

# Public Document Pack

Legal and Democratic Services



## COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

Tuesday 12 July 2022 at 7.30 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall

Link for public online access to this meeting:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8186081096647884557>

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Telephone (listen-only): 02037135012, Telephone Access code: 663-460-217

The members listed below are summoned to attend the Community and Wellbeing Committee meeting, on the day and at the time and place stated, to consider the business set out in this agenda.

Councillor Alex Coley (Chair)  
Councillor Christine Cleveland (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Bernice Froud  
Councillor Luke Giles  
Councillor Christine Howells

Councillor Debbie Monksfield  
Councillor Julie Morris  
Councillor Phil Neale  
Councillor Guy Robbins  
Councillor Peter Webb

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

For further information, please contact Democratic Services, 01372 732122 or [democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk)

### **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

No emergency drill is planned to take place during the meeting. If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by council staff. It is vital that you follow their instructions.

- You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts;
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings;
- Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building, but move to the assembly point at Dullshot Green and await further instructions; and
- Do not re-enter the building until told that it is safe to do so.

## Public information

**Please note that this meeting will be held at the Town Hall, Epsom and will be available to observe live on the internet**

This meeting will be open to the press and public to attend as an observer using free GoToWebinar software, or by telephone.

A link to the online address for this meeting is provided on the first page of this agenda and on the Council's website. A telephone connection number is also provided on the front page of this agenda as a way to observe the meeting, and will relay the full audio from the meeting as an alternative to online connection. A limited number of seats will also be available in the public gallery at the Town Hall. For further information please contact Democratic Services, email: [democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk), telephone: 01372 732000.

Information about the terms of reference and membership of this Committee are available on the [Council's website](#). The website also provides copies of agendas, reports and minutes.

Agendas, reports and minutes for the Committee are also available on the free Modern.Gov app for iPad, Android and Windows devices. For further information on how to access information regarding this Committee, please email us at [Democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:Democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

### Exclusion of the Press and the Public

There are no matters scheduled to be discussed at this meeting that would appear to disclose confidential or exempt information under the provisions Schedule 12A of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Should any such matters arise during the course of discussion of the below items or should the Chairman agree to discuss any other such matters on the grounds of urgency, the Committee will wish to resolve to exclude the press and public by virtue of the private nature of the business to be transacted.

### Questions from the Public

Questions from the public are permitted at meetings of the Committee. Any person wishing to ask a question at a meeting of the Committee must register to do so, as set out below.

Up to 30 minutes will be set aside for written or oral questions from any member of the public who lives, works, attends an educational establishment or owns or leases land in the Borough on matters within the Terms of Reference of the Community and Wellbeing Committee which may not include matters listed on a Committee Agenda.

All questions whether written or oral must consist of one question only, they cannot consist of multi parts or of a statement.

The question or topic may not relate to a specific planning application or decision under the Planning Acts, a specific application for a licence or permit of any kind, the personal affairs of an individual, or a matter which is exempt from disclosure or confidential under the Local Government Act 1972. Questions which in the view of the Chairman are vexatious or frivolous will not be accepted.

To register to ask a question at a meeting of the Committee, please contact Democratic Services, email: [democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk), telephone: 01372 732000.

Written questions must be received by Democratic Services by noon on the tenth working day before the day of the meeting. For this meeting this is **Noon, Tuesday 28 June 2022**.

Registration for oral questions is open until noon on the second working day before the day of the meeting. For this meeting this is **Noon, Friday 8 July 2022**.

## **AGENDA**

### **1. QUESTION TIME**

To take any questions from members of the Public.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in respect of any item of business to be considered at the meeting.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 5 - 10)**

The Committee is asked to confirm as a true record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 17 March 2022 (attached) and to authorise the Chair to sign them.

### **4. EPSOM AND EWELL HUB - APPLICATION FOR 2ND YEAR FUNDING (Pages 11 - 16)**

To support a bid for grant funding from the DWP's Flexible Support Fund to continue the work of the Epsom and Ewell Hub, with delivery partners.

### **5. REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS ASSISTANCE POLICY (Pages 17 - 40)**

This report proposes two amendments to the Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy.

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**Minutes of the Meeting of the COMMUNITY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE held  
on 17 March 2022**

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**PRESENT -**

Councillor Alex Coley (Chair); Councillor Christine Cleveland (Vice-Chair); Councillors Steven McCormick (as nominated substitute for Councillor Clive Smitheram), Julie Morris, Phil Neale, Guy Robbins and Peter Webb

In Attendance:

Absent: Councillor Luke Giles, Councillor Bernice Froud, Councillor Debbie Monksfield and Councillor Clive Smitheram

Officers present: Clare Lawrence (Director of Environment, Housing & Regeneration), Rod Brown (Head of Housing and Community), Ian Dyer (Head of Operational Services), Sue Emmons (Chief Accountant), Annette Snell (Housing Operations Manager), Rachel Kundasamy (Health and Wellbeing Officer), Samantha Whitehead (Streetcare Manager) and Tim Richardson (Democratic Services Manager), Dan Clackson (Administrator)

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**16 QUESTION TIME**

No questions were received from Members of the public.

**17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Committee made the following declarations in relation to items on the agenda:

**Tennis in the Borough**

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Julie Morris declared that her son is a professional tennis coach who uses tennis courts, both paid and unpaid. Councillor Morris did not participate in the debate or vote on this item.

**Allotments Review**

Councillor Christine Cleveland, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Christine Cleveland declared that she was an allotment holder at the Kingston Road allotment site.

## Allotments Review

Councillor Julie Morris, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Julie Morris declared that she was an allotment holder and didn't believe that she had any bias with regard to this item.

## Allotments Review

Councillor Steven McCormick, Other Interest: In the interests of openness and transparency, Councillor Steven McCormick declared that he is an allotment holder but came to the meeting with a clear and open mind.

## 18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Community and Wellbeing Committee held on 18 January 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

## 19 MOTION: HERITAGE TOURS

The Committee received a report presenting a Motion referred to it by the Council at its meeting on 7 December 2021. The Motion proposed a Summer programme of Heritage tours.

The Committee considered the following matters:

- a) **European Grant Funding for the Downs.** The Committee noted that European Grant Funding had been secured for Epsom and Walton Downs which would fund two different types of heritage tour on the Downs.
- b) **Tours of Ashley Road Tunnels.** The Committee noted that the Ashley Road tunnels were in private ownership and that any heritage tours to the site would require permission from the site owner. The Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that the previous tour of the tunnels had been organised by the Epsom Business Improvement District (BID) and that he would work with the BID to explore whether further tours would be possible.
- c) **Business case and funding for Heritage Tours.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that the planned programme of Heritage Tours in 2022-23 would be provided within existing budgets. A business case and identification of funding sources would be presented to the Committee for consideration if it was proposed to expand the service.
- d) **Horton Chapel.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Operational Services informed the Committee that Officers would contact the Trustees of Horton Chapel regarding the possibility of holding a Heritage Tour to the Chapel.

- e) **SCC information signs in Epsom town centre.** The Committee was informed that there was outstanding Surrey County Council sign posting works for Epsom town centre as a part of the Plan-E project, which would provide information about local heritage. Officers had contacted the County Council to request an update on these works.
- f) **Communication of programme of Heritage Tours.** The Committee noted that Councillor Nigel Colin would be involved in the Heritage Tour Programme, as the Council's Heritage Champion. The programme of tours would be communicated with residents by the Council's communications team.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the Motion;**
- (2) **Agree to establish a programme of Heritage Tours to begin in Summer 2022.**

## 20 AFGHAN CITIZENS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

The Committee received a report setting out the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and proposing that the Council extends its offer of accommodating Afghan families arriving in the UK under the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Resettlement Scheme, to those arriving under the ACRS.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Extension of scheme.** The Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that the report's proposals would not extend the Council's obligation to Afghan refugees, the proposals would extend the eligibility criteria of the scheme to enable households to be matched with suitable properties.
- b) **Number of households supported.** The Committee noted that the Council was currently supporting 2 families under the Syrian Refugee Scheme and 1 household under the Afghan Refugee scheme. The support costs for these families was being met by the Government.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Agree to the Council participating in the ACRS as detailed in this report and therefore extending its offer to accommodate and support up-to 5 Afghan families arriving in the UK under both the LES Resettlement Scheme and ACRS.**

## 21 HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

The Committee received a report presenting the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review, and

seeking agreement to consult on these documents prior to returning to Committee for approval to adopt.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Empty properties.** Following a question from a Member, the Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that a multi-faceted approach was required to address the issue of long-term empty properties. This included the Council's decision to introduce a 300% Council Tax charge on properties which remain empty for more than 2 years. The Head of Housing and Community provided the Committee with a verbal summary of the actions undertaken by officers to reduce the number of empty properties in the Borough, in accordance with the Empty Property Strategy. A Member asked whether an update on the number of empty properties in the Borough could be provided as a standard report in future and the Head of Housing and Community informed the Committee that he would discuss this with the relevant Head of Service.
- b) **Housing Need Register.** Following a question from a Member, the Housing Operations Manager informed the Committee that Social Housing was allocated in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy.
- c) **Rough sleepers.** Officers informed the Committee that there were currently two entrenched rough sleepers in the Borough who had refused offers of assistance to provide housing accommodation.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved:

- (1) **To agree that the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Action Plan 2022 – 2027 and Homelessness Review as set out in Appendix 1, 2 and 3 to the report, are submitted to public consultation.**

## 22 TENNIS IN THE BOROUGH

The Committee received a report presenting a non-repayable grant funding opportunity from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the Borough.

The following matter was considered:

- a) **Annual costs.** Officers informed the Committee that the proposed scheme included a requirement that income from the tennis courts would contribute to a 'sinking fund'. This fund would pay for the ongoing annual maintenance of the courts and gate entrance technology.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved by majority vote with 6 members voting for and 1 not voting, to:



- (1) **Grant permission for officers to apply for a non-repayable grant from the Lawn Tennis Association to refurbish and upgrade all tennis courts in the borough as set out in section four of the report.**
- (2) **Agree to a request to Strategy and Resources Committee to release of £10,330 from capital reserves for a 10% match funding contribution from S106 funds.**
- (3) **Agree to the principle of charging for usage of tennis courts to fund the ongoing maintenance, as required by the Lawn Tennis Association.**
- (4) **Note that a further report will be presented to the June 2022 meeting of the Committee to set out proposals for the future management of the tennis courts.**

## 23 ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

The Committee received a report presenting a review of all allotments in the Borough and sets out recommendations for the future of council managed and self-managed sites.

The following matters were considered:

- a) **Process for becoming a self-managed allotment site.** The Committee noted that the process for Council-managed allotment sites to become self-managed sites includes a requirement that 75% of plot holders support the application. Officers informed the Committee that this was 75% of all plot holders for the site, and that non-respondents were considered to not be in support.
- b) **Clarification to wording of paragraph 4.1 of the report.** The Committee considered that paragraph 4.1 of the report should be clarified to detail that a request had been received from Epsom Common Allotment Society for the self-managed site criteria to be revised. The Epsom Common Allotment Society had not submitted a request to become self-managed.
- c) **Amendment to self-management criteria.** The Committee requested Officers to present a report to its June 2022 meeting providing a review of the criteria for self-managed allotment sites, including the requirement for 75% of plot holders to be in support. Officers were requested to consult the Allotment Forum site representatives for their views as a part of this review.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously resolved to:

- (1) **Note the status of all allotment sites in the Borough.**
- (2) **Note that the current agreements for the three self-managed allotments sites are due to expire in December 2022 and agree to**

**issue new agreements for the next five years from date of expiry as set out in section three of this report.**

- (3) Agree to consult with the Allotment Forum site representatives to gauge interest in the remaining council-managed sites becoming self-managed as set out in section 4 of the report.**

*The meeting began at 7.31 pm and ended at 9.03 pm*

COUNCILLOR ALEX COLEY (CHAIR)

## **EPSOM AND EWELL HUB - APPLICATION FOR 2ND YEAR FUNDING**

**Head of Service:** Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community  
**Wards affected:** (All Wards);  
**Urgent Decision?(yes/no)** No  
**If yes, reason urgent decision required:**  
**Appendices (attached):**

### **Summary**

To support a bid for grant funding from the DWP's Flexible Support Fund to continue the work of the Epsom and Ewell Hub, with delivery partners.

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Support that the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chair of Community and Wellbeing Committee, the Chief Finance officer and Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration, submits an application to the Department of Work and Pensions to fund a further year of the Epsom and Ewell Hub.**
- (2) Agree that the Council continues the delivery arrangements with Surrey Life-Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**
- (3) Delegate minor amendments to the bid to the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chair of Community and Wellbeing.**

## **1 Reason for Recommendation**

- 1.1 Approving the recommendations will enable the Council to apply for funding to continue the Epsom and Ewell Hub and help support those at risk of unemployment within the borough.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In January 2021 the Strategy and Resources Committee agreed to support an application to the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) for funding from the DWP's Flexible Support Grant to establish the Epsom and Ewell Hub (also known as the Youth Hub). The application was for 12 months funding which expires in August 2022.
- 2.2 The Hub was established originally in Bourne Hall before moving to an empty retail unit in the Ashley Centre, where it is still currently operating from. The hub supports young people who are not in work or training, helping them to find employment or approved training courses. The Hub also provides support to build confidence, develop good mental health as well as introduce employers to potential candidates.
- 2.3 The role of the Youth Hub is not to replicate existing DWP services but to leverage a range of additional partner and industry resources to provide employment information and advice, support employer connections, work placements and mentors to support young people find pathways into work.
- 2.4 The January 2021 S&R original report outlines the original proposal for the Hub and can be viewed via this link <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=969&Ver=4>

### **3 Review of first year of Hub**

- 3.1 The Epsom and Ewell Hub has operated since August 2021 and in the first 10 months of operation, including a period of relocation, the Hub has engaged with over 160 young people, exceeding the DWP annual target of engaging with 150 young people in 12 months.
- 3.2 The relocation of the Hub from Bourne hall to the Ashley Centre in October 2021 has led to a significant increase in footfall and a significant visible presence and recognition by young people and their families as well as local businesses.
- 3.3 The Hub has achieved getting 36 young people into work, 14 into Kick Start placements, 4 Apprenticeships, 7 work placements as well as 175 social inclusion steps.
- 3.4 With a growing profile within the Ashley Centre, the Hub is expected to significantly exceed the DWP targets for 12 months up to August 2022.
- 3.5 In year 1 the Hub has developed strong partnerships with DWP, NESOT, the Business Improvement District, Job Centre Plus as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership, all of whom join the Council and Surrey Life Long Learning (the delivery partner for the Hub) in forming the Hub's Steering group.

#### **4 Proposal for year 2 funding bid**

- 4.1 The DWP have invited applications for a second year's funding for the Hub, which would start in August 2022 for a period of 12 months.
- 4.2 The DWP have indicated that they would welcome bids which develop the role of the Hub to include more interactions with local businesses. Whilst continuing to offer holistic employment support, the DWP has requested that the Hub becomes more active in regular employer SWAPs, where local employers attend the Hub with their vacancies and the Hub introduce potential candidates.
- 4.3 The DWP have also requested that year 2 funding should develop the role of volunteers in helping young people get back to work or training. It should also increase the engagement with businesses, including Surrey Chambers and the Federation of Small Businesses.
- 4.4 Although not required until August 2022, the DWP have indicated that the processes of year 2 bids can take time and have suggested the Council submits the bid without delay. As such a bid has had to be submitted ahead of this committee meeting to meet this timescale. This bid could be retrospectively withdrawn if support from this committee is not forthcoming.

#### **5 Risk Assessment**

##### Legal or other duties

##### 5.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1.1 The impact of the pandemic on the economic recovery of the UK will depend on local jobs to help the local circular economy. Supporting local households living on lower incomes will be significantly influenced by their unemployment status and resulting unaffordable housing costs.

##### 5.2 Crime & Disorder

- 5.2.1 There are clear correlations between high levels of unemployment and increased incidence of crime and anti-social behaviour. Supporting young People to develop skills and employment will reduce the tendency towards undesired behaviours.

##### 5.3 Safeguarding

- 5.3.1 Unemployment and its associated loss of income can exacerbate vulnerability in individuals who are more susceptible to abuse, neglect or coercion.

##### 5.4 Dependencies

5.4.1 The extent of the support available from the Hub will be dependent on the levels of funding awarded by the DWP.

5.5 Other

5.5.1 None

## 6 Financial Implications

6.1 The DWP bid forming this proposal is intended to cover all staffing costs, including any associated overheads and managerial costs.

6.2 The extent of financial support being sought from the DWP is £97,407.72

6.3 The main Council contribution is in the provision of accommodation for the Hub to operate from. It is intended that the Hub will continue to operate from the unit it currently occupies free of charge in the Ashley Centre. Should this no longer be available spare accommodation in other Council owned buildings, such as Bourne hall will be considered.

6.4 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Skills Hub should be fully funded by the DWP bid as there are no Council budgets currently allocated to the scheme.

## 7 Legal Implications

7.1 The delivery of the Hub will be managed through an arrangement between the Council and delivery partners.

7.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report

## 8 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

8.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Opportunity and prosperity and Safe and Well.

8.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

8.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** none

8.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Unemployment can be associated with greater opportunities for anti-social behaviour and environmental crime. Employment will create alternative options for individuals, growing their confidence and life choices.

8.5 **Partnerships:** This proposal has built on the longstanding partnership between the Council and Surrey Life Long Learning partnership. The year 2 funding will strengthen further partnerships between the Council and businesses as well as the LEP and the Epsom BID and NESOT

**9 Background papers**

9.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

**Previous reports:**

- [Strategy and Resources Committee 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#)

**Other papers:**

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## **REVIEW OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING GRANTS ASSISTANCE POLICY**

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	n/a
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	Appendix 1: Revised Policy with track changes

### **Summary**

This report proposes two amendments to the Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy.

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Approve the recommended amendments to the Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy, so as to:**
  - (i) Increase the level of discretionary top up funding to £30,000 (or more in exceptional circumstances, provided it would not cause the Council to exceed its overall DFG grant allocation);**
  - (ii) Where reference is made to the term “legal charge” replace with the term “land charge”.**
- (2) Agree to delegate any necessary minor amendments to the Council’s Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy following changes in law or good practice, to the Head of Housing & Community in consultation with the Chairman of Community and Wellbeing Committee.**

### **1 Reason for Recommendation**

- 1.1 Due to continued increased funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme through the Better Care Fund, the Authority was enabled to use the powers under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 (RRO) to introduce a Discretionary Private Sector Housing Grants Assistance Policy which provides a far reaching assistance scheme for vulnerable residents.

- 1.2 Whilst the scheme has been very effective, one area which has been identified as having scope to improve is the level of top-up funding available to support the mandatory DFG grant, and to streamline administrative processes, to replace the imposition of legal charges with land charges on certain adaptations.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Policy was first effective in 2018 and widened in 2019.

### **Legal/Land Charges**

- 2.2 The policy makes reference to charges. For the mandatory DFG, the repayment condition will be registered as a local land charge against the adapted dwelling for 10 years. If the property is sold within 10 year period, starting on the date of completion of work, the council will, at its discretion, seek to reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000, but will not seek to recover more than £10,000.
- 2.3 With regards to discretionary grants, the advice received at the time of adopting the Policy, was that a discretionary grant could not be listed as a land charge, but must be added as a legal charge. This would mean that for example, owner occupied applications, where the top-up funding is provided (on top of the mandatory maximum grant of £30,000), the full amount will be registered as a legal charge against the adapted property and repayable, if the property is sold within 10 years of the completed work date. Other charges would be applicable for other discretionary grants as per the Policy.
- 2.4 To impose a legal charge is administratively burdensome and requires Legal Services support, whereas imposing a land charge is a very simple process.
- 2.5 Subsequent advice now received is that under paragraph 3 of the 2002 Regulatory Reform Order, a Housing Authority is permitted to place charges in return for discretionary assistance of any form.  
(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/1860/contents/made> ).
- 2.6 Approval is therefore sought to simply replace the terms “legal charge” with the term “land charge” in the Policy, as per the revised Policy with tracked changes attached as Appendix 2

### **Discretionary Top-Up Funding**

- 2.7 The Policy currently permits the Authority to provide top-up funding to the maximum DFG in exceptional cases. This has allowed discretionary support of up to £15,000 to meet the cost above the £30,000 mandatory limit when all other funding options have been explored, and in conjunction with financial support available from Surrey County Council and other funding streams.
- 2.8 Whilst this has been highly effective in enabling the Authority to support many vulnerable complex cases, it would provide even greater flexibility if the top-up limit is increased to £30,000 in exceptional cases, which would have a great positive impact on the level of assistance we can deliver to disabled residents in particular children. In addition, for particularly highly complex special needs cases, and exceptional circumstances, where all funding streams and options have been explored, that the top-up limit be increased as required (provided it would not cause the Council to exceed its overall DFG grant allocation), to be agreed by the Service Manager or Head of Service.

### **3 Risk Assessment**

Legal or other duties

#### **3.1 Equality Impact Assessment**

- 3.1.1 Extending provision as set out in the report would not be considered to have any adverse impact

#### **3.2 Crime & Disorder**

- 3.2.1 None

#### **3.3 Safeguarding**

- 3.3.1 The process of visiting and assessing an individual for grant assistance does increase the opportunities to consider their welfare and safeguarding.

#### **3.4 Dependencies**

- 3.4.1 The ability to offer discretionary grant funding is dependent upon receipt of by the Council of the DFG grant.

#### **3.5 Other**

The budget would continue to be closely monitored to ensure it is not exceeded. Should there be a risk of budget being exceeded then the priority would focus on progressing the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants only.

### **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The revised Policy would be implemented and administered using existing

staffing resources. Funding for the scheme comes through the Better Care Fund allocation. The DFG allocation from the Better Care Fund to the Council for 2022/23 is £785k, the same as for 2021/22.

- 4.2 With an increase in grants awarded, there could be scope to increase the income generated by the Home Improvement Agency, but fees should be capped at a maximum works of £45,000.
- 4.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The proposed policy changes are deliverable by existing staffing resources and would be externally funded within the Council's overall DFG allocation.

## 5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The proposed changes to the Policy are required to ensure the Council is able to register and enforce the relevant charges.
- 5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

## 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Supporting our Community.
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None
- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** None applicable.

## 7 Background papers

- 7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

### **Previous reports:**

- Community and Wellbeing Committee: 13 June 2017, 20 March 2018 and 22 January 2019.

### **Other papers:**

- Previous Policy Documents.
- Regulatory Reform Order 2002.



## Housing Grants Assistance Policy

Version number      4  
Date                    March/April 2021

## Tracking

<b>Policy Title</b>	Housing Grants Assistance Policy		
<b>LT sign off</b>			
<b>Committee</b>	Community & Wellbeing	<b>Date approved</b>	
<b>Review due date</b>		<b>Review completed</b>	
<b>Service</b>			

## Revision History

Revision Date	Revisor	Previous Version	Description of Revision
13 June 2017	C&W	December 2016	
20 March 2018	C&W		Minor Revisions
22 January 2019	C&W		Minor Revisions

## Document Approvals

Each revision requires the following approvals:

Sponsor Approval		Name	Date
Chief Legal Officer			

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## Introduction

Housing is a key determinant of health and poor housing is directly linked to poor health. This policy sets out how Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (“the council”) will provide financial assistance to support the provision of decent, healthy and safe housing within the Borough.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the Council’s plans set out the council’s vision, priorities and values, which include commitments to supporting our community, customer focus and forward thinking.
- Support working with partners to provide the right services to our residents to reflect an integrated approach to health, social care and housing
- Affirm that the Council’s obligations, powers and duties in relation to the financial assistance for repair and adaptations are contained within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Capital funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant is included in Surrey’s Better Care Fund (BCF) allocation. Home adaptations provision can contribute to meeting BCF conditions and targets. There is good evidence on the cost effectiveness of aid and adaptations to improve quality of life.
- Outline the scope; in relation to discretionary assistance, responsibility for maintaining private properties rests firmly with the owner in the first instance. It is important that the council’s resources are targeted effectively at vulnerable occupiers where it can be demonstrated that other financial options are not available. At the same time, the council will seek to provide information and advice to households and owners as to other ways in which to fund improvements where appropriate, such as tapping into equity tied into the property, leveraging in other investment or taking up nationally-run schemes. Discretionary financial assistance will be targeted at vulnerable households. A full definition of vulnerable households is set out in Appendix A; essentially assistance will be targeted at those who may be particularly at risk of suffering health and safety problems as a result of poor housing conditions in situations where they do not have the resources or support to undertake remedial action themselves and who meet the eligibility criteria. All applications will be considered on their merits and there will be discretion in exceptional circumstances, to provide assistance to those who fall outside the prescribed criteria, for example their savings have been earmarked for imminent care needs.



## Conditions

To deliver the aims and priorities detailed within this policy, the council will implement the housing assistance schemes as set out in point three during the life of this policy.

The availability of any discretionary scheme is dependent on the council's funding being available and schemes may be withdrawn at any time and without notice.

Where assistance is provided the council will, where possible, seek to recycle funding so that it may be re-used for the benefit of residents in the future. For discretionary grants, where applicants are home-owners, the applicable grant amount will be registered as a land charge against the property and will be repayable on the sale of the property. This will again ensure that the council's funding is recycled for the benefit of future residents.

Where the Home Improvement Agency services are engaged, an agreed fee will be applied and payable within the grant sum.

Where time bound limits have been referred to in the policy, in exceptional circumstances, these may be waived.

Where a land charge charge is applied, the charge will not include the HIA fees amount.

Where it is not possible to obtain paperwork from the resident in a timely manner and where there is an immediate risk to that individual, the means test can be waived at the discretion of the Licensing, Grants and Home Improvement Agency Manager.

Where a means test has taken place resulting in a contribution of up to £5000 (or higher where appropriate) the Licensing, Grants and Home Improvement Agency Manager has the discretion to disregard the contribution. This applies where the payment of the contribution would result in significant financial hardship for the resident, or if failing to provide the assistance would result in significant harm to the individual.

## Summary of Grants available

Hardship fund – this scheme approved by the Community and Wellbeing Committee on 7 April 2017 will run alongside the grant assistance in this policy.

The following outlines the forms of assistance available and appendix D provides the details of each scheme.

### **Priority 1 - To assist disabled and vulnerable residents to remain in their homes through the provision of aids and adaptations.**

#### **Mandatory disabled facilities grant:**

To assist disabled and vulnerable residents to remain in their homes through the provision of aids and adaptations

The health and well-being of disabled and vulnerable residents is often compromised due to their homes not meeting their specific needs, and this can impact on their ability to live with dignity within their homes.

The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes.

The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing mandatory DFGs are prescribed and the council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

The Council is required to administer DFG's to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, and the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing.

In some cases the use of DFG's is able to assist with reducing the length of stay in hospital and facilitating a quick return to home. This also reduces the demand for residential care placements

#### **Disabled facilities support grant – discretionary financial assistance**

In some cases, the extent of the aids and adaptation required is extensive; the total cost may exceed the statutory maximum amount available under the DFG regime. Where the additional funding cannot be found via other relevant sources such as Surrey County Council, Surrey County Council, housing associations or the disabled resident, this grant will be available to ensure that the DFG is completed wherever possible. This grant will also apply where some means tested contributions cannot be found.

## **Disabled facilities support grant – discretionary works**

To provide discretionary assistance to residents who are in receipt of or have applied for a DFG to improve well-being through the provision of **aids and adaptations that are not eligible for assistance through the mandatory DFG.**

The mandatory DFG regime sets out the specific works that are eligible for grant assistance. In some cases the mandatory scheme does not provide the full range of adaptations that enable disabled residents to live their lives to the full. For example where a disabled person works from home and need wheelchair accessible office space or to facilitate full access to gardens to improve well-being.

Assistance will also be available to offer the ability for a disabled resident **to move home** to reduce the level of aids and adaptations required to support their continued independence, for example by moving from a house to a level access bungalow.

## **Priority 2 – to assist vulnerable residents to feel safe and secure in their homes.**

### **Safe and secure grants**

To assist vulnerable households to carry out a wide range of minor adaptations, small repairs and security measures to reduce risks and accidents around the home and promote independent living and assist with hospital discharge or prevent hospital admission. Works can include small building repairs, minor adaptations, general home safety checks and remedial actions, falls and accident prevention checks and remedial actions such as repairing floor coverings, security checks, installing locks, chains and spyholes.

### **Handyperson and small works**

This scheme would operate in the same way as the current handyman scheme funded by Surrey County Council with the discretion of funding work up to a higher amount than allowed on the existing scheme.

### **Hospital to Home**

This scheme will support the Council's Hospital to Home Service. Where residents have been selected for assistance under the Hospital to Home service, the usual means test criteria would be waived to allow for a rapid hospital discharge where urgent/remedial works are required to enable a person to return to their own home. Additional non urgent works including Disabled Facilities Grant works would be subject to standard procedures and eligibility criteria.

## **Priority 3 - To improve the health and well-being of residents by removing unnecessary health and safety hazards in their home**

### **Major works grant**

To provide discretionary assistance to remedy unacceptable health and safety hazards, i.e. a category 1 or significant category 2 health and safety hazard, within the homes of eligible residents to improve their health and well-being and reduce the negative impact on health services that result from poor housing conditions. Examples of work would be to remedy dampness and mould, defective/faulty wiring or heating.

**Priority 4 – To improve the health and well-being of residents by promoting affordable warmth.**

**Warm at home**

To improve the health and well-being of residents by promoting affordable warmth through home energy efficiency. Examples of work would include cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, condensing boilers and heating systems.

Each year in excess of 20,000 people die unnecessarily as a result of living in cold homes. In extreme cases the inability to afford to heat the home results in cold temperatures that creates hypothermic conditions, however for many individuals (particularly older persons) cold homes result in trips, slips and falls and other injuries resulting from cardiovascular, circulatory diseases and respiratory disease. Aside from the personal impact that this causes, there is a significant cost to the public purse, for example a hip fracture costs the health service on average £26,000.

The energy efficiency of private sector homes is therefore a key determinant of health inequalities, and this policy promotes the improvement of home energy efficiency and affordable warmth.

## Enquiries, applications and procedures

Enquiries about financial assistance can be made to the Housing Grants team/HIA via e-mail [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

Formal applications for grants must be made on the forms prescribed by and available from the Council. Applicants will be required to provide satisfactory documentary evidence of qualifying status in respect of any claim for assistance.

All grant approvals will be issued in writing and the qualifying works must not be commenced prior to grant approval being issued. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in the application being refused.

Where required, two itemised and individually priced quotations from suitably qualified contractors must be submitted to ensure that best value can be demonstrated. Where the value of works exceeds, or is likely to exceed £20,000, three quotations will normally be required.

Once grant approval has been issued and works have been satisfactorily completed payment of the grant will be made direct to the contractor(s) undertaking the works.

With the exception of mandatory DFG's the award of a grant will be subject to the provision and availability of necessary funding.

Grants may be repayable if the property is sold or otherwise disposed of within the grant period. Repayment may be waived or reduced if there are exceptional circumstances requiring the sale or disposal and repayment would cause exceptional hardship

## Complaints and redress

Information is available by contacting the Customer Services Centre by e-mail [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) or online at [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

## Appendices

### Appendix A - Definition of vulnerable households

Vulnerable groups targeted for assistance are those who may be particularly at risk of suffering health and safety problems as a result of poor housing conditions in situations where they do not have the resources or support to undertake remedial action themselves. Married couples and partners are treated as a single person when living at the same property and both sets of finances are taken into account.

Applicants must be:

- In receipt of a means tested benefit (as set out below) which will mean no contribution to make towards the cost of works, subject to the grant maximums. In addition to the income related benefits that are 'passporting benefits' for a DFG, the council will not expect a contribution from applicants in receipt of local council tax relief, **or**;
- Have the state retirement pension as their main source of income with savings of less than £15,000, **or**;
- Be subject to a means test which closely follows the statutory test for DFG's. The test looks at an applicant's income and capital and their ability to meet the cost of the works from their own resources.

### Eligible benefits

Income support

Income-based employment & support allowance (not contribution based ESA)

Income based jobseeker's allowance (not contribution based JSA)

Working tax credit and/or child tax credit (where your annual income is below the income threshold to attract the maximum tax credit amount)

Housing benefit

Guaranteed pension credit (not savings pension credit alone)

Universal credit

## **Appendix B - Test of resources guidance**

### **Means test for disabled facilities grant**

All DFG applications are subject to a statutory financial means assessment. This assessment looks at the resources of the disabled person and their spouse or partner and is used to determine how much, if anything, they must contribute towards the cost of the works. Any contribution is then deducted from the grant awarded.

Where the applicant (the owner or tenant of the property) is not the disabled person, it is the disabled person who will be means tested and who will be required to declare, and provide documentary evidence of, all income, savings and capital.

The income, savings and capital figures will be used in conjunction with a table of fixed allowances, set by the government, to calculate the amount of contribution required.

The maximum amount of grant that the council is required to pay is £30,000 per application less any assessed contribution from the applicant. In exceptional circumstances, if the cost of the eligible works is more, the council can use discretionary powers to increase the amount.

The grant is sometimes paid in instalments, and sometimes in full on completion of the work. The council will normally pay the contractor directly, when the council is satisfied that the work (or phase of work) has been completed to their satisfaction and in accordance with the grant approval.

The grant is not means tested if the adaptations are necessary for meeting the needs of a child with disabilities.

## **Appendix C - Category 1&2 hazards under the health & safety rating system**

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a risk assessment tool used to assess potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties in England and Wales.

Under this system, any housing defects have to be considered in relation to 29 separate hazards and a process undertaken to determine how likely the hazards result in harm. A score is allocated and action may be taken depending upon which category the hazard falls into. The assessment method therefore focuses on the hazards that are most likely to be present in housing. Tackling these hazards will make more homes healthier and safer.

The assessment will show the presence of any serious (Category 1) hazards and other less serious (Category 2) hazards. The full list of potential hazards are as follows:

### **Physiological requirements**

Damp and mould growth etc.  
Excessive cold or Excessive heat  
Asbestos etc.  
Biocides  
CO and fuel combustion productions  
Lead Radiation  
Un-combusted fuel gas  
Volatile organic compounds

### **Psychological requirements**

Crowding and space  
Entry by intruders  
Lighting  
Noise

### **Protection against infection**

Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse  
Food safety  
Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage  
Water supply

### **Protection against accidents**

Falls associated with baths etc.  
Falling on level surfaces  
Falling on stairs etc.  
Falling between levels  
Electrical hazards Fire  
Flames, hot surfaces etc.  
Collision and entrapment Explosions  
Position and operability of amenities etc. Structural collapse and falling element



## Appendix D - Table of grant assistance

Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
<b>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)</b>  <div>Page 33</div>	<p>All works that are necessary for one or more of the following purposes: - to make it easier to get into and out of the dwelling by, for example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>widening doors and installing ramps;</li> <li>ensuring the safety of the disabled person and other occupants by, for example, providing a specially adapted room in which it would be safe to leave a disabled person unattended or improved lighting to ensure better visibility;</li> <li>to make access easier to the living room;</li> <li>by providing or improving access to the bedroom ,and kitchen, toilet, washbasin and bath (and/or shower) facilities; for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom;</li> <li>to improve or provide a heating system in your home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person;</li> </ul>	<p>a) The applicant must be either an owner- occupier or a tenant and the applicant or a member of their household must be a disabled person within the household.</p> <p>b) The disabled person must be registered or registerable with Social Services.</p>	<p>a) There is a limit of £30,000 for these grants per application. The disabled person and any partner are means tested to determine the amount of any contribution towards the cost of the works. (See Appendix B)</p> <p>b) If the disabled person is a child, the parents or legal guardian are not means tested.</p>	<p>a) For owner applications, the DFG repayment condition will be declared as a land charge against the adapted dwelling for 10 Years. If the property is sold within 10 year period, starting on the date of completion of work, the council will, at its discretion, seek to reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000, but will not seek to recover more than £10,000.</p> <p>The Council will give consideration to the reasons for the disposal of the dwelling. Disposals for reasons of changes in employment, financial circumstances, physical or mental health, or to provide care for another person will be dealt with sympathetically. Monies are not expected to be recovered where significant reasons are present in this respect or where financial hardship will be caused.</p>



Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
<b>Disabled Facilities support grant-discretionary financial assistance</b>	To support the mandatory DFG, to allow for the continued welfare and quality of life of the disabled person.	As for mandatory DFG	Provide top up funding <u>up to £30,000 to a maximum of 15k</u> to meet the costs above the £30,000k mandatory DFG where all other funding options have been explored. <u>In particularly highly complex cases, the discretionary top up limit may be increased as required, to be agreed by the Service Manager or Head of Service.</u>	a) Subject to budgetary availability b) Assistance linked to mandatory DFG application c) Subject to means test d) For owner applications, for grants providing top up over £30k, the full amount will be registered as a <del>legal</del> <u>land</u> charge against the adapted property and repayable, if the property is sold within 10 years of the completed work date. The council will give consideration to the reasons for the disposal of the dwelling. Disposals for reasons of changes in employment, financial circumstances, physical or mental health, or to provide care for another person will be dealt with sympathetically. Monies are not expected to be recovered where significant reasons are present in this respect or where financial hardship will be caused.

Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
<b>Disabled facilities support grant – discretionary works</b>	To support the mandatory DFG to meet the reasonable costs of aids and adaptations that fall outside the mandatory DFG programme, to assist a disabled resident to live independently in their home.	Applicants who are applying for a mandatory disabled facilities grant and works are: a) ineligible for assistance under the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant regime; b) be recommended by the Occupational Therapist; c) provide a significant health and/or well-being benefit to the disabled occupant, for example by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing additional access into and around the property;</li> <li>extending access into external areas of the home</li> <li>facilitating relocation to more suitable accommodation requiring significantly reduced aids and adaptations</li> </ul>	Grant limit of £10,000 on any one application.	As for mandatory DFG plus: a) subject to budget availability b) assistance linked to mandatory DFG application c) for owner applications, the DFG repayment condition will be declared as a <b>legal land</b> charge against the adapted dwelling for 10 Years. If the property is sold within 10 year period, starting on the date of completion of work, the council will, at its discretion, seek to reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000, but will not seek to recover more than £10,000.  The Council will give consideration to the reasons for the disposal of the dwelling. Disposals for reasons of changes in employment, financial circumstances, physical or mental health, or to provide care for another person will be dealt with sympathetically. Monies are not expected to be recovered where significant reasons are present in this respect, or where financial hardship will be caused. There can be no further grant within 3 years of completion of previous grant.

Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
<b>Safe and Secure Grant</b>	To assist vulnerable households to carry out a wide range of minor adaptations, small repairs and security measures to reduce risks and accidents around the home and promote independent living.	As per appendix A – definition of vulnerable households.	Grant Limit of £5000 on any one application.	a) Subject to budget availability. b) There can be no further grant within 2 years of completion of previous grant.
<b>Handy person and small works</b>	To assist vulnerable households to carry out minor repairs and aids through our handyperson service.	Over 65 or under 65, in receipt of a means benefit and disability benefit	Grant Limit of £500	a) Subject to budget availability b) One per financial year
<b>Hospital to Home service</b>	This scheme will support the Council's Hospital to Home Service. Where residents have been selected for assistance under the Hospital to Home service, the usual means test criteria would be waived to allow for a rapid hospital discharge where urgent/remedial works are required to enable a person to return to their own home. Additional non urgent works including Disabled Facilities Grant works would be subject to standard procedures and eligibility criteria.	Residents selected for assistance under Hospital to Home Service	N/A	a) Subject to budget availability

Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
Major works grant	<p>Works to a property which are necessary to remedy a category: 1 Hazard or significant category 2 Health and Safety hazard. As set out in the Housing Health and Safety rating system. (See appendix C).</p> <p>Examples of the type of items that can be grant aided include: Works to keep the property wind and weather tight, defective electrical wiring and heating systems, structural defects, defective windows and doors, treatment of dampness, timber infestation and rot. Other works supported by the Environmental Health Team.</p>	<p>An applicant must be</p> <p>(a) an owner-occupier or a private tenant with repairing obligations relating to the eligible works, and</p> <p>(b) be aged 18 or over; and meet the definition of a vulnerable household as set out in appendix A.</p> <p>(c) intend to occupy the property for a minimum of 5 years following completion of works</p> <p>(d) been main residence for a minimum of 3 years.</p>	<p>Grant limit of £15000 on any one application.</p>	<p>Subject to budget availability</p> <p>a) For owner applications, the repayment condition will be declared as a <del>legal</del> <u>land</u> charge against the adapted dwelling for 10 Years. If the property is sold within 10 year period, starting on the date of completion of work, the council will, at its discretion, seek to reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000, but will not seek to recover more than £10,000.</p> <p>b) There can be no further grant within 3 years of completion of the previous grant.</p>

Form of assistance	Description – eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
Warm at home grant	<p>To improve the energy efficiency of the home to provide affordable warmth and as a result improve the health and well-being of the occupiers. Measures will aim to provide adequate thermal insulation, tackle excess cold and address fuel poverty. Examples of work may include:</p> <p>Cavity wall insulation Loft insulation Condensing boilers</p> <p>Grants will compliment national or local programmes. The council works in partnership with Action Surrey who provide advice and information about home energy efficiency and will act as a referral route for</p>	<p>a) An applicant must be an owner- occupier or a private tenant with repairing obligations relating to the eligible works.</p> <p>b) be aged 18 or over;</p> <p>c) meet the definition of a vulnerable household as set out in appendix A</p> <p>d) Intend to occupy the property for a minimum of 5 years following completion of works.</p> <p>c) The property must have been the applicant's main residence for a minimum of 3 years.</p>	Grant limit of £10,000 on any one application	<p>a) Subject to budget availability.</p> <p>b) For owner applications, the repayment condition will be declared as a <del>legal</del> <u>land</u> charge against the adapted dwelling for 10 Years. If the property is sold within 10 year period, starting on the date of completion of work, the council will, at its discretion, seek to reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000, but will not seek to recover more than £10,000.</p>

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