

EEBC 2025-2027 STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4: COMMUNITY ASSET REVIEW

Head of Service:	Mark Shephard, Head of Property and Regeneration
Report Author	Mark Shephard
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1: Community Asset Mapping Report Appendix 2: Issues and Opportunities Appendix 3: Bourne Hall Status Report Appendix 4: Playhouse Status Report Appendix 5: C&W Status Report

Summary

This report outlines the progress made in respect of the Council's 2025-2027 Strategic Priority 4 in relation to Community Assets.

It recommends completion of the Phase 2 work to ensure each of the 3 key Community Assets (Bourne Hall, Community & Wellbeing Centre and Epsom Playhouse) are provided with a business case to help safeguard their future success.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the update and progress made as set out in this report.**
- (2) Agree to complete the more detailed Phase 2 work at a cost of £30,000 as set out in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4.**
- (3) Agree to release the £30,000 Phase 2 funds from the LGR Reserve.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

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- 1.1 The Council has a statutory obligation under s123 Local Government Act 1972 to seek Best Value from its land and property assets.
- 1.2 The Phase 2 work (as described in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.3) will ensure that each of the 3 key Community Assets is provided with a business case for transfer to the new East Surrey Unitary Council.
- 1.3 The recommendations represent the outcome of the work undertaken to date (and reported below) demonstrating the Council's commitment to its s123 statutory obligation.

2 Background

- 2.1 At its 6 May 2025 meeting, Full Council approved seven Strategic Priorities to be delivered in 2025-2027. The revised Priorities replaced the Council's Four-Year Plan and focused its strategic delivery in the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timescales.
- 2.2 To ensure the 2025-2027 Strategic Priorities continue to be delivered swiftly alongside business as usual and existing commitments, support has been provided by an external specialist property consultant.
- 2.3 This report relates to the Community Assets of Strategic Priority 4, which stated:

Priority 4: Carry out and complete major Asset Review

Outcome: To Review key council owned property assets, including EEPIC, Bourne Hall, Playhouse and C&W Centre but excluding commercial assets on long term leases, to understand market values. Identify assets that could transfer to a new local governance entity (subject to the creation of new entity/ies) and likely revenue/maintenance costs for that new entity.

- 2.4 Strategy & Resources Committee had previously considered EEPIC, Operational and Surplus Assets at its 11 November 2025 meeting. The report also included an update on the initial work to review the Community Assets including:
 - As part of the wider review of all Council assets, those assets held for community purposes, and which might be considered appropriate for a Community Transfer had been identified.
 - As requested by Strategy Priority 4, particular focus was applied to:
 - Bourne Hall
 - The Epsom Playhouse
 - Community & Wellbeing Centre

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- Work was undertaken to better understand the implications of holding the assets in any new local governance entity - which was linked to Strategic Priority 1: *Explore and implement future local governance (i.e. Town Community Council)*.

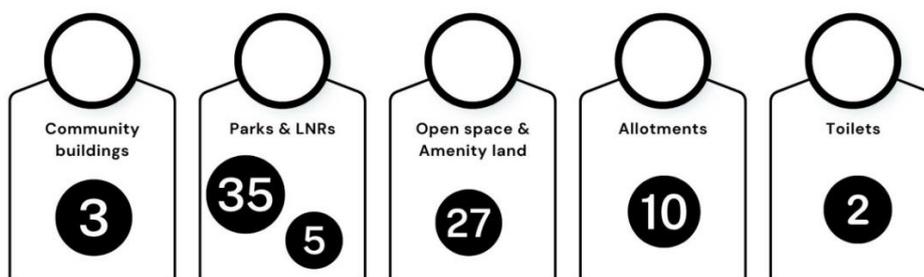
2.5 This report provides further information of the Community Asset Review work to date (Phase 1) and outlines the second phase of the Community Asset Review work (Phase 2).

2.6 Phase 2 is designed to put the above assets in the strongest position possible as the Council moves towards becoming part of the new East Surrey Unitary Council.

3 Strategic Priority 4: Community Asset Review - Phase 1 (work undertaken)

3.1 The first step was to identify those assets held for community purposes which included community buildings, as well as Country Parks, Allotments and other open space.

3.2 The assets were attached as an appendix to the earlier 11 November 2025 Strategy & Resources report and can be summarised as:



3.3 Focussing on the 3 key community buildings (Bourne Hall, The Playhouse and the Community & Wellbeing Centre), the first phase of the Community Asset Review has primarily focussed on building a more detailed understanding of the 'as is' arrangements for these assets. This included looking at existing operating, staffing and management models.

3.4 A review of past budgets, along with current and future forecasts, both in terms of revenue and capital spend was also undertaken. This identified areas that could be reviewed and considered in more detail.

3.5 In parallel, initial Community Asset Mapping work was carried out to identify local community need, resources and assets already in the Borough. However, this work is ongoing and currently does not include all local groups.

3.6 The Community Asset Mapping work is attached at Appendix 1.

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- 3.7 The final stage of Phase 1 was to pull together thoughts around key issues, ideas and opportunities including a SWOT analysis. This highlighted several areas that could be explored in more detail, with the aim of both strengthening the community benefit and creating a more financially sustainable model for the 3 key Community Assets.
- 3.8 Appendices include:
- Appendix 2: Draft Community Assets Issues and Opportunities
 - Appendix 3: Draft Bourne Hall Status Report
 - Appendix 4: Draft Playhouse Status Report
 - Appendix 5: Draft C&W Status Report
- 3.9 Epsom & Ewell benefits from a range of community building and facilities, which provide important services to both residents and the wider community.
- 3.10 Phase 1 demonstrated the extent of the Council's continued investment in its community assets ranging from environmental upgrades (e.g. solar panels at Bourne Hall / Epsom Playhouse and replacement windows at Bourne Hall); to creative ways to enhance income (e.g. Flying Saucer Café at Bourne Hall and the new Upper Bar at Epsom Playhouse).
- 3.11 However, a Council budget of circa £2m per annum is currently required to maintain the 3 key Community Buildings. While the above environmental and income generating initiatives have played their part, there is a need to look at how these assets can be reimagined and business cases developed.
- 3.12 In the current challenging financial climate and with Local Government Reform now well underway, there is a need to continue the work required to formulate business cases for each key Community Asset.
- 3.13 These business cases would ensure sound future decision making by the new East Surrey Unitary Council.

4 Strategic Priority 4: Community Asset Review - Phase 2

- 4.1 In light of the financial challenges and the Council's continued wish to support its community, it is proposed to continue the work to look at the key Community Assets and move forward with Phase 2.
- 4.2 The aims and objectives of Phase 2 are:
- **Strategic aim:** to continue to support the community of Epsom & Ewell through its community assets, giving residents access to services, experiences and social connection.

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- **Objective:** to create a sustainable & resilient business case for the key assets; enhancing the community offer and safeguarding them for the longer term, while preparing for transfer to the Unitary Council.

4.3 The themes of Phase 2 are:

- **Finance, funding & business planning:** further ways to deliver efficiencies and increase income and funding streams.
- **Stewardship, governance & partnerships:** including opportunities to strengthen links with existing and/or new community organisations, as well as resourcing and scope for new partnership working.
- **Building and asset management:** including spatial and development opportunities.
- **Community and stakeholder needs:** positioning the assets to better meet community need while strengthening their long-term sustainability.

4.4 The total cost to complete Phase 2 (as described above) is approximately £30,000 and proposed to be released from the LGR Reserve.

4.5 Building on the work already undertaken, Phase 2 is intended to provide each of the 3 key Community Assets with a business case and consolidate the learning into a framework.

4.6 This will prepare the 3 key Community Assets for transfer to the new East Surrey Unitary Council and support sound future decision making.

5 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

5.1 Equality Impact Assessment

5.1.1 Not applicable

5.2 Crime & Disorder

5.2.1 Not applicable

5.3 Safeguarding

5.3.1 Not applicable

5.4 Dependencies

5.4.1 None

5.5 Other

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5.5.1 None

6 Financial Implications

6.1 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The financial implications are detailed within the body of the report.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The Council has a statutory obligation under s123 Local Government Act 1972 to seek Best Value from its land and property assets.

7.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

8 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

8.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- *Priority 4: Carry out and complete major Asset Review*

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:** None

8.5 **Partnerships:** None

8.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:** The Council remains under a statutory duty to achieve Best Value and ensure services can be delivered and maintained until LGR Vesting Day on 1 April 2027.

9 Background papers

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

Previous reports:

- EEBC 2025-2027 Strategic Priorities 3 & 4, Strategy & Resources Committee 11 November 2025
<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=1843&Ver=4>

Other papers:

- Community Governance Review, Full Council 9 December 2025
<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=1790>
- EEBC Strategic Priorities 2025-2027, Full Council 6 May 2025
<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=1627>