

## YOUTH HUB INITIATIVE

**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 request grant funding from DWP's Flexible Support Fund to set up a Youth Hub in the Borough, with delivery partners, and to match fund the bid with the offer of a location for the Youth Hub.

### Recommendation (s)

**The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Agree that the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Chairman of Strategy and Resources Committee, the Chief Finance Officer, Chief Operating Officer and the Head of Property and Regeneration, submits an application to the Department for Work and Pensions to fund the establishment of a Youth Hub;**
- (2) Agree that the Council enters into an arrangement with delivery partners to deliver this initiative.**

## 1 Reason for Recommendation

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

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The impact of the COVID19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the numbers of borough residents claiming Universal Credit. This is particularly large in the 16-24 year old age group.

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- 2.2 In response to this growing problem of unemployment and to avoid the pandemic creating a cohort of left behind young people, the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) has requested bids from local authorities to establish a Youth Hub within the borough with the intention of supporting 18 – 24 years olds to help them seek employment and increase their chances of gaining future employment.
- 2.3 The role of the Youth Hub is not to replicate existing DWP provision 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 as soon as possible. Partners would include NEScot and Coast to Capital Enterprise Adviser service.

### **Skills Hub to support vulnerable local residents**

- 2.4 On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 this Committee agreed to fund the establishment of the Epsom and Ewell Skills Hub, to support vulnerable local residents get help to develop skills to gain employment or more secure types of employment. The funding agreed was for one year and the scheme is due to conclude in March 2021.
- 2.5 The Skills Hub is provided by Surrey Life Long Learning Partnership, who have a strong track record of providing local residents with valuable job seeking service, supporting many individuals who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness to seek employment and avoid the Benefit cap to their welfare payments.
- 2.6 The Skills Hub has performed well using virtual meetings during much of the COVID19 pandemic, however more recently provision to more conventional face to face meetings has been achieved providing suitable support to those clients who either do not have access to a computer or for whom a face to face interaction is more appropriate.
- 2.7 The DWP have recognised that the Council's Skills Hub has played a valuable role in helping local residents to gain confidence, qualifications and be ready to enter the workplace.
- 2.8 The Council took a proactive step in funding the Skills Hub and the intention was that any future provision would be supported by other partners such as the DWP.

### **3 Youth Hub**

- 3.1 Youth Hubs were recently introduced by the DWP as a means of preventing the long lasting negative impact of the COVID19 pandemic on young people aged 18 – 24, avoiding a cohort of left behind young people. Youth Hubs are intended to provide an accessible resource for residents seeking access to a range of employment related services.

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- 3.2 The DWP have invited bids from local authorities to establish and operate a Youth Hub within the borough for a period of one year. The bid is intended to provide funding for staff resources, employed by the Council and operating from premises provided by the Council.
- 3.3 The provision of the premises can be considered as match funding as the Council would not charge for the use of the premises used for the Hub. However, the scale of this match funding is not required to be equal to the value of the Council's bid.
- 3.4 If the DWP funding bid is successful the Youth Hub will operate for 12 months. Currently it is difficult to anticipate what future funding provision might be. In the absence of any further funding, the Youth Hub would cease after 12 months and those being supported will transfer to the Youth Employment Programme operated by DWP and continue to be supported by the Case Workers operating at the Job Centre Plus.

#### **4 Proposal**

- 4.1 The proposal is to submit a bid to the DWP before the March 2021 deadline to fund the employment of up to two FTEs to operate a Youth Hub, incorporating the second year of the Skill Hub, for a period of one year.
- 4.2 The target group for the Youth Hub will be those within the 18 – 24 age group, however it is intended that there will be tolerances to accept service users from other age groups. The bid would allow for Job Centre Plus work advisors to be able to participate in the provision of support and guidance to the users of the service.
- 4.3 Clear outcome based measures will be used to manage the service, agreed prior to commencement and to include an increase in employment and an uptake in traineeships and apprenticeships. The premises available for the Youth Hub has yet to be determined, although a degree of flexibility is anticipated with the Council being able to offer a variety of rooms or space which might include more than one venue used on different days. Some of the service provided by the Youth Hub will be based on outreach not requiring premises.
- 4.4 The proposal is based on the using a spare room or space in a Council venue that is not being hired out. As such the proposal would not include loss of any income to the Council. Discussions with the Head of Property and Venues indicates that there is scope at Bourne Hall to accommodate the proposed Youth Hub without any loss of income.
- 4.5 Should the proposal not be feasible without the loss of income to the Council, then the proposal will return to this committee for a further decision. The current vacant Council property in South Street Epsom is not available for use due to intended works on site.

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### **5 Risk Assessment**

Legal or other duties

#### 5.1 Impact Assessment

5.1.1 The impact of the pandemic on the economic recovery will significantly depend on local jobs to help support the local circular economy. Supporting local households living on lower incomes from unemployment and consequential homelessness will be significantly influenced by unemployment status and resulting unaffordable accommodation costs.

5.1.2 Employment helps local residents meet the costs of their accommodation and remain secure in their accommodation, reducing the demands for expensive homelessness accommodation. Employment also has a significant impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

#### 5.2 Crime & Disorder

5.2.1 There are clear correlations between high levels of unemployment and increased incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour. Supporting young people to develop skills and gain jobs and apprenticeships will increase an individual's options for future employment and 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 successful outcome to the bid to DWP will be subject to the negotiation with the DWP and Surrey Life Long Learning Partnership. The extent of the activity included as part of the Youth Hub will be dependent on the eventual funding awarded.

5.4.2 The full effect on local residents including young people from the pandemic and economic impact has yet to be determined. The continued route of the pandemic, the withdrawal of Government COVID19 protections such as furlough and rent protection will have an impact on local unemployment levels and the demand for the proposed service.

#### 5.5 Other None

### **6 Financial Implications**

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- 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 main Council contribution is in the accommodation provided for the operation of the Youth Hub. The Youth Hub will only utilise rooms that the Council has not otherwise been able to hire out to other users, as such the proposal will not result in any loss of income for the Council.
- 6.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Skills Hub should be funded in full by the DWP bid, as the Council currently has no budgets allocated for the scheme.

### 7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The delivery of the Youth Hub will be managed through an arrangement between the Council and delivery partners.
- 7.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents 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 not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 8.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**
- 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 arisen from the existing close partnership working with Surrey Life Long Partnership in delivering the Skills Hub. The Council is also growing closer partnerships with the local Job Centre plus.

### 9 Background papers

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

#### **Previous reports:**

- None

#### **Other papers:**

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- The report on the Skills Hub (Strategy and Resources Committee 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020)