

MINUTES OF THE WORKSPACES TASK & FINISH GROUP

Wednesday, 5 July 2023 at 6.00pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Liam Shrivastava (Chair), Billy Harding, Mark Ingleby and Aliya Sheikh

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972.

It was MOVED, SECONDED and AGREED that Cllr Liam Shrivastava be appointed as the Chair for this meeting in the absence of Cllr Rudi Schmidt.

1. Minutes of the last meeting held on 16 November 2022

1.1. RESOLVED: that the minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a true record.

2. Declarations of interest

2.1. Councillor Mark Ingleby declared a personal interest in item 3 as he was a member of the Musicians' Union.

3. Draft Final Report

The Task and Finish Group members discussed their draft final report. The following key points were noted:

- 3.1. It was discussed that the Task and Finish Group's final report should recognise and promote the flexibility component of workspaces as it was as important as affordability.
- 3.2. The revamping of Lewisham Library provided the Council with a great opportunity to increase its provision of affordable and flexible workspaces. This library was centrally located and had great transport links to other parts of the borough. This meant people from all over the borough could benefit from the facilities in this library.
In light of this, Councillor Aliya Sheikh proposed that an additional recommendation be added to the Group's final report that focused on optimising the provision of affordable and flexible workspaces in Lewisham Library that could cater to a diverse range of age groups, incorporating flexible workspaces for adults and informal study areas for young people. This recommendation would ask the Council to consider the Group's findings while planning the transformation of Lewisham Library, ensuring the expansion of workspaces to meet the community's needs.
- 3.3. It was hoped that this recommendation around Lewisham Library was something that could be implemented quickly and therefore have an immediate positive impact on the provision of flexible and affordable workspaces in the borough.
- 3.4. It was agreed that under the 'Key Findings' section of the draft report, another point would be added after point 4.54 to reflect that Councillor Aliya Sheikh had visited Lewisham Library on multiple occasions and had participated in various focus groups and user consultation sessions around the revamping of the library. A

photograph of Councillor Aliya Sheikh at the Lewisham Library would also be included in the final report.

- 3.5. A member of the Group mentioned that spaces used by the local community for various purposes such as churches, libraries and community centres had great footfall and exploring the possibility of providing workspaces in underused areas of these community spaces could lead to the formation of 'cultural hubs'. For example, Catford Mews was one such multi-purpose and flexible space that was a cinema and a social space that also provided residents with free wi-fi so that they could work from there.
- 3.6. The Group agreed that workspaces generated investment and attracted creatives and businesses, but it was important that all the residents of Lewisham felt that these spaces were for them as well. It was important that all workspaces were inclusive and accessible to all.
- 3.7. A member of the Group stated that it was a well written and clear report with a strong set of recommendations. It dovetailed nicely with the Council's upcoming Affordable Workspace Strategy.
- 3.8. Provision of music venues and rehearsal spaces for musicians was also briefly discussed by the Group. Workspaces mentioned in the report cover a broad range of spaces which included spaces for music rehearsals. The Group was hopeful that the implementation of its recommendations would help increase the provision of music rehearsal spaces as well. Currently, Lewisham had the Music Room on New Cross Road which provided rehearsal studios and Sister Midnight, a community-owned music venue that was due to open soon would also be providing music practice spaces upstairs.
- 3.9. Under the 'Key Findings' section of the draft report, point 4.47 mentioned that the Group hoped that the Council would build upon the dialogue initiated by the Group with the Musicians' Union to inform the implementation of its cultural strategy. A few members of the Task and Finish Group had a discussion with national officers from the Musicians' Union and hoped that the Council would continue this dialogue with Musicians' Union members from South London. Councillor Mark Ingleby had also spoken with the London Secretary of Musicians' Union about progressing this dialogue.
- 3.10. It was discussed that following consideration of the report by the Mayor and Cabinet, one way forward could be to share a questionnaire with Musicians' Union members to ask if they were aware of or had any suggestions for spaces that they thought could work as live music performing venues or music rehearsal spaces.
- 3.11. Under the 'Key Findings' section of the draft report, point 4.53 mentioned the Lewington centre managed by L&Q in the north of the borough that was not being utilised to its full potential and had the potential to provide workspaces. It was discussed that when the Group analysed the Council's asset register, it had found more potential spaces that were unused or being underused such as the space in Northover. A member of the Group enquired whether the list of those assets could be shared with the Task and Finish Group. Members were informed that the list of assets identified by the Group had been shared with the Council's Estates team who was currently reviewing them to establish the current status of each of the assets on the list. Once that review was finished, the list of assets would be shared with the members of the Group.
- 3.12. It was also discussed that as part of the Affordable Workspace Provider survey, some workspace providers had suggested a few spaces across the borough that they thought were underused or unused. This list would also be shared with members of this Group and the Council's Estates team.

- 3.13. The Group praised recommendation 5.4 about the Overview and Scrutiny Committee having asset management on its agenda for in-depth scrutiny.
- 3.14. A member of the Group mentioned that along with the mention of the GLA's Cultural Infrastructure Map, the report also needed to focus on a local resource that listed workspaces and other community spaces specifically in Lewisham. The Group was informed that SHAPES Lewisham website held a directory of workspaces and other community spaces in the borough and that this was mentioned in the draft report at point 4.37.
- 3.15. Recommendation 5.11 in the draft report referred to SHAPES Lewisham and recommended that the Council should update the SHAPES Lewisham website to correctly display all the workspaces in the borough and also look into improving its accessibility. It was discussed that this recommendation should also mention that the Council could consider the possibility of incorporating a map of workspaces on the Lewisham Council website similar to what Brent Council had done. This would provide a user-friendly resource for individuals seeking information on affordable workspaces in Lewisham.

RESOLVED: That

- the report and recommendations be agreed subject to the inclusion of additional comments and the recommendation put forward at the meeting:
“The transformation of Lewisham Library offers the Council a golden opportunity to optimise the provision of affordable workspaces and promote the idea of flexible workspaces. The revamped space could cater to a diverse range of age groups, incorporating flexible workspaces for adults and informal study areas for young people. In light of this, the Task and Finish Group recommends that the Council consider the Group's findings while planning the transformation of Lewisham Library, ensuring the expansion of workspaces to meet the community's needs.”

The meeting ended at 6.37 pm.

Chair:

Date:
