CABINET

21st AUGUST 2018

KEY DECISION: NO

COUNCILLOR MARTIN TENNANT
MAJOR PROJECTS AND PROPERTY
PORTFOLIO HOLDER

REPORT NO. ED1802

ALDERSHOT DIGITAL-GAMES HUB

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The report updates Members on progress with respect to the development of a Digital-Games Hub in Aldershot – a key project within the Regenerating Rushmoor programme - including information on:

- Progress with respect to the use of the Old Town Hall (in liaison with partners), and
- Financial support from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership

The report also explains what the next steps are to progress the project and seeks approval to undertake further development work, including the preparation of a specification for external and internal (including fit-out) works to the building and the submission of required planning and listed building applications with respect to the modifications to the building.

Recommendations:

- To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve further project development work (of approximately £40K – from within the approved regeneration budget and/or LEP funds) including the preparation of a specification for external and internal works to the building and management of these works
- To approve the submission of required planning and listed building applications, with respect to the modifications to the building
- To approve the principle of the Council 'underwriting' the revenue costs of the facility in Years 1 and 2 (as described in para 3.10), with formal approval to be considered as part of the annual budget setting process

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The report updates Members on progress with respect to the development of a Digital-Games Hub in Aldershot – a key project within the Regenerating Rushmoor programme - including information on:

- Progress with respect to the use of the Old Town Hall (in liaison with partners), and

- Financial support from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership

1.2 The report also explains what the next steps are to progress the project and seeks approval to undertake further development work including the preparation of a specification for external and internal (including fit-out) works to the building and the submission of required planning and listed building applications with respect to the modifications to the building.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has been developing a 'Digital-Games Hub' proposal for a number of years, with the support of the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3 LEP) and other partners, following an initial suggestion from Hampshire County Council (HCC).

2.2 There is a strong and growing digital economy in the Guildford-Aldershot axis and there is evidence (Tech Nation Report – 2018) to suggest the development of a 'Digital-Games Hub' in Aldershot will contribute towards the growth of this sector and thus boost economic activity in the Borough. The digital economy sector is the fastest growing sector in the UK – growing 2.6 times faster than the rest of the UK. The number of jobs in the sector grew by 13% in the 3 years to 2017. Productivity in the sector is very high - worth an additional £10K per annum. Jobs are better paid than many others – by an average of £10K per annum (Tech Nation Report – 2018).

2.3 An Expression of Interest (EOI) was submitted to EM3 LEP and approved at a level of £1.2M in March 2016 related to the development of a Games Hub and associated residential development in Aldershot. It was proposed at that time to acquire a building and convert it to create the Games Hub, together with associated "specialist worker-type" accommodation. The EOI was approved subject to the production of a detailed business case. The detailed business case has not been progressed because the property acquisition has not proceeded as expected, due to a combination of landowner reluctance and unacceptable asking price etc.

2.4 An alternative building has now been identified, with a willing landlord (see paras 3.6 below), and which requires less overall investment, albeit the scheme does not now propose to directly deliver the residential component.

2.5 Rather than amend the existing EOI, the EM3 LEP encouraged the Council to submit a fresh application for support for the project under its 'Projects Deliverable in 2018/19' programme. This application was submitted in June 2018 (with a value of £867K) and on 5th July was approved by the Programme Management Group (PMG) of the LEP subject to 'due diligence'. This process will be completed in early September 2018. The projected timescale for project delivery will see the Digital-Games Hub open for business in April 2019.

2.6 This rest of the report provides further information on the project, including details of:

- The proposal
- The building
- The partners
- The business plan, including demand
- Economic impact and VFM
- Project risks and mitigation
- Next steps

2.7 The Aldershot Games Hub is a key project within the Regenerating Rushmoor programme as it has the potential to deliver a major boost to the digital economy of Aldershot, Rushmoor and the wider sub-region. The project also aligns with the Council's Digital Strategy and supports the priority around engaging with young people, creating a digital community and improving skills.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

The Proposal

3.1 The Aldershot Games/Digital Hub will comprise a 60-place collaborative workspace for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs, micro, small and developing businesses, and others working in the Gaming/Digital sector.

3.2 The Hub will provide a physical base for a supportive and collaborative, shared working environment, offering a combination of "state of the art" facilities (including Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) services developed in partnership with the 5G Innovation Centre in Guildford that game developers can use for future marketing and sales activity) and flexible working arrangements together with essential support services for new and fledgling businesses. This will support an increase in the number of business start-ups in this key sector and help existing businesses 'scale-up', and so build upon the strength of the sector along the Guildford-Aldershot axis whilst contributing to the growth of the digital sector (and associated sectors, including defence and aeronautical – all of which are Council and EM3 LEP priorities) within the sub-region.

3.3 These services will also support the growth and development of other similar businesses in the locality and sub-region who will benefit from the increased investment and focus on digital and games technologies the project will support.

3.4 The Hub will comprise the following services and facilities:

- Secure premises
- Meeting rooms
- Office space
- Collaborative work space
- Support services with respect to accountancy, legal, marketing, branding, Intellectual Property etc

- Virtual Reality Suite
- Auditorium
- Café/Restaurant (potentially)
- High speed broadband

The Building and the main Partners

3.5   It is proposed to house the 'Digital-Games Hub' within the Old Town Hall in Aldershot.

3.6   The Old Town Hall is presently owned by HCC, who have declared the building surplus to operational requirements. Following an approach by the Council and in the context of other discussions with key partners in the town, HCC is investigating the option to dispose of the building to the Rock and Pop Foundation (CISS Limited) (who acquired the adjoining Registry Office building from HCC a few years ago) *on condition that* the Rock and Pop Foundation lease the building to the Council for a period of 2 – 3 years (with the first 2 years being *on a peppercorn*) for use as a Digital-Games Hub. The Rock and Pop Foundation is supportive of this approach. Legal discussions have commenced across all 3 parties with draft heads of terms agreed.

3.7   The Rock and Pop Foundation has agreed to provide a 'day to day' facilities management service (as they own and manage the building next door) and discussions have commenced with Rocket Desk in Guildford related to their assistance with specialist operational management of the specific 'Games Hub' aspects. This is expected to result in one of the games developers taking on responsibility for daily operational matters (desk and room bookings, invoicing etc) within their working day after the first few months (as happened at Rocket Desk). The detail of this will be worked up by Christmas.

3.8   The works needed for the proposed Digital-Games Hub are likely to require planning and listed building consent and building control approval. Cabinet approval to submit a planning application is required, hence the recommendation above. Initial discussions have taken place with relevant colleagues and it is not anticipated, subject to consultation, that approval will not be achievable within a reasonable timescale (see programme in Next Steps, para 3.26, below). The specification for these works needs to be developed and the works programme managed. It is anticipated the cost of this task will be c.£40K. The current 2018/19 capital budget for the regeneration of Aldershot town centre (£6.45m) can accommodate this sum. The revenue effect of this capital budget (financed by borrowing) is already contained within the Council's General Fund budget plan. Utilisation of this budget therefore presents no additional revenue budgetary effect. It should be noted however that any utilisation of this capital budget is subject to the submission of a business case. The potential to obtain an allocation from the LEP will also be pursued.

3.9   It estimated that the building requires approximately £682K (ex VAT) of work (external and internal refurbishment and fit out) to enable it to be used for the Games Hub. The entirety of this sum has been applied for from the EM3

LEP. The LEP has approved this application "in principle" subject to 'due diligence' (expected to be completed in September). If the "Hub" does prove to be successful within the first 2 years, it is anticipated that a 'bespoke' facility can then be designed to be incorporated into the Union Street development (or similar location), helping to support the 're-invention' of the High Street; contributing to the diversification of the town centre offer and re-invigorating it in an innovative way. The LEP has been asked to confirm in writing the detail of this plan and understand that its funds, if approved, will be contributing towards the development of a Digital-Games Hub, initially in the Old Town Hall for probable transfer as described above, with the Old Town Hall subsequently utilised as a "Dance Academy" helping to create a further 30 full-time and 600 part-time jobs, as well as safeguarding 44 existing jobs at the Rock and Pop Foundation, and that the Council will have no grant repayment obligations at the end of the trial period.

The Business Plan, Economic Impact and Demand Survey

3.10 A high-level 'financial plan' accompanied the EM3 LEP application (attached at Appendix 1), detailing expected income and expenditure during the first 3 years of operation. This suggests annual running costs of approximately £95,000 per year and projected income of £22,000 in Year 1, £66,000 in Year 2 and £100,000 in Year 3. Business Rates need to be added to the costs (though this cost will be passed on to individual businesses, most of whom would be eligible for 100% relief), and a market rental figure for Year 3. Cabinet is being asked to approve, in principle, to 'underwrite' the revenue deficit in Year 1 and 2 (though it is intended to secure other contributions to help 'bridge' this gap – see para 3.14 below), with formal approval to be considered as part of the annual budget setting process. The Council must obtain an option to tax from HMRC on the building. This will ensure that VAT on expenditure incurred by the Council can be reclaimed, and all charges to users of the building for accommodation and services will be made with the addition of VAT.

3.11 As these costings illustrate, and in line with evidence from elsewhere (see para 3.12 below), it is not expected that the Digital-Games Hub will make a significant revenue surplus for a number of years. However, it is believed that the Hub will kick-start the growth and development of a significant number of games/digital enterprises that will make a significant contribution to the local economy. There is also potential for additional income to be generated over and above that indicated through forging partnerships with like-minded organisations (like those listed in para 3.14 below), sponsorship, special events, etc.

3.12 Evidence from all of the other Games Hubs across the country (eg Guildford, Brighton, and Leamington Spa) indicates that such facilities require initial pump-priming funding to help put them on a financially sustainable footing. Equally, evidence from national research (Tech Nation report - 2018) demonstrates that a successful Games Hub will make a significant and growing contribution to the local economy (in the order of £7M per annum -

analysis by Olsberg SPI and Mordacity in February 2015 concluded that the GVA per FTE in the video games sector in 2013 was £67,992).

3.13 Officers have developed and negotiated a proposal which limits the Council contribution and financial exposure to the minimum, (and which enables the Council to 'terminate' the project early should circumstances suggest this is prudent) in the context of the economic benefits the project has the potential to deliver.

3.14 There are potential contributions from other partners (subject to further negotiation and consideration of procurement implications as appropriate):

- EM3 LEP contribution towards running costs - £40,000
- Asmodee/Virgin Media contribution - marketing costs - up to £50,000
- Virgin Media contribution – broadband connectivity - up to £100,000
- 5G Innovation Centre – broadband and 5G connectivity - up to £100,000
- MOD – apprenticeship programme - tbc

3.15 In early 2018, officers conducted a 'Demand Survey' of the offer. This entailed the distribution of 3,000 questionnaires across a number of 'platforms' including existing Council databases, Twitter and Facebook pages together with the 'mailing lists' of partner organisations.

3.16 The questionnaire was completed by 71 individuals or organisations, of which 71% (employing over 370 people) expressed positive interest in using the Games Hub on a part or full-time basis. The study confirmed there is an existing unmet demand for the Digital-Games Hub and that it has potential to produce significant economic benefits.(See appendix 2 of this report)

3.17 The reasons cited in the survey for supporting the Games Hub in Aldershot included:

- The proximity to Guildford specialist sector expertise without the added costs associated with a Guildford address
- The scope to create all of the collaborative benefits within one facility as described above
- Property values in Aldershot are presently significantly less than anywhere else in the sub-region
- The strength of the complementary sectors in and around Aldershot – especially defence and aeronautics (both priority sectors for EM3 LEP).

3.18 In the comments section associated with the survey, and in follow-up conversations, respondents particularly emphasised the strength of the collaborative working possibilities and the value of both the networking opportunities afforded by our proposed scheme (which they consider does not exist elsewhere) and the specialist facilities being proposed (especially the Virtual Suite and the 5G linkage).

3.19 The high-level 'financial plan' (Appendix 1) suggests indicative 'desk rental' figures of approximately 75% of the rates charged at a similar venue (Rocket

Desk) in Guildford (because Aldershot commands lower values than Guildford because of its reduced attractiveness (connectivity, housing offer, nighttime economy etc)). When phased utilisation rates are modelled in (as indicated in the Financial Plan), together with modest sponsorship and special event revenues, the income projections quoted in para 3.10 above are revealed.

3.20 The Digital-Games Hub will deliver the following economic outputs:

- 100 new jobs created in the Digital-Games Hub together with 370 jobs safeguarded in the wider digital economy by 2021
- 30 new jobs created in the Rock and Pop Foundation 'college'/training centre and 44 jobs safeguarded from 2021 onwards, as well as 600 part-time music teacher training jobs created at the same time (through facilitating the retention of the Rock and Pop Foundation on the wider 'town hall' site)

3.21 On the basis of the predicted economic impact of the Digital-Games Hub as a whole referred above, and in the light of the risks and mitigations referred below, this is considered a sound business case on which to proceed.

Risks and mitigation

3.22 The project is considered to have the following risks and mitigations:

- **Demand not realised** – The Council has undertaken a demand survey which has revealed a strong appetite for the facility as planned. The Council also plan to work closely with Rocket Desk (as well as Desklodge in Basingstoke and The Base at Bordon) to learn from their experience
- **Competition from other areas** – The Council believes Aldershot has an immediate competitive advantage over other areas in terms of rental values, the existing strength of the digital games and associated sectors (defence and aeronautics) etc., but this advantage could be lost if the Hub is not developed with all urgency
- **Costs of works outstrip budgets** – The Council has sought match-funding contributions from project partners as referred above. It will continue to pursue these and other possibilities. Estimates have been prepared for works (based on specialist knowledge from HCC and others) and the budgets will form the basis of the specification for the works. Liaison has taken place with planning and building control colleagues, and a specialist heritage architect, and these conversations suggest the budgets will be adequate to meet the requirements of the works
- **The needs of the sector are rapidly changing** – The Council has built flexibility into the plan – both for the Old Town Hall building and the later bespoke Games Hub development within the Union Street scheme – to enable it to respond creatively and nimbly to these changes
- **Income projections not achieved** – The lease arrangement being negotiated with the Rock and Pop Foundation enables the Council to terminate the project, and thus cease any future responsibilities and liabilities should revenue projections (in the form of desk rental, sponsorship or special events income) not materialise as projected

Alternative Options

3.23   Two alternative options have been considered and rejected:

- **Leave to the private sector to develop** – there is no evidence from elsewhere in the country that the private sector will develop such a facility, at least not without a significant public-sector subsidy. This proposal does entail a public-sector subsidy, but it keeps the public sector in control of its use
- **Let another public sector partner take the lead** – The Council is working very closely with HCC and EM3 LEP and each of these organisations are being very supportive - but it is equally clear that neither of them would be willing or able to take the lead themselves with the development of the project with the urgency that is needed

Consultation

3.24   The development of the Digital-Games Hub has been included in the plans for the regeneration of Aldershot for a number of years and has been discussed at the Aldershot Regeneration Group on a number of occasions. The group has always been supportive of the proposal.

3.25   The Digital-Games Hub is a project within the 'Regenerating Rushmoor' work plan, which has been approved by Cabinet. The project also aligns with the Council's Digital Strategy.

Next steps

3.26   Subject to Cabinet approval it is proposed that the following actions will occur:

- Develop specification for works (August-September)
- EM3 LEP due diligence completed (September)
- Works out to tender (September)
- Planning, listed building and building control applications submitted (September)
- HCC recommends sale to Rock and Pop Foundation (CISS Ltd) and onward lease to RBC (September)
- Tenders returned (October)
- Lease agreement finalised with RPF and HCC (October)
- Continue to secure additional finance (ongoing)
- Formal completion (December – or earlier)
- Commence works (January 2019)
- Market Games Hub (ongoing)
- Complete operational plan (with Rocket Desk, RPF, other partners) – (January 2019)
- Complete works (March 2019)
- Open Games Hub (April 2019)

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks and Mitigation

4.1 See para 3.22 above.

Legal Implications

4.2 Property matters are being led by the Council's property team in liaison with property colleagues at HCC. The LEP contract and associated funding conditions will be considered utilising the process agreed for previous LEP awards to the Council.

Financial and Resource Implications

4.3 The following financial matters result from the proposed development of the Digital-Games Hub described in this report.

Financial implications	£		
Capital			
Initial work programme	40,000	To be financed from Aldershot Town Centre Regeneration budget (subject to business case)	Revenue effect of utilisation of this budget already contained in budgets **#**
Main works to building	682,000	Financed by grant/contribution from LEP	No overall revenue effect, as expenditure is totally financed from external source
Revenue			
Overall net revenue effect - year 1 Costs £95k less income £22k	73,000	Growth in General Fund revenue budget plan	
Overall net revenue effect - year 2 Costs £95k less income £66k	29,000	Growth in General Fund revenue budget plan	
Overall net revenue effect - year 3 Costs £95k less income £100k	-5,000	Growth (contribution) in General Fund revenue budget plan	

A recommendation is included to delegate the Chief Executive to approve further project development work (of approximately £40K). The remainder of

the above financial implications are not included as recommendations to this report, and will be considered within the forthcoming budget process.

Equalities Impact Implications

4.4   The proposed Digital-Games Hub aims to meet the employment needs of aspiring entrepreneurs in the Borough, and as such, meets the needs of young and disadvantaged people. The facilities within the proposed Digital-Games Hub and access arrangements will be designed to ensure that no section of the community is disadvantaged.

Other

4.5   The proposal is expected to:

- Make a significant positive impact to the economic health of Aldershot
- To boost economic activity in a fast-growing sector in the wider sub-region
- Contribute to the diversification of the town centre offer in Aldershot
- Help support the 're-invention' of the High Street; re-invigorating it in an innovative way

5   CONCLUSIONS

5.1   The Digital-Games Hub has the potential to make a significant, positive impact to economic activity in Aldershot and the wider sub-region through the creation of up to 100 jobs.

5.2   The proposal is a key project within the Regenerating Rushmoor programme that has been approved by Cabinet.

5.3   The proposal as described in this report will facilitate the development of this important project through leveraging significant partner contributions whilst minimising the financial exposure and risk to the Council.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Initial Financial cost plan
Tech Nation report – 2018
Games Hub Survey and Summary Report

CONTACT DETAILS:

Report Author
Steve Pearce, steve.pearce@easthants.gov.uk - 07961 111988

Head of Service
Karen Edwards, karen.edwards@rushmoor.gov.uk - 01252 398800

APPENDIX 1

	2019 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2020 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2021 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Costs												
Running costs	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000
Building maintenance	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500	7500
Officer manager	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750	3750
Marketing	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500	2500
Total	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750	23750
Income												
Average Occupancy	10%	10%	25%	25%	50%	50%	50%	50%	75%	75%	75%	75%
Permanent desks	1755	1755	4387.5	4387.5	8775	8775	8775	8775	13162.5	13162.5	13162.5	13162.5
Casual desks	810	810	2025	2025	4050	4050	4050	4050	6075	6075	6075	6075
Daily desks	300	300	750	750	1500	1500	1500	1500	2250	2250	2250	2250
Special events		600	600	600	1200	1200	1200	1200	1800	1800	1800	1800
Sponsorship etc					1000	1000	1000	1000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Total	2865	3465	7762.5	7762.5	16525	16525	16525	16525	25287.5	25287.5	25287.5	25287.5
Profit/loss	-20885	-20285	-15987.5	-15987.5	-7225	-7225	-7225	-7225	1537.5	1537.5	1537.5	1537.5

Permanent Desk - 30 total	£195 pcm
Casual Desk - 30 total	£90 pcm
Daily Desk - as above	£15 per day
Special events	£300 per event

Aldershot Games Hub Survey

March 2018

Consultation report by Strategy, Performance and Partnerships

Contents

Purpose of the consultation

Rushmoor Borough Council believes there is a significant community of games developers and associated specialists working in and around, Aldershot. The Council wants to support this community and is considering providing a specialist "Games Hub" to help.

The aim of the Games Hub is to provide a collaborative, shared workspace in Aldershot town centre with excellent broadband connectivity, innovative and locally-unique Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) services developed in partnership with the 5G Innovation Centre in Guildford that game developers can use for future marketing and sales activity.

Before this idea was explored further, Rushmoor wanted to gauge demand for the Games Hub and make sure it provides what possible future users say they want.

Method

An online survey (Appendix A) was designed to collect potential user views on a Games Hub. Links to the survey were emailed to a database of over 500 people involved in the gaming sector and to a range of business support organisations and industry experts. The survey was also posted on Rushmoor4business twitter account and on Rushmoor's Facebook account.

To encourage people to fill in the survey there was an option to enter a prize draw to win a £250 gift voucher.

The survey ran from 9th February until the 4th March 2018.

Response rate

In total 71 people filled in the survey and 52 people entered the prize draw.

Consultation results

Summary

There was interest in a Games hub in Aldershot with 70.7% (41 respondents) indicating that they were very likely or likely to use it. The main reason why respondents indicated that they wouldn't use the Games Hub was because they were already set up elsewhere. 34 respondents were interested in joining the Games Hub if it was developed and 16 respondents indicated that they would use the Games Hub full time.

The majority of respondents were from businesses that were full time and micro-businesses (under 10 employees), based in the GU postcode and 80.0% (40 respondents) indicated that they were developers. 46.4% (32 respondents) run their businesses from home and 31.9% (22 respondents) run their business from a rented office.

Kitchen facilities, on-site parking and access 24/7 are in the top five things respondents current have access to and that they think the hub should have access to. In addition top of the list of facilities that should be included in the Hub are hot desk / ad hoc office space, and conference and meeting rooms.

The most popular option which would make the Hub more attractive was virtual reality booths (63.6% 35 respondents), followed by a green room (61.8% 34 respondents), followed by an audio/editing suite (58.2% 32 respondents). The least popular was an eSports suite (25.5% 14 respondents).

The prices respondents were willing to pay to be based at the Hub ranged wildly. The median price respondents were willing to pay for an ad hoc hot desk was £50-£100 a month, for a dedicated desk £101-£150 a month, for an ad hoc office was £151-£200 a month and for a dedicated office £201-£250 a month.

The two largest responses for what other services the respondents would like to benefit from were access to networks and development partners and for advice about funding and finance.

Detailed Responses

Section one – about you and your business

Question 1 and 2 asked the respondents their name and their businesses name.

Question 3 – Is your business full-time or part-time?

In total 69 respondents filled in this question. The majority of respondents, 73.9% (51 respondents) indicated that their businesses were full-time.

Is your business full-time or part-time?
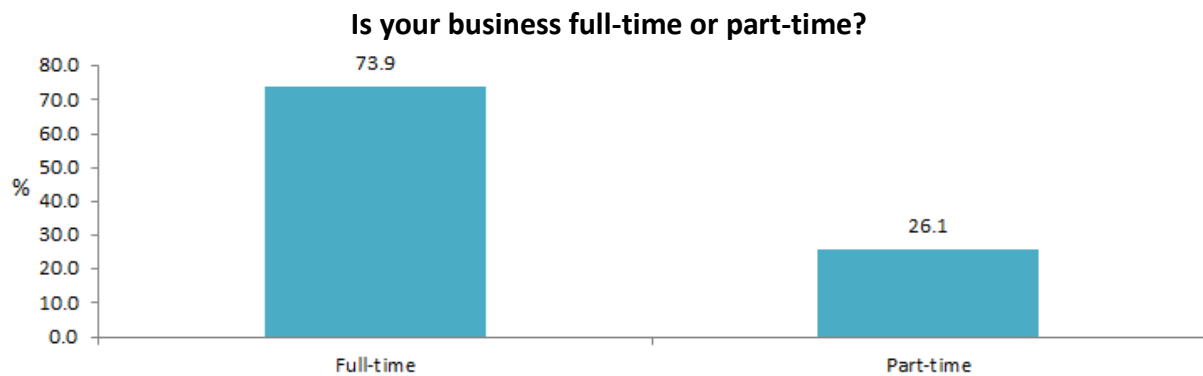
Question 4 - What type of business do you have?

In total 50 respondents filled in this question, they could tick more than one answer. The majority of respondents, 80.0% (40 respondents) indicated that they had a developer businesses.

What type of business do you have?
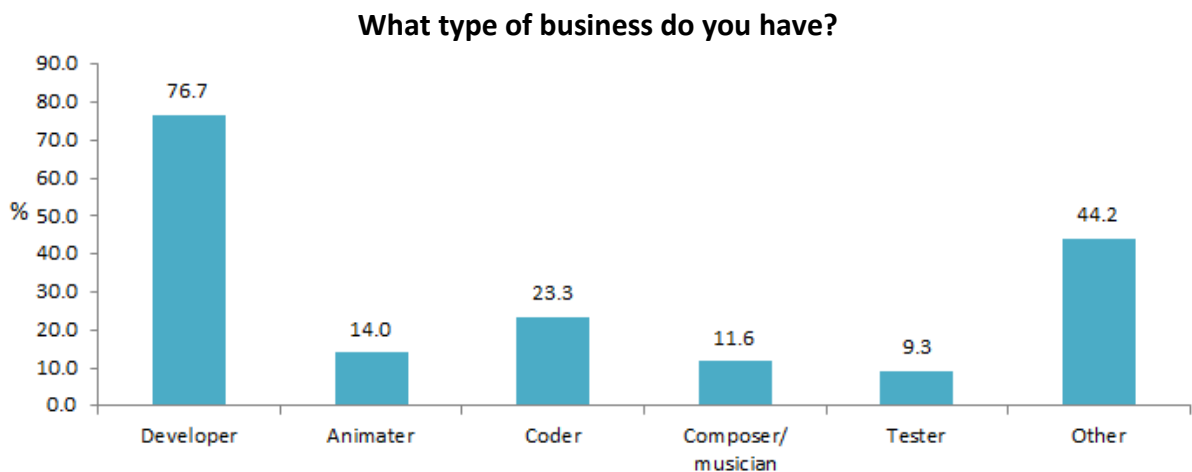
Of the 31 respondents that filled in the other part in the question, five indicated their business was artist/illustrator, four indicated that their business was publisher and two indicated that their business was VR developers. The other respondents' answers were:

- Video games consultancy
- CAIDJ-Games
- Sound Design / Game Audio Implementation

- Digital strategy/marketing
- Audio visual services and electrical services
- Games monetisation software, games financing, in-game advertising technology (multiple businesses)
- Councillor
- Game Development/Manufacture
- SaaS - Optimising IAP pricing
- Accountancy geared towards the games industry
- Cultural organisation
- Educator - Games Design & Art
- Game Designer
- I run video game events
- Dog walking
- Gaining community
- Esports
- Electronics
- Frames Animation Collective
- Government Department
- E-Commerce business (tabletop / RPG gaming)

Question 4 – What are your residential and business postcodes?

In total 69 respondents filled in their residential postcode, with 52 (75.4%) of them residing in the GU postal code area. 66 respondents filled in their business postcode, with 42 (63.6%) having businesses in the GU postal code area.

What are your residential and business postcodes?
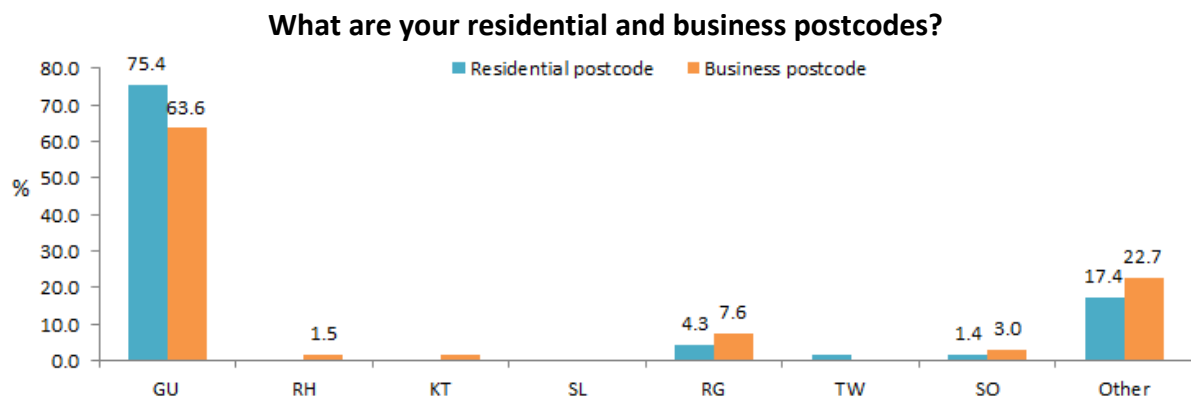
Question 6 – How many employees does your business have?

In total 69 respondents filled in this question. The two largest responses were, 31.9% (22 respondents) were running their business with just themselves and 23.2% (16 respondents) had larger business with 20 plus employees. A micro-business has 0-9 employees, 68.1% of the business have 10 or less employees.
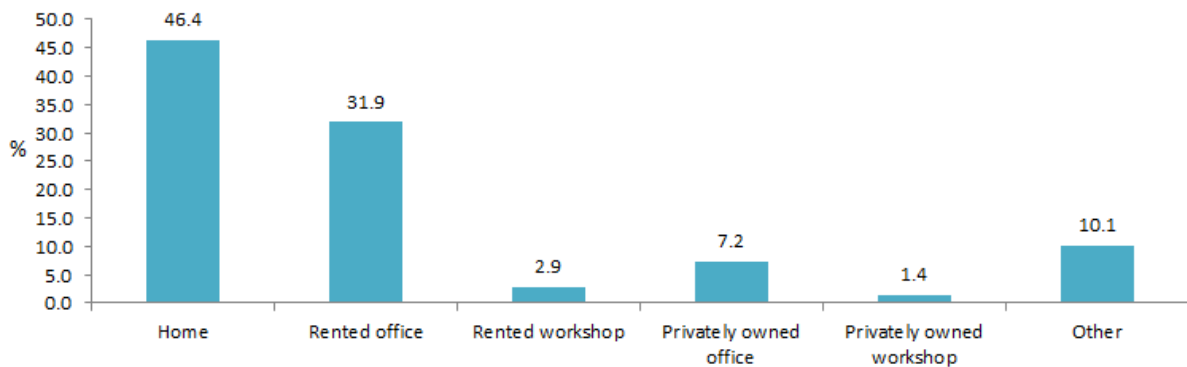
How many employees does your business have?
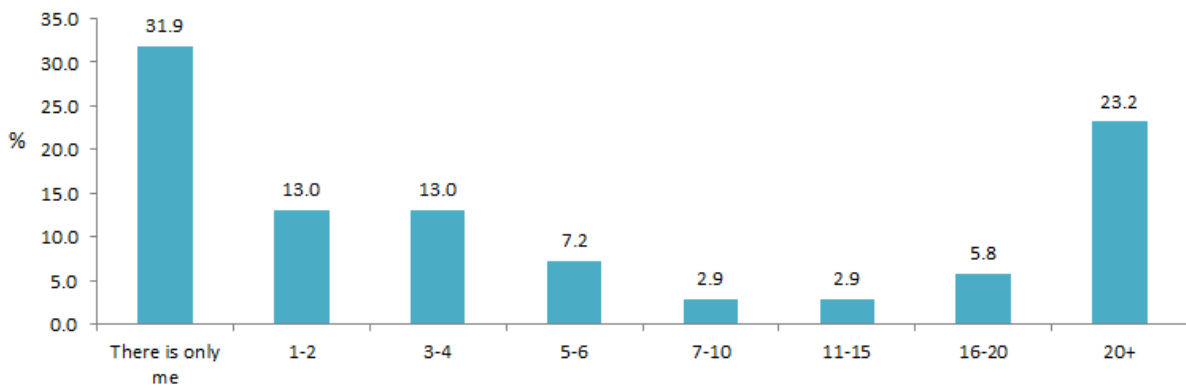
Question 7 – What type of space is your business currently based in?

In total 69 respondents filled in this question. The two largest responses were, 46.4% (32 respondents) run their businesses from home and 31.9% (22 respondents) run their business from a rented office.

**What type of space is your business currently based in?**

Seven respondents filled in the other part in the question, their responses were:

- Museum building
- Multiple sites
- I work in a company that has it's own Office
- Free Games Hub
- Different locations and remote workers
- Different locations and remote workers
- Home in Aldershot, rented office in Guildford

Question 8 - If you rent business accommodation, how much do you currently pay per month?

In total 48 respondents filled in this question. The two largest responses were, 31.3% (15 respondents) preferred not to say and 25.0% (12 respondents) indicated that they paid £0-£100 a month.

If you rent business accommodation, how much do you currently pay per month?
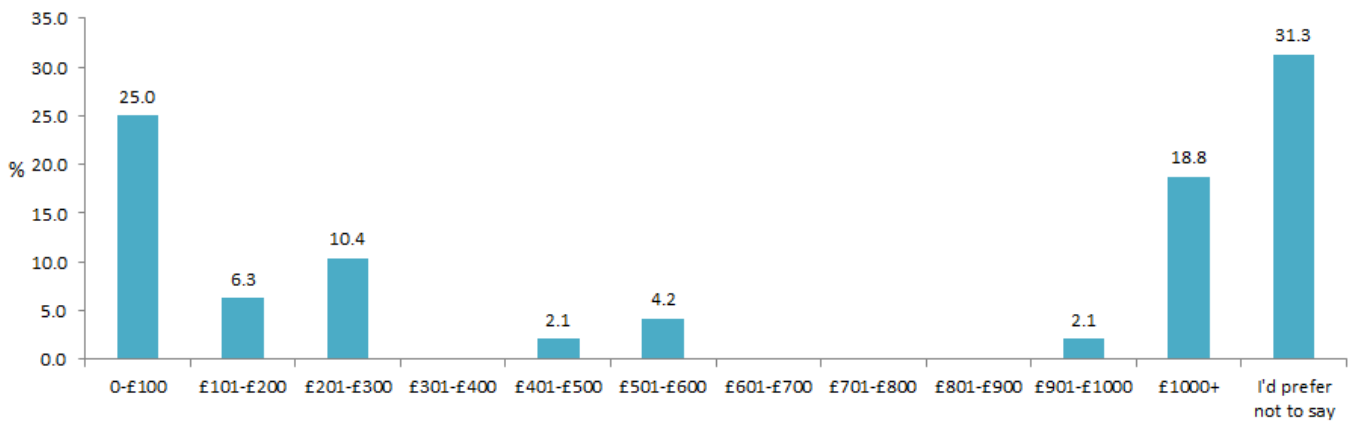
Question 9 - What facilities do you have access to in your current business location?

In total 66 respondents filled in this question. The top five facilities respondents currently had access to are kitchen facilities (74.2% 49 respondents), access 24/7 (63.6% 42 respondents), access week days (53.0% 35 respondents), access week ends (48.5% 32 respondents) and on-site parking (45.5% 30 respondents).

What facilities do you have access to in your current business location?
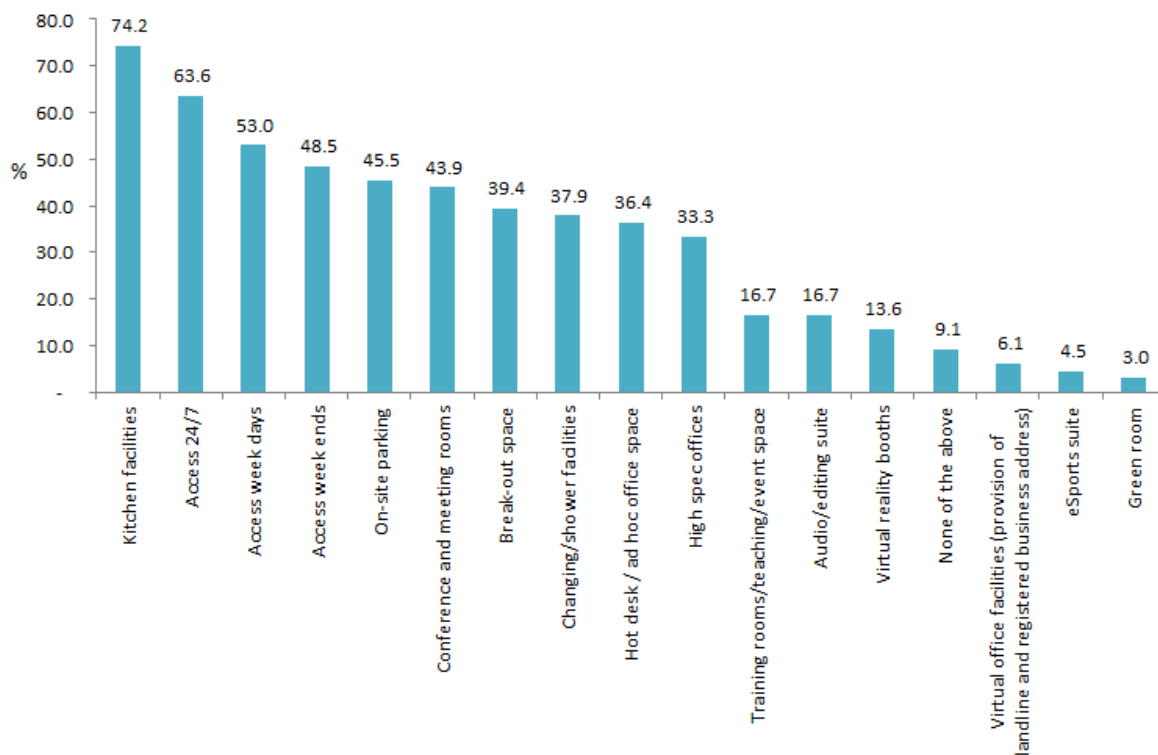
Section two – Your requirements

Question 10 - What type of facilities should be provided at the Hub?

In total 58 respondents filled in this question. The top five facilities respondent would like to see at the Hub are hot desk / ad hoc office space (72.4% 42 respondents), conference and meeting rooms (72.4% 42 respondents), kitchen facilities (62.1% 36 respondents), on-site parking (58.6% 34 respondents) and access 24/7 (56.9% 33 respondents).

**What type of facilities should be provided at the Hub?**
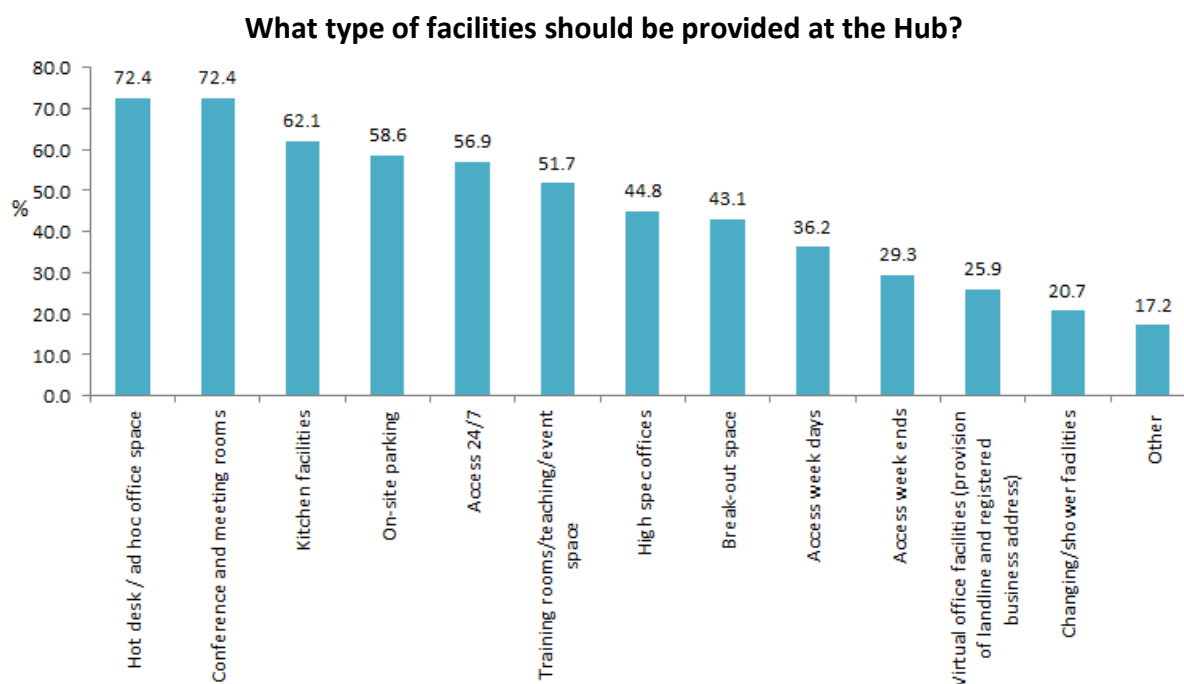
Ten respondents filled in the other part of the question, their responses were:

- Really good Internet access
- Private ideally sound proofed booths/Pods for private conference / telephone calls
- The facility to be configured for trade/public events
- Super fast Internet
- All of these things are equally important
- None
- 24/7 access would be good, but not essential.
- Cleaning
- Space for private phone calls
- User Test room. Ability to view/record players testing a game with 1 way glass or video/audio recording. Great for testing how people play a game when left to their own devices.

Question 11 - We are interested in creating a world class facility to support the game development community including dual purpose facilities which could offer the following services to make the venue more attractive

In total 55 respondents filled in this question and the most popular option was virtual reality booths (63.6% 35 respondents), followed by a green room (61.8% 34 respondents), followed by an audio/editing suite (58.2% 32 respondents). The least popular was an eSports suite (25.5% 14 respondents).

**Which service could make the venue more attractive?**
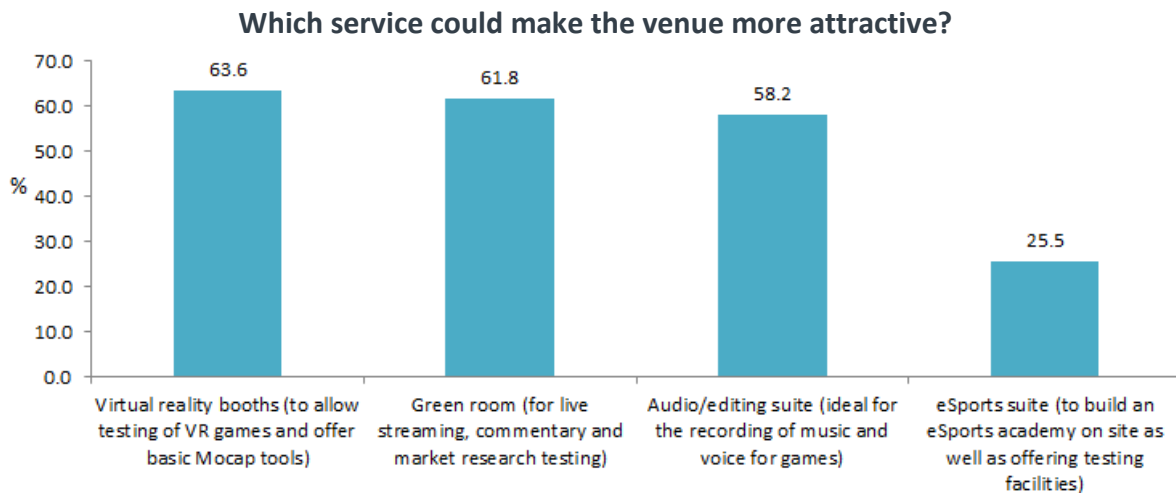
Question 12 - If you were interested in being based at the new Hub, which facilities would you be most likely to use and how much would you be willing to pay per month?

In total 41 respondents filled in the question relating to ad hoc hot desk and the median answer was £50-£100 per month. 42 respondents filled in the question relating to dedicated desk and the median answer was £101-£150 per month. 36 respondents filled in the question relating to dedicated desk and the median answer was £151-£200 per month. 47 respondents filled in the question relating to ad hoc office and the median answer was £201-£250 per month. The chart below shows the range of responses for each type of work space.

Number of respondents willing to pay for each type of work space
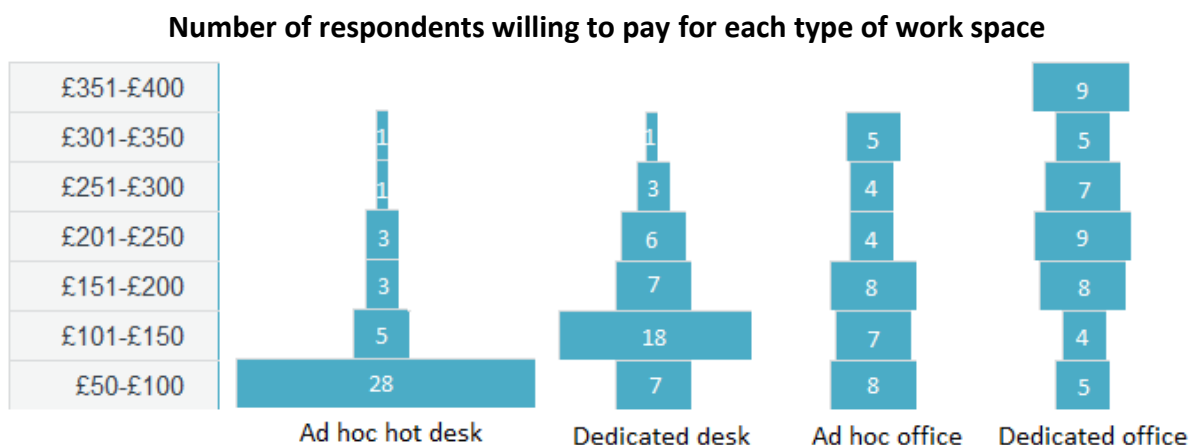
Question 13 - In addition to work space, what other services do you think you would benefit from?

In total 56 respondents filled in this question. The two largest responses were, 58.9% (33 respondents) for access to networks and development partners and 50.0% (28 respondents) for advice about funding and finance.

In addition to work space, what other services do you think you would benefit from?
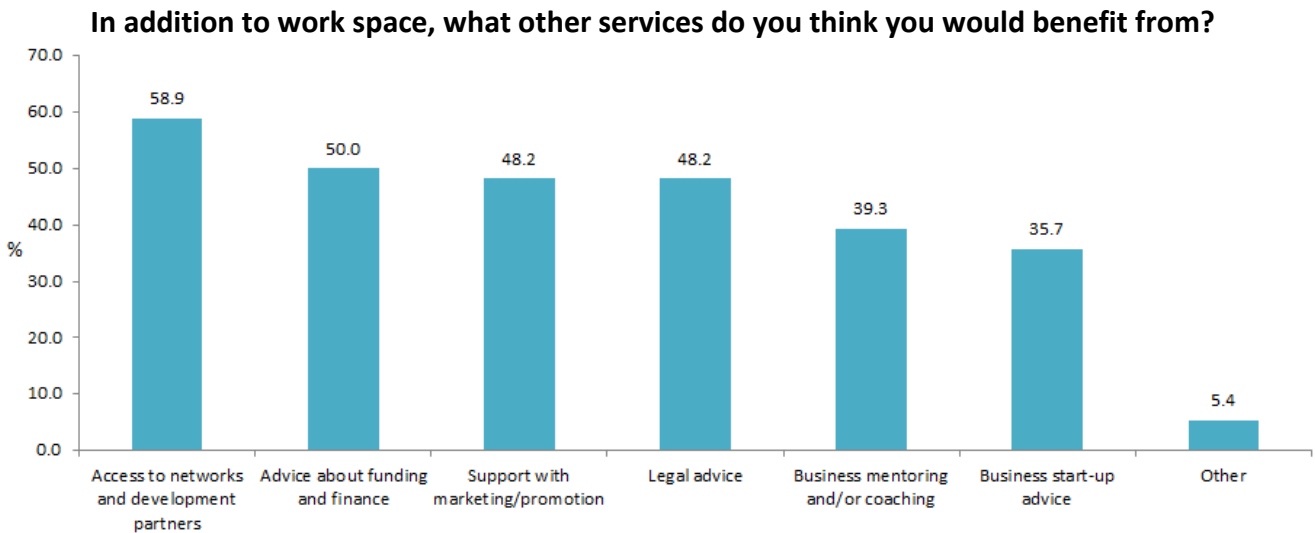

Three respondents filled in the other part of the question, their responses were:

- Work experience placements
- Business analysis
- Manufacturing and Production

Question 14 - If a new Games Hub was developed in Aldershot town centre and it met your business needs in terms of cost and facilities/services provided, how likely would you be to use it?

In total 58 respondents filled in this question 70.7% (41 respondents) indicated that they were very likely or likely to use the Games Hub, 29% (17 respondents) indicated that they were unlikely or not at all likely to use the Games Hub.

**How likely are you to use the Games Hub?**
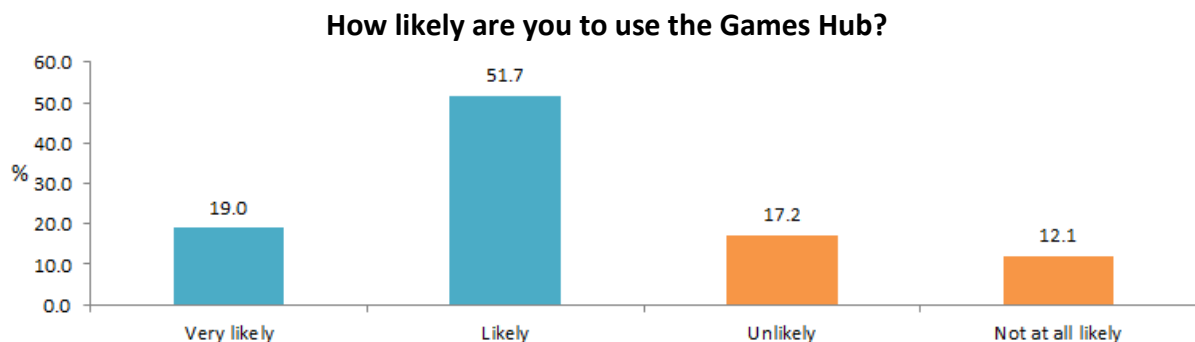
22 respondents indicated why they were unlikely or not at all likely to use the Games Hub, the main themes of the comments were:

- The respondent is currently set up/works elsewhere (mentioned 10 times)
- The respondents aren't sure Aldershot is the right place for the Games Hub (mentioned 4 times)

Question 15 - If you answered very likely or likely to the above questions, how often might you use the Hub?

In total 39 respondents filled in this question. The largest response was for full-time, 41.0% (16 respondents) indicated that they would use the Games Hub full-time.
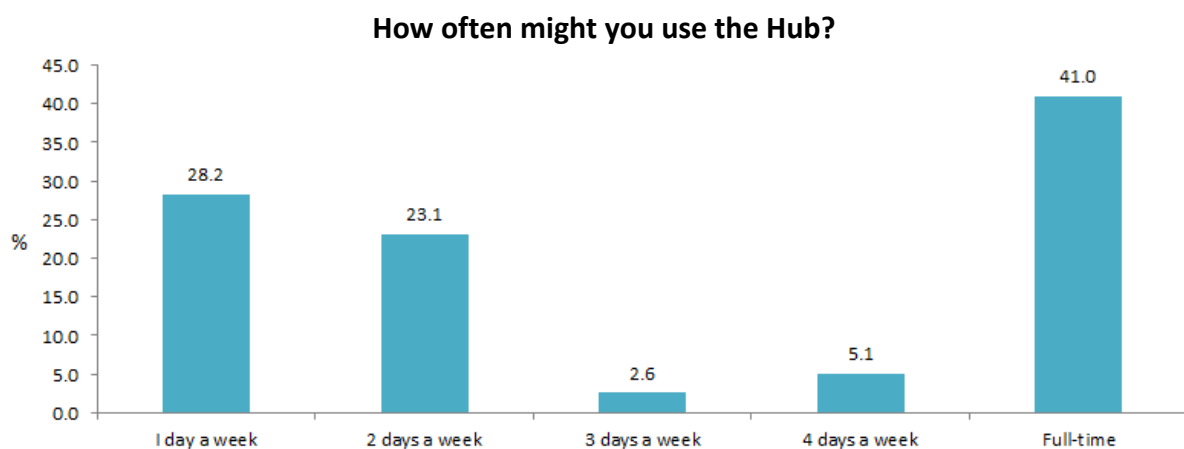
How often might you use the Hub?

Question 16 - Do you have any other comments/suggestions about the provision of a Gaming Hub in Aldershot?

In total 34 respondents filled in this question. It was difficult to place the comments into themes the full responses can be seen in Appendix B.

Question 17 - **If you are interested in joining the Hub (should it be developed), and are happy for us to contact you, please give us your contact details in the box below.**

In total 34 respondents left their contact details.

Appendix A – copy of the survey

RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

Aldershot Games Hub Survey

Introduction

Rushmoor Borough Council believes there is a significant community of games developers and associated specialists working in, and around, Aldershot. The council wants to support this community and is considering providing a specialist "Games Hub" to help.

Before we explore this idea further, we want to gauge demand for it and make sure it provides what future users say they want.

Our aim is for the Games Hub to provide a collaborative, shared workspace in Aldershot town centre with excellent broadband connectivity, innovative and locally-unique Mobile Edge Computing (MEC) services developed in partnership with the 5G Innovation Centre in Guildford that game developers can use for future marketing and sales activity.

This will enable local small games-based and games-related businesses to undertake their existing product development more quickly and to be "several steps ahead of the competition" when it comes to future 5G roll-out potential. The Aldershot Games Hub would have access to the Innovation Centre's 5G test bed facility, making this a unique facility!

We want to hear what you think - the more positive responses we get, the more likely the Games Hub is to happen.

The closing date for the this survey is 4th March 2018.

Data protection notice: We will only use the information you give us to improve our services and provide you with information in future, if you have said you are happy for us to contact you.

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Aldershot Games Hub Survey

About you and your business

1. Your name

2. Your business name

3. Is your business full-time or part-time?

○ Full-time ○ Part-time

4. What type of business do you have? (tick all that apply)

☐ Developer

☐ Animator

☐ Coder

☐ Composer/musician

☐ Tester

Other (please specify)

5. What are your residential and business postcodes?

	GU	RH	KT	SL	RG	TW	SO	Other
Residential postcode	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Business postcode	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. How many employees does your business have?

○ There is only me

○ 1-2

○ 3-4

○ 5-6

○ 7-10

○ 11-15

○ 16-20

○ 20+

7. What type of space is your business currently based in?

○ Home

○ Rented office

○ Rented workshop

○ Privately owned office

○ Privately owned workshop

○ Other (please specify)

[   ]

8. If you rent business accommodation, how much do you currently pay per month?

○ 0-£100

○ £101-£200

○ £201-£300

○ £301-£400

○ £401-£500

○ £501-£600

○ £601-£700

○ £701-£800

○ £801-£900

○ £901-£1000

○ £1000+

○ I'd prefer not to say

9. What facilities do you have access to in your current business location? (please tick all that apply)

☐ High spec offices

☐ Hot desk / ad hoc office space

☐ Training rooms/teaching/event space

☐ Conference and meeting rooms

☐ Break-out space

☐ Kitchen facilities

☐ Changing/shower facilities

☐ eSports suite

☐ Virtual reality booths

☐ Virtual office facilities (provision of landline and registered business address)

☐ Green room

☐ Audio/editing suite

☐ On-site parking

☐ Access week days

☐ Access week ends

☐ Access 24/7

☐ None of the above

Aldershot Games Hub Survey

Your requirements

The Hub would offer a mixture of flexible and short-term hot desking facilities, as well as short to long term office options. The Hub would be fully serviced and have an on-site management facility. High speed internet access would be provided and the Hub would be in a town centre location.

10. What type of facilities should be provided at the Hub? (please tick your top 4 requirements)

- [ ] High spec offices
- [ ] Hot desk / ad hoc office space
- [ ] Training rooms/teaching/event space
- [ ] Conference and meeting rooms
- [ ] Break-out space
- [ ] Kitchen facilities
- [ ] Changing/shower facilities
- [ ] Virtual office facilities (provision of landline and registered business address)
- [ ] On-site parking
- [ ] Access week days
- [ ] Access week ends
- [ ] Access 24/7
- [ ] Other (please specify)

[   ]

11. We are interested in creating a world class facility to support the game development community including dual purpose facilities which could offer the following services to make the venue more attractive. (Please tick the two options you feel would be most beneficial)

☐ eSports suite (to build an eSports academy on site as well as offering testing facilities) *

☐ Green room (for live streaming, commentary and market research testing) *

☐ Virtual reality booths (to allow testing of VR games and offer basic Mocap tools) *

☐ Audio/editing suite (ideal for the recording of music and voice for games) *

*There may be an additional cost for facilities above office/desk rent

12. If you were interested in being based at the new Hub, which facilities would you be most likely to use and how much would you be willing to pay per month? (please tick all that apply)

	Ad hoc hot desk	Dedicated desk	Ad hoc office	Dedicated office
£50-£100	☐	☐	☐	☐
£101-£150	☐	☐	☐	☐
£151-£200	☐	☐	☐	☐
£201-£250	☐	☐	☐	☐
£251-£300	☐	☐	☐	☐
£301-£350	☐	☐	☐	☐
£351-£400	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. In addition to work space, what other services do you think you would benefit from? (please tick your top two preferences)

☐ Business start-up advice

☐ Advice about funding and finance

☐ Business mentoring and/or coaching

☐ Support with marketing/promotion

☐ Access to networks and development partners

☐ Legal advice

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

14. If a new Games Hub was developed in Aldershot town centre and it met your business needs in terms of cost and facilities/services provided, how likely would you be to use it?

◯ Very likely

◯ Likely

◯ Unlikely (please tell us why)

◯ Not at all likely (please tell us why)

Please tell us why you are unlikely or not at all likely to use a Games Hub in Aldershot town centre.

[ ]

15. If you answered very likely or likely to the above questions, how often might you use the Hub?

◯ 1 day a week

◯ 2 days a week

◯ 3 days a week

◯ 4 days a week

◯ Full-time

16. Do you have any other comments/suggestions about the provision of a Gaming Hub in Aldershot?

[ ]

17. If you are interested in joining the Hub (should it be developed), and are happy for us to contact you, please give us your contact details in the box below.

[ ]

18. Is there any specific help or advice you/your business would benefit from now?

[ ]

Thank you

19. Thank you for completing this survey. All completed surveys can be entered into a prize draw to win a £250 gift card. The winning entry will be picked in the week beginning 5 March and we will notify the winner by phone or email.

Please fill in the box below with your phone number or email address is you wish to be included in the prize draw.

Data protection notice: We will only use the information you give us to improve our services and provide you with information in future, if you have said you are happy for us to contact you.

Appendix B – responses to question 16 (Do you have any other comments/suggestions about the provision of a Gaming Hub in Aldershot?)

- Your proposals are very software focused. Games could require some hardware development. Space for this should/could be included.
- With games hub Guildford close by but really pricey this is a great idea. You'll attract existing businesses and new ones too.
- While I don't think it's something that I personally need at the moment, it sounds like it could be a great service to provide in the area.
- When developing games it might be difficult to work in-office as the computers would need high-end graphics cards, cpu, double monitor setup etc for creating graphics. I wouldn't use a laptop as the screen size would be too small.
- We'd love to see one in Portsmouth.
- We would be interested in a local facility for green-screen, VR focus testing, and maybe 5.1 audio mastering/testing as well. I could imagine us using these a couple of times a month.
- We run a co-working space in leamington and it has led to a sense of community which has led onto people finding work, companies setting up in the area and the location becoming well known as a game making hub.
- Transport links will be key to success here both into/out of london and surrounding areas.   In my experience, running genuinely useful events for the audience (i.e. not sponsored sales pitches) is the best way to raise awareness.
- This seems like a 'no-brainer' initiative, in the sense that the location is perfect (near Guildford which has plentiful games companies), with easy access down the Hog's Back. In addition, there's Testology in the town centre, which could be used as a resource in collaboration with studios which set up in the town also. Small, private, office spaces would be great for our team. Communal areas feel like a nice idea, as that would allow networking and socialising with other like minded people.
- This proposal provides a fantastic and long-awaited opportunity for Aldershot to capitalise on the immersive technology sector burgeoning on its doorstep.
- This is a fantastic proposal and I feel that it could be the start of allowing the gaming sector to grow in Aldershot area and allow an emulation of the Guildford gaming sector.
- This concept sounds like Rocketdesk in Guildford. They provide a lot of the things youare aiming to provide and have quite a few people working with them already. Perhaps you should get in touch and support them.
- The recording studio idea is nice, but in terms of practicality and usefulness it'd be more beneficial to have a couple of edit suites (i.e. separate rooms) intended for audio professionals to work out of with access to a centralised, bookable recording space. Audio folks need to listen on speakers which is impractical for a shared office space

(e.g. the noise, cables everywhere).

- Sounds exciting!
- See comments in 14 - I would welcome the chance for work experience placements so that our claimants interested in this type of career could gain experience of the industry plus access to employers in the labour market
- Privacy is important to game development, especially when dealing with NDAs and devkits, having a private locked office is vital.
- No
- Need a to be joined up effort to improve the attractiveness of the centre in general
- Make it a tech hub, or even a general creative hub. The more creative people together, the better results that come out of it. Also provides excellent networking opportunities for all kinds of artists and developers.
- Lots of bandwidth
- It's a great idea.
- It's a great idea (even though my business is very much on the periphery of this field) - however, Rushmoor BC will need to demonstrate to potential users of the Hub why Aldershot is preferable to Guildford, where there is already a strong games development history. I feel the Hub would need support and regular promotion for a reasonable time before it started to generate a return on the investment (still worth doing, though !)   On a slightly different tack, for "real world" gaming (board games, wargames, figure manufacture etc) there is already quite a bit of activity within a 30-mile or so radius; with enough support and some innovative outreach, it might be possible to develop a light manufacturing / event / retail hub similar to the "Lead Belt" centred around Games Workshop's factory in Notingham.
- I'm quite happy in Rocketdesk currently but the biggest issue is that once the game studios grow to 5 + people they get their own studio and the culture changes back to a more corporate feeling. The desk cost is too high for a dedicated desk and i'd like to have a dedicated office or ad-hoc office to get some space to concentrate or collaborate on a project with others temporarily. If I didn't move from Rocketdesk I would still really need mentorship and and support and would like to see this offered by yourselves.
- If there was an audio suite I think it would need to be quite high spec and have a lot of features that smaller home studios do not have. For example 5.1 + 7.1 mixing suites.
- I would pay to use an audio suite/studio for recording VO or instruments etc, but not necessarily a desk unless it was in an isolated room :)
- I think this would be a great idea and would really attract talent to the area. Personally I'd rename it 'Aldershot Games & New Media Hub' because it will appeal to a wider audience.

- I think a more general approach would be better. Target tech businesses in general and not just games. So having space and services for any tech business would broaden your appeal. For example I am developing a Web application but I'd also like to build and launch a game. I don't think excluding certain developers would be good for the cause. By all means have an editing suite which is broad in appeal but perhaps market it as a tech hub with some gaming specific services. If you can get some sponsorship from the gaming firms in Guildford all the better but don't let them run the show, they will ultimately benefit from home grown talent. Some sort of internship scheme would be good, the hub could try and get all the local tech firms to advertise or even create internships, marketed through the hub. And make sure you have enough plug sockets.
- Hub support, outreach and community management will be key requirements.
- High speed internet, upload and download needed. Ability to work in peace when needed, and also some work will be covered by NDAs most likely, so ability to shield yourself from others (cubicles?) would be nice.
- Does it have support from the trade and successful games developers?
- Awesome. It's all about community. Even if just a drop-in community member or working at a hub for a couple of days a week, it's about meeting the right people and getting involved.
- Although we aren't probably the exact company you were looking to fill this in, we would be very interested in finding out more about your plans to see if there is any link with what we provide in the local area through our cultural Engagement work, both via West End Arts Centre and Aldershot Military Museum. We are really keen to work more in the local community with local businesses, creative industries and participants so very keen to find out more.
- Aldershot has the potential to gain a lot of Indy and freelance work from the local area - with good links by rail to London (via guildford or Ascot) - I would suggest building links with the local university and Farnborough colleges - this worked in Bournemouth and would suggest it would work very very well here - My company for one will be happy to join this.
- Aldershot doesn't seem to me to be a games hub. Other than Testology (who are just a service provider). I'm unaware of any developers in the area. Guildford would make more sense on many levels