1. Summary & Purpose

The former Ladywell Leisure Centre building was closed in June 2013, and the Leisure services previously provided there transferred across to the new Glass Mill facility (as agreed by Mayor & Cabinet in 2007). Demolition of the former Leisure Centre building was subsequently approved by Mayor & Cabinet, and Officers were instructed to commission further feasibility studies to investigate future development options for the broader site (hereafter referred to as the ‘Lewisham Central Opportunity Site’). A contract award report for the main demolition works was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel on 26 November 2013, and works duly commenced on 2 December 2013. This report sets out the responses to the queries raised at the Business Panel meeting in November last year, and provides an update on the second phase of the project.

2. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Mayor note the responses to the Business Panel’s queries set out in this report.

3. Policy context

3.1. The Lewisham Central Opportunity site was designated for ‘a mix of uses including retail…and housing’ in the Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan (Sept 2012), which will form part of the Local Planning Authority’s Local Development Framework. The plan now been ‘found sound’ by the Planning Inspectorate, and is due to be considered for adoption by Full Council at the end of February this year.

3.2. Development of the site in line with this designation would contribute towards the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities of ‘Clean, Green and Liveable’ and ‘Dynamic and Prosperous’, and the Council’s corporate priorities of ‘Strengthening the Local Economy and ‘Decent Homes for All’.
4. **Background and update**

4.1. The Lewisham Central Opportunity site is located in the southernmost part of Lewisham town centre, on the eastern edge of Ladywell town centre. The site also incorporates a public car park behind the main building, and sits within Lewisham Central Ward.

4.2. In June 2013, the new Glass Mill Leisure Centre in Lewisham town centre opened and the former Ladywell Leisure Centre closed. A decision was taken to demolish the existing building in order to optimise the development potential of the site, and Officers were instructed to undertake feasibility studies to investigate potential future development options.

4.3. The demolition contract was awarded in November 2013, and works duly commenced in December. Works will be completed and the site handed back to the Authority in May this year.

4.4. Given the prominence and location of the site and the adjacency of additional Authority-owned land, it is of paramount importance that any future development is carefully considered in the context of other nearby developments and the Authority’s ‘place-shaping’ aspirations for the area. Options are therefore being reviewed corporately and Officers are currently preparing to tender a master-planning feasibility study for the area, with results expected in early Summer this year. The proposals will be developed in line with the site’s designation as a mixed use development (retail and housing) in the Lewisham town centre local plan (2012), as noted above.

5. **Response to Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel queries**

The points raised by Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel in November 2013 are listed below, along with the responses:

i. *Business Panel requests that the Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration ensures that officers develop a communications plan in conjunction with the Planning department to inform the community about the plans for the redevelopment of the former Ladywell Leisure Centre site after the demolition of the centre.*

The Lewisham Central Opportunity site is identified in the Lewisham town centre local plan as one of the sites that are ‘key to the development of Lewisham town centre’. This plan was the result of extensive consultation, and is available on the Lewisham corporate website. As noted above, the plan also designates the site for ‘a mix of uses including retail...and housing’.

Since the Mayor & Cabinet meeting in June 2013, Officers have attended a number of meetings to update stakeholders about the proposals, including:

- Sustainable Development Select Committee – 10th September 2013
- Lewisham Central Local Assembly – 1st October 2013
Several updates have also been posted on the Regeneration pages of the Council’s website, as events have progressed over the last 6 months. The latest of these can be found here: http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/regeneration/lewishamtowncentre/Pages/Lewisham-Central-opportunity-site.aspx

As the proposals for the future development of the site progress, key stakeholders will be informed via the following communication channels:

- Updates on the Council website
- Press releases to local media, e.g. newspapers, bloggers, social media etc.
- Direct mail-outs and briefings
- Information/consultation drop-in events

ii. The Panel further requested that a feasibility study should be progressed as soon as possible.

The scope and timescales for any future feasibility work are being considered as part of a broader corporate development programme. Officers are currently undertaking a wide-ranging review of land and property ownership in the area, and are also preparing to tender for a master-planning feasibility exercise which will test the viability of a range of different options. The scope of this exercise has been developed jointly alongside the Local Planning Authority, the Strategic Housing Service and the Community Services Directorate.

Once all relevant documentation is in place the initial master-planning exercise will be tendered, and timescales for the outcome of this study will depend on the results of the tendering process; however, Officers hope to receive initial proposals by early Summer this year. Members will be updated with the development programme for this second phase of the project as it progresses.

6. Financial implications

The budget for this project, allocated in June 2013 as part of the Mayor & Cabinet report, is currently being monitored and any changes will be reported back to members as appropriate. The financial implications of any future development proposal will be a key factor in deciding the most appropriate option for the site.
7. **Legal implications**

Development of the site will be carried out in line with the Local Planning Authority’s designation for the site, the Authority's Contract Procedure Rules, and the consents required for asset disposal. The Authority's Legal Services division will be closely involved in the process, and will advise on the legal implications of pursuing any potential development option on the site.

8. **Crime and disorder implications**

Due consideration will be given to crime and disorder implications throughout the project, both in terms of the planning and design for future development, and during the works themselves.

9. **Equalities implications**

The key equalities implication at this stage of the project relates to the Lewisham Opportunity Pre-School located at the back of the site. The demolition methodology has been screened as part of the planning process to ensure that it addresses the sensitivity of these users, and the onsite Project Team regularly liaise with the Head Teacher. Future development proposals for the site will need to comply with the Equality Act 2010, particularly in relation to accessibility.

10. **Environmental implications**

Officers have worked closely with environmental specialists and the Local Planning Authority to ensure that demolition of the existing building is properly screened, and that environmental concerns (such as dust and noise control, traffic impact, removal of remaining asbestos and implications for the nearby nursery) have been considered. The environmental impact of any future development proposals will be given due consideration as part of the future proposals.

11. **Conclusion**

Based on information contained within this report, the Mayor is advised to note the update provided in this report and direct any further questions to Officers.

**Background documents and originator**

- Lewisham town centre local plan (2012)
- Report Back on Matter Raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel: 4th December 2013

If there are any queries on this report please contact Joe Gillam, Project Manager, 020 8314 7680