

EPSOM AND EWELL EMPLOYMENT HUB

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Report Author	Rod Brown
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Social Impact Report of EEHub Appendix 2 - Exempt

Summary

Consideration of options regarding funding the Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub for 2026/27

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Determine which funding option from those set out in section 5 of this report for the financial support of the Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub in 2026/27(A, B, C or D) is preferred**
- (2) Agree that the Council continues the delivery arrangements with Surrey Life Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**
- (3) Nominate and authorise the Head of Housing and Community, in consultation with the Director of Environment Housing and Regeneration and the Chair of Community and Wellbeing Committee, to enter into a legal agreement with Surrey Life Long Learning to deliver this initiative.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Epsom and Ewell Employment Hub (the EEHub) does not have identified funds for operating after the end of March 2026. If no funding was secured for the next financial year, before March 2026 the charity operating the existing service would need to consider redundancies that might be required.

2 Background

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- 2.1 Since April 2020 the Council has supported an employment hub, offering support to help residents into employment, education and training. Since its inception the service has been delivered, on behalf of the Council, by Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership (SLLP) a local charity active in employment support.
- 2.2 Initially the service was operated as Epsom and Ewell Skills Hub delivering services virtually, due to COVID, but subsequently in a vacant shop unit in the Ashley Centre. Following securing external DWP funding the Hub operated with the support of the DWP as an employment service restricted for young people aged 18-24 years, as the Epsom and Ewell Youth Hub.
- 2.3 Following marked improvements in local youth unemployment, DWP funding ceased in 2023. From August 2023 the Council utilised funding from the UK Prosperity Fund to support a service providing a wider range of employment support to residents of all ages across the borough and the hub became the Epsom and Ewell Hub (EEHub).

3 Current position

- 3.1 The EEHub operates from an otherwise vacant rent-free office unit on the second floor at Global House in the Ashley Centre where they meet their clients and provide support. Access to the services of EEHub is free. The EEHub offers a wide range of support to residents to gain confidence and develop key skills required to prepare them to succeed in employment and be the best they can be.
- 3.2 Residents can approach the service directly, or more commonly are referred into the service by the local Job Centre Plus or other partners.
- 3.3 The service employs a small team of three dedicated staff, alongside other partners who deliver complementary services such as Work Well (helping to get long term sick back into employment) and other training schemes such as Multiply, a mathematical skills programme.
- 3.4 The EEHub actively supports local businesses and the local economy. The EEHub have held a number of jobs fairs in Global House. These events have been successful in enabling local employers to access local employees, with the EEHub actively preparing and supporting their clients to succeed. These job fairs have often focussed on a particular sector such as health and social care, or local retailers.
- 3.5 The work of the EEHub is supported by a Steering Group, chaired by the Council's Head of Housing and Community and includes local stakeholders such as NESOT, the local Job Centre Plus, Epsom BID and other key partners.

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4 Review of current performance

- 4.1 The EEHub approaches their work with service users with great empathy and understanding. Often the barriers to employment or training result from missed opportunities in education, frequently involving other factors such as a low levels of personal confidence, poor mental health and physical disabilities and neurodiversity.
- 4.2 Over the last five years, the hub has developed highly valued relationships with businesses, NESOT, and DWP Job Centre work coaches. This valuable network of relationships is fundamental to the ability of the EEHub to be able to help service users into employment or training.
- 4.3 The impact of EEHub has recently been documented using the Wellbeing Valuation method (endorsed by HM Treasury), with an estimated value of total social impact through the Epsom & Ewell Hub of £4.32 million between 2022/23 and 2024/25. This social impact report is available in Appendix 1.

5 Future options

- 5.1 DWP have not identified this borough as being a priority for further Youth Hub funding.
- 5.2 The cost of operating the hub is mainly associated with staffing levels although energy costs are also high and paid for by SLLP. SLLP have identified a range of future delivery options for continuing operation of the EEHub, all based on delivery at the existing Global House venue but with a range of staffing levels.
- 5.3 The anticipated outputs achievable will depend on the staffing levels within the hub, with Option A being the closest to current staffing levels. The options providing more staffing resources enables the Hub to engage with more people seeking help and minimise any waiting times to access the service. Greater resourcing will also enable delivery of a wider programme of events and engagement with more local businesses.
- 5.4 Considerations of future funding for the EEHub might have implications for those staff employed by SLLP. Consequently the four options being presented for the future funding of the EEHub are in Table 1 in exempt Appendix 2.

6 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessment

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6.1.1 Supporting local households living on lower incomes will be significantly influenced by their unemployment status and resulting unaffordable housing costs.

6.2 Crime & Disorder

6.2.1 None

6.3 Safeguarding

6.3.1 None

6.4 Dependencies

6.4.1 Access to existing vacant office space provided by The Ashley Centre. Indications are that the existing arrangements for the use of 2nd floor Global House by SLLP for the EEHub will continue for a further 12 months.

6.5 Other

6.5.1 None

7 Financial Implications

7.1 The Council has provided the EEHub with £160,000 in 2025/26, funded by a contribution from the Corporate Project Reserve, as agreed by S&R on 28 January 2025.

7.2 Should funding of the EEHub be agreed for 2026/7 it is anticipated this would need to also be achieved through the Corporate Project Reserve, due to a lack of other funding options. The current uncommitted balance of corporate project reserve stands at c.£2.12m following the decision at S&R on 11 November 2025 to transfer in £1m each from the PIE and collection fund equalisation reserves.

7.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** We will be able to fund the service up until March 2027 but any decision post vesting day will be determined by the shadow and / or new unitary authority.

8 Legal Implications

8.1 The Council has power to provide grants to voluntary and community sector organisations under the general power of competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

8.2 Any grant will be made in accordance with the requirements of subsidy control legislation where applicable.

8.3 The grants set out within this report are not subject to the Council's Contract Standing Orders. (Section 4 and 10 EEBC CSO).

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- 8.4 The delivery of the Hub will be managed through an agreement between the Council and delivery partners.

8.5 Legal Officer's comments:

- 8.6 Members will note the funding previously provided by this Committee last year (see para 7.1). This proposal is to provide further funding to SLLP directly from Council funds rather than passing through central government funding, the Council must consider the impact of The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the Act) when considering such a decision.

The Act governs the provision of financial support by public authorities in the UK. Under the Act, procedures must be followed for most subsidy awards. However, minimal financial assistance (MFA) allows subsidies to be granted with fewer formalities.

- 8.7 MFA is limited by a financial threshold that cannot be exceeded by a recipient. This threshold is cumulative, meaning that separate awards must be aggregated to calculate whether a recipient has exceeded it. The threshold is set at £315,000 and includes income received via other subsidies. This means that SLLP can receive small cumulative subsidies up to the threshold without triggering the need for a more extensive assessment under the subsidy control rules.

There is a formal MFA process that the Council is required to comply with. The Head of Housing and Community has been advised about the process previously and what is required and shall be expected to ensure that this is complied with.

9 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

9.1 Council's Key Priorities:

From the 2020-24 corporate plan this proposal would support Safe and Well and Opportunity and Prosperity. It is not specifically included in the current strategic priorities for the council.

- 9.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

- 9.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None

- 9.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None

- 9.5 **Partnerships:** The EEHub thrives on the effective partnerships between the council, SLLP, DWP, Businesses, NESOT and many other partners.

- 9.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:**

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- 9.6.1 Each of the five districts and boroughs within the East Surrey unitary boundary either currently operate or intend to start operating an employment hub or Youth Hubs.
- 9.6.2 Over the last 5 years the EEHub has developed mature relationships and connections with both local businesses as well as with key partners including NEScot and the Epsom BID. Should the EEHub close at the end of the current financial year, staff will either be made redundant (liability is with SLLP) or reallocated to other projects and the existing EEHub would be dismantled.
- 9.6.1 It is anticipated work around economic and employment support would continue within the new East Surrey unitary council.
- 9.6.2 Should EEHub cease operating it will take time and investment to regain the current level of influence and effectiveness. From the experience with starting the EEHub, it would be anticipated to take at least 6 months to rebuild a similar hub approaching that which currently

10 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- Skills hub January 2020 <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MID=771#AI5468>
- Youth Hub January 2021 <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MID=969#AI6444>
- 2nd year Youth Hub July 2022 <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=214&MID=1399#AI8259>

Other papers:

- None