

Overview and Scrutiny



Workspaces Task and Finish Group Agenda

Wednesday, 5 July 2023

6.00 pm,

Civic Suite

Lewisham Town Hall

London SE6 4RU

For more information contact: Nidhi Patil (nidhi.patil@lewisham.gov.uk)

This meeting is an open meeting and all items on the agenda may be audio recorded and/or filmed.

Part 1

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Workspaces Task and Finish Group Members

Members of the committee, listed below, are summoned to attend the meeting to be held on Wednesday, 5 July 2023.

Jeremy Chambers, Monitoring Officer
Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Members Councillor Rudi Schmidt (Chair) Councillor Billy Harding Councillor Mark Ingleby Councillor Aliya Sheikh Councillor Liam Shrivastava	
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MINUTES OF THE WORKSPACES TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Wednesday, 16 November 2022 at 6.00 pm

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

ALSO PRESENT: Patrick Dubeck (Director of Inclusive Regeneration), Joe Lee (Small Business and Enterprise Officer), Nidhi Patil (Scrutiny Manager) and Katie Wood (Scrutiny Manager)

1 Election of Chair

1.1 RESOLVED:

That Councillor Rudi Schmidt be elected Chair of the Task and Finish Group (TFG).

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1 RESOLVED:

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

3 Maximising Creative and Community Workspaces in Lewisham - TFG Review Scope

3.1 Katie Wood, Scrutiny Manager introduced the report to the Committee and highlighted that the scope included two main workstreams – the affordable workspace stream and the live music strategy stream. Section 5 highlighted the first iteration of expected outcomes, but the scope did not have to be static and as the TFG investigated the issues during the discovery phase of the review, these could be amended. Following the discussion and presentation received on item 4 on Affordable Workspaces Strategy, the Committee had mentioned a number of additional areas of focus and were asked to think carefully about the time and capacity of Members and Officers and to prioritise work on areas where they felt they would most add value. The additional areas of focus mentioned were:

- To include a focus on spaces for young people as part of the review including considering the role of libraries in providing spaces for young people to study.
- To add information and discussion on inequalities and accessibility in the cultural sector and ensure equalities and inclusion was a strong focus of both the TFG and the Affordable Workspaces Strategy.
- For Councillor Ingleby to provide details of work previously carried out by himself and colleagues to be included in the evidence considered as part of the discovery phase of the review.

3.3 The following additional key points were made during the discussion:

- A member of the TFG mentioned reviewing the asset register as part of the review and possibly sending a questionnaire to all members of the Council asking them to let the TFG know if they knew any areas in their ward that might be suitable for workspaces. The TFG were informed that reviewing the asset register would be a very big piece of work and they should carefully consider whether it was the best use of time and be clear what outcomes they would hope to achieve.
- Regarding the Live Music Strategy, it was suggested that the TFG could ask the Musicians Union if it could survey members in the borough.
- A member of the TFG suggested that consideration of remote workers' needs could form part of the review.
- As part of the High Streets survey, the Council tracked empty commercial properties in high streets.

3.4 Councillor Schmidt highlighted the proposals for the Affordable Workspace Strategy working in partnership with the TFG listed in the presentation at item 4. Some of these were already included in the scope of the review. The proposals included:

- Engagement session with PRD.
- Engagement with community groups.
- Attending the next Affordable Workspace Forum (Dec 2022)
- Scrutinising and feeding into the Draft of the Affordable Workspace Strategy and Action Plan (due Dec 2022)
- Involvement in the launch of the Strategy.

3.5 **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the scope be agreed subject to the addition of a focus on:
 - Inclusivity including looking at building in equality and diversity considerations to the TFG's review.
 - Considering spaces for mixed use in particular to include workspaces with study spaces as well as looking at the role of libraries in providing work spaces for young people.
- 2) That Councillor Ingleby provide the TFG with information on the work he had carried out with colleagues in the previous municipal year including looking at the asset register.

4 **Presentation on the Council's Work on Affordable Workspaces**

4.1 Joe Lee, Principal Business Development Officer, Economy and Partnership gave a presentation to the Committee - a copy of which is included in the agenda documentation. Patrick Dubeck, Director of Inclusive Regeneration was also in attendance. During the discussion the following key points were noted:

- Larger versions of the maps included in the presentation listing workspaces could be provided for the TFG. Further details on the workspaces listed on the map could also be provided.

- The definition of “affordable” had not been finalised in the Strategy and getting an agreed definition was a focus. Different providers suggesting different monetary amounts per square foot. The TFG were informed that previous definitions included a rate that was approximately 80% of market rate value. This would mean the exact amount would be different in each ward depending on location and a number of other factors that influenced market value.
- There was a lack of workspace in the South of the borough.
- A member of the TFG wanted to include consideration of workspaces for students and children as part of the TFGs remit and also wanted consideration of workspaces that included childcare options or spaces for children.
- The TFG were informed that Mother House Studios in Catford were delivering an innovative model of creative and affordable workspaces combined with childcare.
- Engagement with schools and young people could be part of the strategy and there was potential for it to be part of the social-value outcomes when using Council buildings. There could also be engagement with developers as part of the strategy to discuss focus on support for young people through the process. Officers could request that PRD look further into this to see what models had been successful in the past. This would also be added to the scope of the TFG.
- Size, building condition, light, location and price were all key components.
- The TFG would be able to meet PRD to engage with them and feed into the Strategy any results from community engagement that had taken place through the TFG. The TFG would also be able to attend the next Affordable Workspace Forum meeting.
- A member of the TFG commented that it was important that within the strategy there was a focus on making sure that through the providers and through the planning process there was an emphasis on ensuring the workspaces were of high quality and maintenance was kept up.
- A member of the Committee asked for details of the gap analysis in terms of what data was missing. The TFG heard that the mapping exercise was showing that other than in the creative sector, there was a lack of affordable workspaces in the borough for other sectors and a lack of longer-term leases for spaces.
- The 2017 Creative Digital Strategy was carried out as part of the bid for the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ).
- S106 funding can only be used where there was a specific policy calling for it a specific need was identified. The planning process was not usually so prescriptive as to be able to demand workspaces with childcare attached but some general discussions might be possible.
- A member of the TFG asked for clarity on what the Affordable Workspace Provider list would be used for. The TFG heard it would be a place where developers and the Council could look for providers who had been formally assessed as providing affordable space and who met additional requirements around socio-economic outputs. It would also help the Council engage with landlords who were considering converting to residential to give them details of organisations they could approach to consider continues workspace use. It would also help keep providers being held to a particular standard like a badge system of accreditation.
- Many of the affordable workspace providers were charities or social enterprises. The majority of those who were part of the Forum were culture focussed but some worked across a range such as Hatcham House. If the building was a Council Asset there was potential to ensure met any defined needs or gaps.

- The Strategy would likely be launched around February or March 2023 and the TFG could be involved with the launch process.
- A member of the TFG asked whether there was potential for the Council to own and deliver affordable workspaces themselves. The TFG heard that this was a specialist area and there would not be the knowledge or capacity to deliver this in house at this time and it was not clear what benefit there would be. If the assets were the Councils, then the tender process could be used to ensure it met agreed objectives.
- Councillor Ingleby would share work with the TFG that he had done previously on Council assets.
- PRD and Re-do would be interested in any examples of Council assets that could be used.
- A member of the TFG asked if there was scope to repurpose spaces within housing developments. The Group heard that where it was a new development, planning could specify community spaces if it was deemed there was a need. In terms of study space there were issues around safeguarding that needed to be considered. In existing developments through Lewisham Homes and through housing providers it could be possible to pursue discussions on the best use of existing community spaces.
- If Council assets were used as affordable workspaces it was important to recognise that the Council was essentially subsidising this activity by not achieving the full market value. Therefore, careful consideration of priorities was essential to justify any resulting reduction in income. There was a balance between monetary and social/economic value.
- Regarding empty commercial space, the TFG heard that the Council was currently working on having a closer relationship with estate agents and landlords to engage regarding meanwhile use opportunities.
- The Planning department was involved with engagement work with the local community and businesses looking at Article 4 direction for permitted development use to reduce commercial spaces being lost to housing.
- A member of the TFG commented that the Lewisham High Street Study carried out in 2021 found that 63% of business owners were black, Asian or from a minority ethnic group and therefore asked if the Affordable Workspaces Strategy would target a similarly diverse group and whether providers could be asked for data. The TFG heard that for Council-owned assets or where a Council grant had been supplied that data could be requested. For example, Set Studios in Lewisham had been provided with a grant and the Council was working with them to track the diversity around those using the spaces. Socio-economic background could also be tracked.
- Understanding more about the specific social-value targets and outcomes was important to ensure equalities built into the process.
- A member of the TFG commented that studies by Levelling Up in the Creative Industries had shown that the creative sector was one of the least accessible in the Country and asked if the Workspace Strategy could include addressing this inequality. In response the TFG heard that it would be possible to set objectives that would help to address some of the inequalities, in particular where it was a Council asset. It would not be possible to enforce this in the private sector but the Strategy itself could recognise the issues.
- There was currently no capacity within the Council to support private sector organisations develop diversity and inclusion strategies.
- The Council was working with PRD on what types of provision were needed. For example, there was a high demand for kitchen workspaces and for spaces for tech businesses.

- A member of the TFG asked if free access to the internet for young people could be requested as part of the tendering process. The TFG heard that where a Council asset was used, there could be a discussion on this. Some organisations were already developing schemes such as Cockpit Arts who were currently engaging with residents on providing a space with internet access.

4.2 **RESOLVED:**

That the information and findings from the presentation and discussion be used by the TFG as evidence for their review.

That larger version of the maps included in the presentation listing workspaces would be provided for the TFG including further details on the workspaces listed.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

Chair:

Date:

Agenda Item 2



Workspaces Task and Finish Group

Declarations of Interest

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Jeremy Chambers (Director of Law and Corporate Governance)

Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

1. Summary

1.1. Members must declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda. There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct:

- (1) Disclosable pecuniary interests
- (2) Other registerable interests
- (3) Non-registerable interests.

1.2. Further information on these is provided in the body of this report.

2. Recommendation

2.1. Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

3. Disclosable pecuniary interests

3.1 These are defined by regulation as:

- (a) Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person* for profit or gain
- (b) Sponsorship –payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union).
- (c) Undischarged contracts between a relevant person* (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works.
- (d) Beneficial interests in land in the borough.
- (e) Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more.
- (f) Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member’s knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person* is a partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest.
- (g) Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:
 - (a) that body to the member’s knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough; and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person* has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class.

*A relevant person is the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner.

4. Other registerable interests

4.1 The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:

- (a) Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- (b) Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes, or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- (c) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

5. Non registerable interests

- 5.1. Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

6. Declaration and impact of interest on members' participation

- 6.1. Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take not part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000**
- 6.2. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless paragraph 6.3 below applies.
- 6.3. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.
- 6.4. If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- 6.5. Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

7. Sensitive information

- 7.1. There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

8. Exempt categories

- 8.1. There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:-
- (a) Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
 - (b) School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or

guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor

- (c) Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
- (d) Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
- (e) Ceremonial honours for members
- (f) Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception).

9. Report author and contact

- 9.1. Jeremy Chambers, Director of Law and Corporate Governance-
Jeremy.Chambers@lewisham.gov.uk , 0208 31 47648

Agenda Item 3



Workspaces Task and Finish Group

Task and Finish Group Final Report

Date: 5 July 2023

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Nidhi Patil (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

Following the review of a wide range of evidence, members of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group are asked to:

- Consider, comment on and agree the final report attached as Appendix A.
- Agree recommendations for submission to the Mayor and Cabinet.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The subject and membership of the Group were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st of September 2022.

The scope and key lines of enquiry for the review were agreed by the Workspaces Task and Finish Group on 16th of November 2022.

Between November 2022 and June 2023, the Task and Finish Group carried out a range of evidence gathering and engagement sessions (as detailed in the report).

1. Summary

- 1.1. The report attached as Appendix A sets out the key findings and recommendations of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Task and Finish Group is asked to:
 - Consider, comment on and agree the final report attached as Appendix A.
 - Agree recommendations for submission to the Mayor and Cabinet.

3. Policy Context

3.1. The Council's Corporate Strategy (2022-2026) outlines the Council's ambitions for Lewisham and details its approach towards achieving them. Delivering this strategy includes the following key priorities that relate to the Workspaces Task and Finish Group:

- Building a strong local economy
Provision of more affordable workspaces in the borough is essential to this objective as they play a crucial role in driving economic growth by attracting new businesses, supporting SMEs, and generating employment opportunities.
- Open Lewisham
The emphasis on equalities and the priority of Open Lewisham hold significant importance in the endeavour to expand availability of affordable workspaces, ultimately contributing to the provision of accessible opportunities for all individuals.

3.2. In its Corporate Strategy 2022-26, the Council also commits to building on its legacy as London's Borough of Culture by celebrating the diverse creative communities in Lewisham. Ensuring the availability of affordable creative workspaces is vital for enhancing Lewisham's cultural landscape.

3.3. The work of this Task and Finish group was informed by these corporate priorities.

4. Background

4.1. The subject of this Task and Finish group was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st of September 2022. The Group has received evidence from a range of sources and activities and has produced a report summarising its findings attached as Appendix A.

4.2. The Task and Finish Group members are being asked to review the final report and agree any recommendations they wish to make.

5. Financial implications

5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group may have financial implications, and these will need to be considered in due course.

6. Legal implications

6.1. The Council's Constitution provides at paragraph 6.11, Article 6 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may from time to time appoint sub-committees, to be known as task and finish groups which will exist for a period of no less than 3 months, nor more than 12 months from the date of their creation. It further adds that 'Any task and finish group shall consist of 5 members and be established for the purpose of examining a particular issue in depth. The terms of reference of any task and finish group shall be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which shall also appoint members to it.'

7. Equalities implications

7.1. The Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

- 7.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.3. It is crucial to consider equalities when expanding the provision of affordable workspace, ensuring that opportunities are accessible and inclusive for individuals of diverse backgrounds.
- 7.4. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report, but the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group may have equalities implications and the Council will need to give due consideration to this in their response.

8. Climate change and environmental implications

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change and environmental implications arising from this report. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group may have climate change and environmental implications, and these will need to be considered in due course.

9. Crime and disorder implications

- 9.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group may have health and wellbeing implications, and these will need to be considered in due course.

11. Appendices

- 11.1. Appendix A- Final report of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group

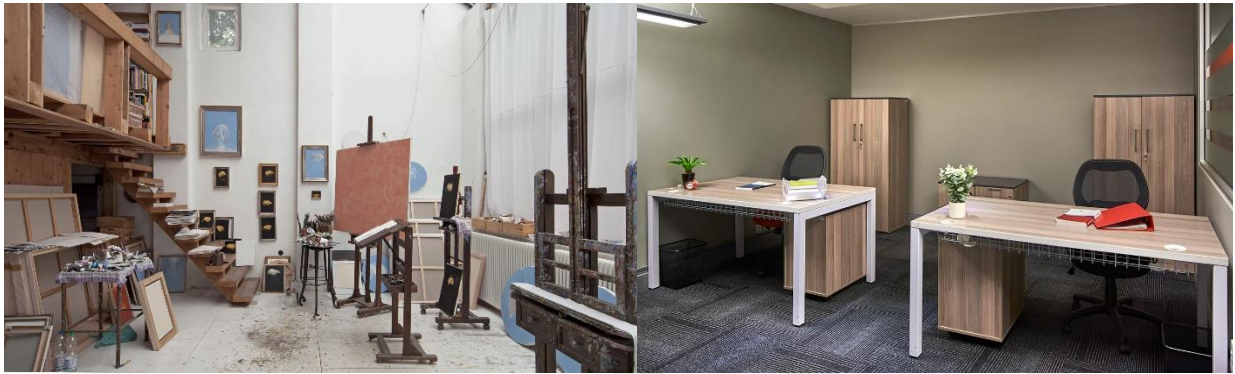
12. Report author and contact

- 12.1. If you have any questions about this report, please contact:
Nidhi Patil (Scrutiny Manager): nidhi.patil@lewisham.gov.uk or 020 8314 7620

Overview and scrutiny



Final Report of the Workspaces Task & Finish Group



July 2023

Membership of the task and finish group



[Councillor Rudi Schmidt](#)



[Councillor Billy Harding](#)



[Councillor Aliya Sheikh](#)



[Councillor Mark Ingleby](#)



[Councillor Liam Shrivastava](#)

Supporting Officer:

Nidhi Patil (Scrutiny Manager)

Is this report easy to understand?

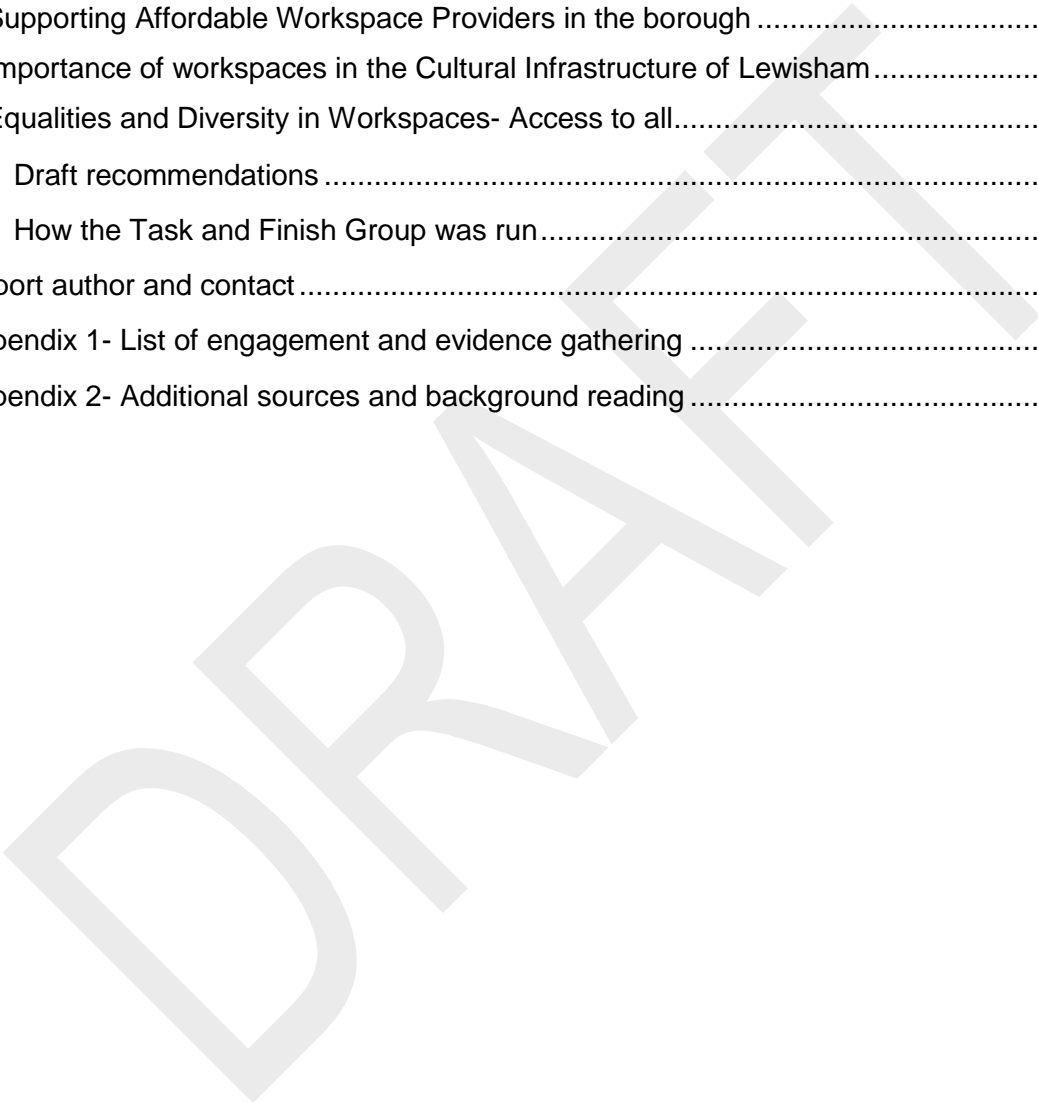
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1. Chair's Introduction

In a short few years “remote working” has become a regular part of working life for many. Indeed, today there are over 60,000 people working from home in Lewisham, a ten-fold increase from 2011 levels¹. With a forecast increase of 619,300 jobs across London between 2016 – 2041, the London Plan calls on councils to include clear strategies for affordable workspaces to support the capitals wide-ranging businesses².

In Lewisham micro, small and medium-sized enterprises make up 99.8% of businesses³, and our Draft Local Plan rightly outlines the need for 1,000 square meters of new office and light industrial workspace each year to 2040. Similarly, our Creative Enterprise Zone⁴, and Affordable Workspace Strategy recognise affordable workspace as a key part of supporting Lewisham's creative and wider economy.

Workspaces play an important role in regeneration and economic growth. They attract foot traffic for local businesses, offer supply chain opportunities and help to build networks of individuals and businesses. But there is, at present, unequal distribution across the borough, and with almost 20,000 households experiencing overcrowding in Lewisham⁵, it is clear that limited access to suitable workspaces exacerbates already existing inequalities.

The stark reality is that workspace providers find it increasingly challenging to operate. Under local planning policy developers are required to provide 10% of new commercial floorspace as affordable⁶ - but with affordability set against an inflated rental market, providing genuinely affordable workspaces is increasingly difficult for those without large financial backing.

This report calls on all the Council to view workspaces as an integral part of our economic and cultural strategy. We must find ways to safeguard our existing providers, enable sustainable new provision with long-term leases, and look for other opportunities to provide genuinely affordable, and at best free workspaces for our residents. The council should review policy frameworks such as Lewisham's Infrastructure Delivery Plan⁷ and Supplementary Planning Documents to ensure that their use reflects our vision for our borough, and proactively engage with developers to support them in meaningfully contributing towards local priorities.

We must highlight and learn from success stories inside and outside our borough, and follow best practice set by other councils. We must work collaboratively with local partners and across our directorates, thinking strategically and creatively to develop further infrastructure which enables residents to work effectively, to grow ideas, and build the networks and opportunities which contribute towards an inclusive and thriving local economy.

¹ [Working mainly at or from home: LGA Research](#)

² [The London Plan 2021](#)

³ [Lewisham Observatory- Business Counts 2022](#)

⁴ [The Lewisham Creative Enterprise Zone](#)

⁵ [Overcrowding- LGA Research based on Census 2021](#)

⁶ [Lewisham's Draft Local Plan](#)

⁷ [Lewisham's Infrastructure Delivery Plan](#)

I want to thank all the members of the Task and Finish Group for all their hard work. I would also like to thank Joe Lee and John Bennet in the Council's Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team and everyone in the Affordable Workspace Forum. Special thanks to Stephen Carrick-Davies, at Hatcham House, whose passion, generosity and insight on the subject was invaluable and to Ed Holloway at Beep Studios for his insightful contributions that have helped enrich this report. Thanks also to Ken Thomas, Slaine Montgomery and everyone else who contributed their time and insights. Lastly thanks to Nidhi Patil, for her immense work and professionalism in bringing together the evidence and writing this report.

Councillor Rudi Schmidt

Chair of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group

DRAFT

2. The role and purpose of the Task and Finish Group

- 2.1. The purpose of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group was to explore how the Council can maximise strategic opportunities for inclusive meanwhile, creative & community workspace in Lewisham, post Borough of Culture, to ensure that we grow and retain talent within the Borough and attract inward investment.
- 2.2. This Task and Finish group was composed of Councillors Rudi Schmidt, Billy Harding, Mark Ingleby, Aliya Sheikh and Liam Shrivastava. The subject and membership of the group was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 21st of September 2022⁸.
- 2.3. The Group considered a scoping report at its first meeting on the 16th of November 2022⁹ which established the context and background for its work. The following key lines of enquiry were agreed by the Group at its first meeting. However, as research was conducted and evidence was collected, the group further refined its focus from the key lines of enquiry initially agreed at its first meeting:
- What are the definitions of affordable workspace, and can we agree a definition for Lewisham?
 - What work is being undertaken on the Affordable Workspace Strategy? How can we use the findings and the stakeholder engagement already undertaken to shape the direction of the review?
 - What are other London Boroughs doing on this and what does good practice look like? How can we learn from the work of other boroughs in this area?
 - Who are our partner organisations and what potential sources of funding are available to support community and affordable workspaces?
 - How does the TFG's work feed into the Council's Economic Development Strategy and how does it relate to the newly established Creative Enterprise Zones?
 - What do Lewisham's business and creatives say they need to support them?
 - What can be done to secure more affordable work space?
 - What do our young people need to support them accessing communal spaces such as homework clubs and spaces for creativity?
 - Are there groups who are currently excluded from participating in local business and creative community? What are the barriers to participation?
- 2.4. Members of the group also discussed the various organisations and stakeholders that they would engage with as part of their research on this subject. The group agreed to use its research to ensure that:
- The Council has a robust and achievable Affordable Workspace Strategy

⁸ [Link to the agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21 September 2022](#)

⁹ [Link to the agenda for the Workspaces Task and Finish Group meeting- 16 November 2022](#)

and Action Plan.

- There is a comprehensive understanding of the needs of stakeholders and the benefits to the Council and local community of supporting creative and affordable workspaces in the borough.
- There is an improved understanding of the Council's assets and raised awareness of using assets to support affordable workspaces.
- There is raised awareness of how planning policy can be used to support affordable workspaces and community workspaces.
- There is a meanwhile use policy that helps support short-term use of empty buildings where practicable.
- Through consultation and research there is a greater understanding of potential partners and sources of funding to support community and cultural workspaces.
- The Council has additional information and analysis that can be used during the creation of the "Live Music Strategy".
- Further exploration of workspace availability for Lewisham's young people has taken place and an analysis completed of what further work needs to be done in this area.

2.5. It was also agreed that the Task and Finish group would be carried out utilising 'agile' methodology, further details of which are given in section six of this report (how the task and finish group was run).

3. Context

3.1. It is now widely recognised that affordable workspaces play an important role in providing opportunities to grow and retain local businesses and employment, nurturing start-ups and promoting a healthy local economy. The increased emphasis placed on the value of affordable workspaces in the Mayor of London's- London Plan 2021¹⁰-reflects this.

3.2. Affordable workspaces have a crucial role to play in rebuilding an inclusive economy post-pandemic¹¹. Provision of workspaces is critical in attracting new businesses and to support existing and start-up SMEs in the local area. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 99.9% of the business population in the UK¹² and contribute over 50% to the country's economy. However, most SMEs are still reeling from the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown which put a significant number of them at high risk of closure. In addition to that, an ever-increasing need for residential places has made it difficult for SMEs to find suitable affordable workspaces for their small businesses.

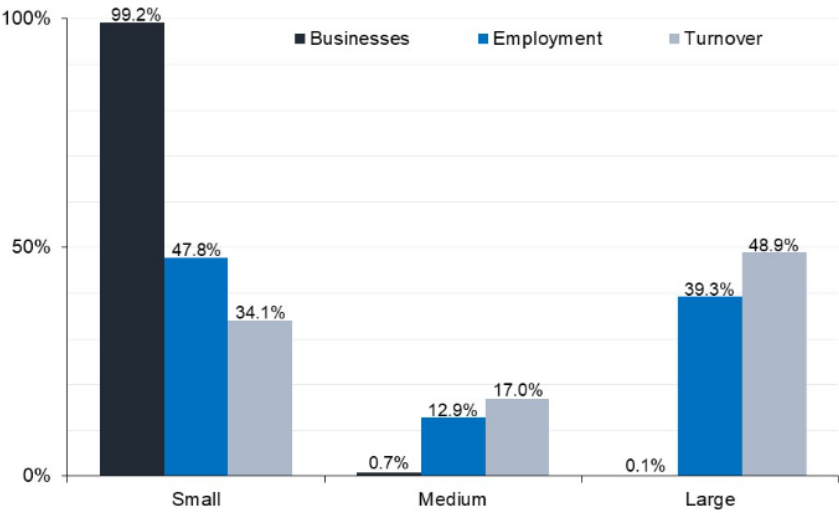


Figure 1 above- SMEs constitute 99.9% of all businesses and have a higher combined turnover than the large businesses. (2022)

3.3. Along with SMEs, artists and creative professionals who work independently, also contribute greatly to London's economy¹³. Having affordable creative workspaces is essential for people working in the creative sector and it is often difficult for them to find these at affordable rates. The unique space requirements of creative and performing arts activities further compound this difficulty. The soaring market rents and exorbitant hiring prices for spaces, especially in London has made it hard for artists, creative professionals and organisations to find affordable creative and co-working spaces.

¹⁰ [The London Plan 2021](#)

¹¹ [British Council for Offices Affordable Workspace: A Solution, not a Problem](#)

¹² [BEIS- Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2022: statistical release](#)

¹³ [Arts and creative industries: The case for a strategy: House of Lords Report](#)

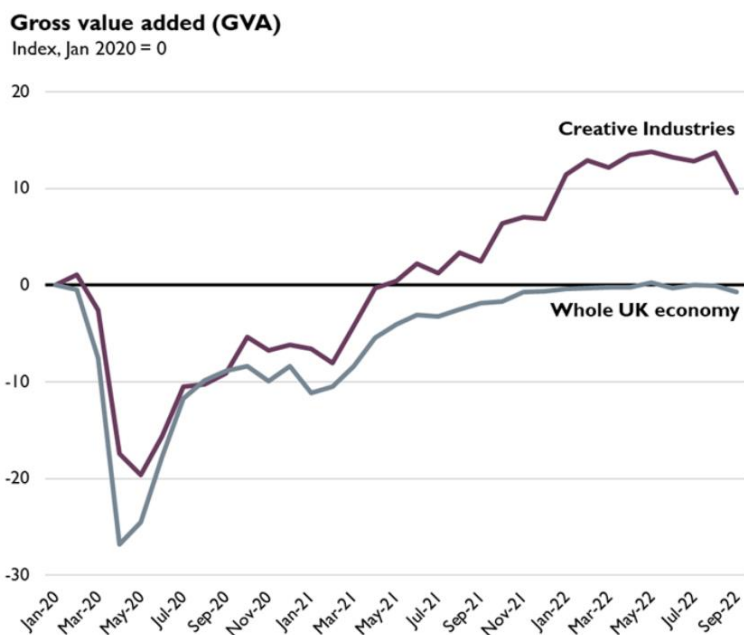


Figure 2 above- Growth in the creative industries has been higher than across the whole of the economy since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.4. The availability of different types of open workspaces is crucial for fostering the growth and success of SMEs, artists and creative professionals. By providing accessible and conducive work environments, London can stimulate economic growth and contribute to local regeneration efforts.
- 3.5. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has also been a rise in remote working across all sectors. Therefore, in addition to SMEs and creative professionals, there are many residents in traditional desk-based jobs who need flexible co-working spaces. As you can see from the table below, the number of people working from home in London has increased from 202,679 in 2011 to a staggering 1,836,823 in 2021¹⁴.
- 3.6. It is important to note that the data in the table below is from the 2021 Census, which reflects a period when government guidance and lockdown restrictions resulted in a substantial increase in remote work and furloughed residents, potentially impacting the data. Nonetheless, the undeniable shift in working patterns since the pandemic is evident, with a significant increase in the number of people working from home compared to pre-pandemic times.

	Work mainly at or from home		
	2001	2011	2021
	No. of People	No. of People	No. of People
London	no value	202,679	1,836,823
East Midlands	no value	108,977	586,025
East of England	no value	161,428	966,487

¹⁴ [Working mainly at or from home: LGA Research](#)

North East	no value	42,528	282,172
North West	no value	144,079	913,829
South East	no value	279,656	1,603,079
South West	no value	177,999	818,531
West Midlands	no value	121,260	676,936
Yorkshire and Humberside	no value	110,962	637,370

Table 1- Number of usual residents aged 16-74 who work mainly at or from home in England broken down by region

3.7. As one can imagine, the workspace requirements for various SMEs, artists and remote workers are incredibly diverse. These requirements span across a wide range of workspaces, from flexible office spaces offered by Incubator, Accelerator and Co-working spaces (IACs), to specialised creative workspaces such as artist studios, makerspaces and flexible desk spaces for individuals in fields such as architecture, marketing or fashion design. Additionally, flexible kitchen spaces cater to the needs of professionals and small businesses in the culinary industry. The term ‘workspaces’ used in this report generally encompasses all types of workspaces, unless explicitly specified otherwise for a specific type of workspace.

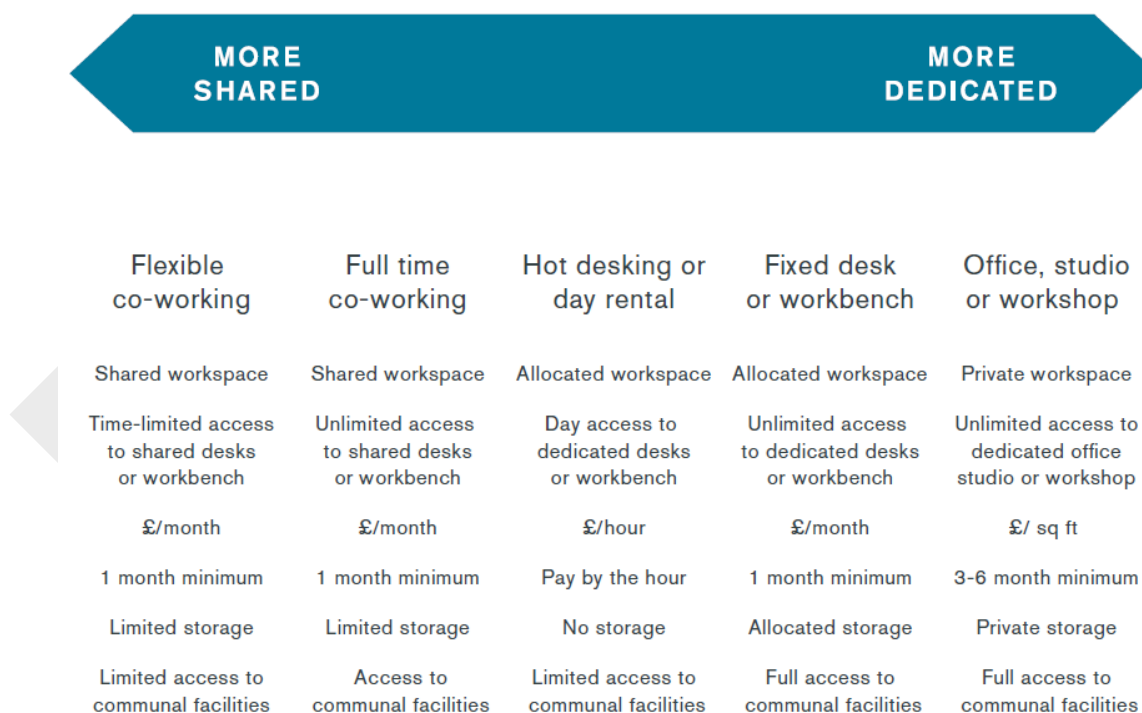


Figure 3- Different types of workspaces

Importance of affordable workspace in the London Plan 2021

3.8. The London Plan 2021 defines affordable workspace as ‘Workspace that is provided at rents maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural, or economic development purpose.’ These purposes include

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workspaces for¹⁵:

- specific sectors that have social value such as charities, voluntary and community organisations or social enterprises;
- specific sectors that have a cultural value such as creative and artists' workspace, rehearsal and performance space and makerspace;
- for disadvantaged groups starting up in any sector;
- supporting educational outcomes through connections to schools, colleges or higher education;
- supporting start-up and early-stage businesses or regeneration.

“The Mayor will encourage the delivery of new workspaces for SMEs, the creative industries, artists and the fashion industry within new residential and mixed-use developments” Page 247, The London Plan 2021

- 3.9. With the growth in outsourcing, freelancing and remote working, there is a huge demand for co-working spaces and small business workspaces. The London Plan 2021 mentions the retention and provision of flexible and other forms of workspace to support start-up, existing and growing SMEs. These various forms of workspaces will include incubator, accelerator or co-working spaces that can provide support, collaboration and networking opportunities for small businesses.
- 3.10. The London Plan 2021 also recognises the rapid growth of the creative industries as a sector and acknowledges their substantial contributions to both London's economy and cultural landscape. Reflecting this importance, the Mayor of London has established Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs) where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work and are supported to start-up and grow.
- 3.11. The Creative Enterprise Zones programme launched in 2018 and Lewisham is one of the London boroughs that has a designated CEZ. Lewisham's CEZ focuses on New Cross and Deptford in the north of the borough and Lewisham Council is entrusted with the responsibility of developing policies to ensure the provision of workspaces required by industries within the CEZ.
- Need for affordable workspaces in Lewisham**
- 3.12. 99.8% of businesses in Lewisham are micro, small or medium-sized enterprises¹⁶. To foster a thriving local economy, affordable workspaces are vital for small businesses in the borough. However, soaring market rents and growing demand for residential spaces have worsened the scarcity of workspaces.
- 3.13. Lewisham also has a high number of people who are working at or from home following the Covid-19 pandemic. Lewisham ranks among the Top 10 London

¹⁵ [The London Plan 2021](#)

¹⁶ [Lewisham Observatory- Business Counts 2022](#)

boroughs in terms of the number of residents predominantly working from home, as depicted in the graph below. As remote work becomes prevalent, the demand for flexible co-working and hot-desking spaces is rising. Census 2021 revealed that 16.3% of households in Lewisham, equating to 19,955 households, experience overcrowding, underscoring the significance of providing flexible and affordable workspaces for remote workers lacking adequate space at home.

Number of usual residents aged 16-74 who work mainly at or from home (people) for Lewisham compared with all London Boroughs (excl City)

source: Census

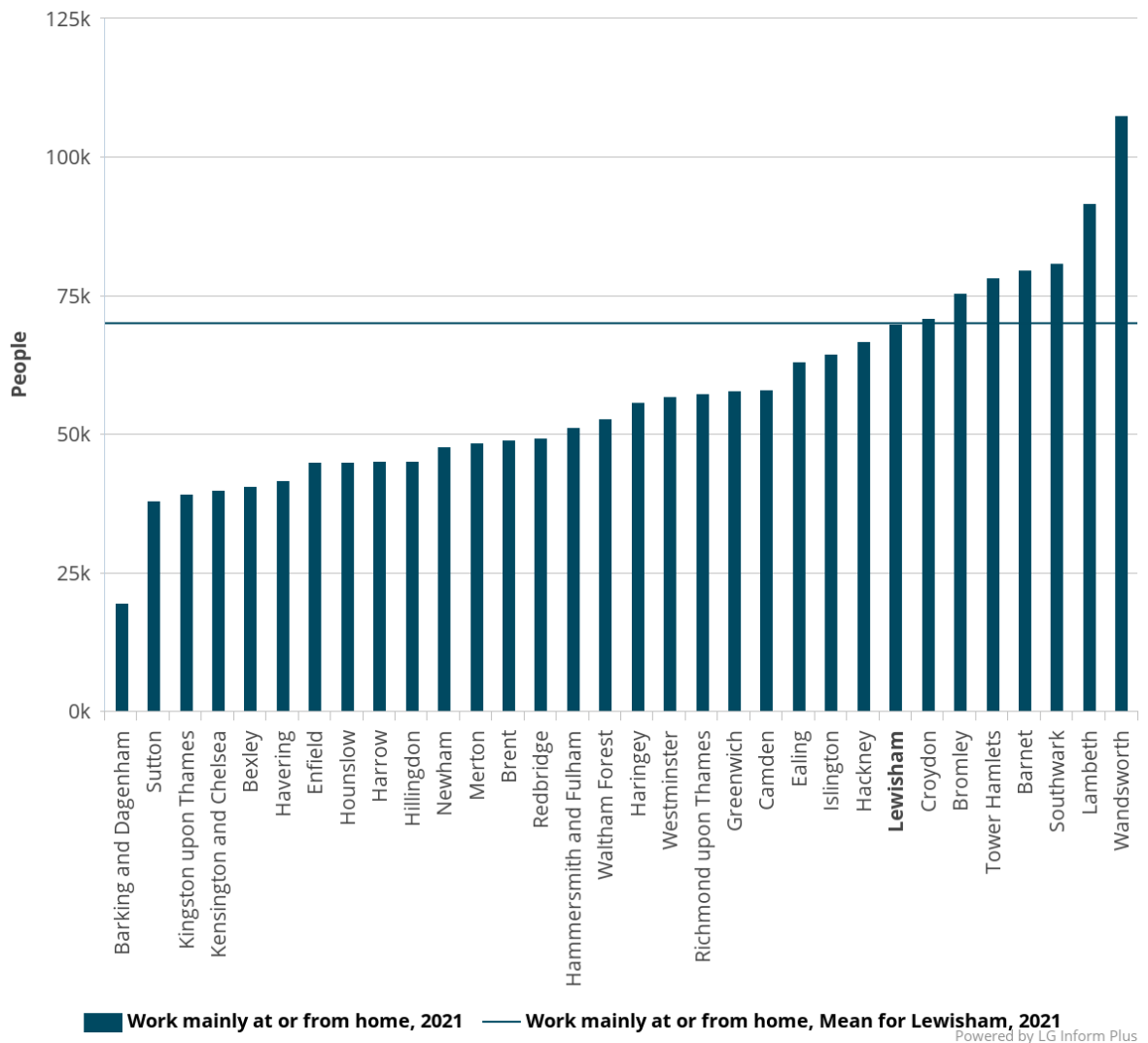


Figure 4- Number of usual residents aged 16-64 who work mainly at or from home for all London boroughs (excluding the City).

- 3.14. Lewisham is also a hub of creativity and Lewisham Council is committed to supporting the creative industries. This is evidenced by Lewisham’s successful bid to be one of London’s first Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) and its efficacious year as London Borough of Culture 2022. With organisations such as Art Hub Studios, Cockpit Arts and The Albany, Lewisham is already home to creative workspaces that support artists and creatives in the borough. However, the current supply of affordable creative workspaces falls short of meeting the high demand for such spaces.

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3.15. Lewisham Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2026

- 'Building a strong local economy' is one of the 6 key priorities outlined in Lewisham Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-26. Essential to this objective is the provision of more affordable workspaces in the borough, as they play a crucial role in driving economic growth by attracting new businesses, supporting SMEs, and generating employment opportunities.
- In its Corporate Strategy, the Council also commits to building on its legacy as London's Borough of Culture by celebrating the diverse creative communities in Lewisham. Ensuring the availability of affordable creative workspaces is vital for enhancing Lewisham's cultural landscape.
- The work of this Task and Finish group was informed by these corporate priorities.

3.16. Lewisham's Draft Local Plan

- Lewisham's draft Local Plan recognises the need for more modern and affordable workspaces to support the growing population of the borough and to promote inclusive economic growth¹⁷.
- It proposes actively seeking affordable workspace in larger developments, making sure that new workspace is designed and built to a high-quality standard, and enabling mixed-use redevelopment of some sites for new workspaces and housing.
- Lewisham's draft Local Plan commits all major commercial developments, including mixed-use developments with a commercial component, to ensuring that 10% of new employment floorspace is delivered as affordable floorspace, which is crucial to growing Lewisham's economic base.
- The Task and Finish Group considered the Council's draft Local Plan while researching ways to maximise workspace provision in Lewisham. The Group sought to build on the vision set out in the draft Local Plan.

3.17. Lewisham Council's emerging Affordable Workspace Strategy

- In 2022, Lewisham Council commissioned PRD with producing an Affordable Workspace Strategy. This strategy is now in its final stages of development and will be submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet before adoption. It sets out the Council's approach and the actions required for increasing affordable workspace in the borough.
- The Task and Finish Group had the opportunity to contribute to the development of this strategy. The Group engaged with Council officers and provided comments and insight on the draft strategy document.
- As part of the Council's work on developing this strategy, an Affordable Workspace Forum has been convened. This forum is made-up of the affordable workspace operators in Lewisham. The Task and Finish

¹⁷ [Lewisham's Draft Local Plan](#)

Group engaged with this forum during its research, benefitting from their expertise. Their insights provided valuable knowledge about the current workspace provision in Lewisham.

3.18. London Borough of Culture legacy and Lewisham's Creative Enterprise Zone

- Lewisham was the London Borough of Culture 2022 and its yearlong cultural programme showcased creativity across the borough. This celebration highlighted the importance of creativity and culture and demonstrated how investing in culture means that you are investing in the local economy and the health and wellbeing of the community.
- Affordable creative workspaces are necessary to enhance the cultural offer of Lewisham by providing a conducive environment for artists, creative professionals and organisations to thrive and contribute to the vibrant artistic community.
- It is a testament to Lewisham's vibrant creative community that the New Cross and Deptford area in Lewisham has been designated as a Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ), securing over £500,000 in funding from the Mayor of London. One of the objectives of these CEZs is to be a place where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work and are supported to start-up and grow.
- The Task and Finish Group conducted site-visits to existing affordable workspaces in the CEZ to understand the current offerings and any challenges. Accompanied by officers from the Council's Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team, the Group also explored the CEZ area to gain a deeper understanding and identify any potential opportunities for workspace development.

3.19. Defining 'affordable' workspaces presents a challenge as its meaning varies among individuals. In this report, the term 'affordable' refers to affordability for both providers and end users. Recognising that affordability is subjective, the report acknowledges the need for a comprehensive understanding of diverse perspectives to ensure workspaces are accessible and financially sustainable for all stakeholders involved.

3.20. The Task and Finish Group conducted its work within the context of addressing the need for increased workspaces. It undertook site-visits, engaged with stakeholders, assessed current offerings, and explored potential opportunities. The Group hopes that its findings provide valuable insights for the Council's broader efforts in expanding workspace availability.

4. Key findings

Strategic use of council-owned assets

4.1. Policies promoting affordable workspaces in new commercial developments are effective for increasing workspace provision. However, reduced rents alone may not sufficiently offset the higher costs of operating in new buildings, making it challenging for affordable workspace operators to secure such spaces⁴. This includes costs like business rates, service charges and upfront fit-out costs, creating a significant ‘affordability gap’ between the rent a developer needs to achieve to maintain overall viability and what an affordable workspace operator can afford.



Figure 5- The affordability gap in new developments

- 4.2. The Task and Finish group met with the Affordable Workspace Forum in April 2023 and learnt that this affordability gap was a significant issue for affordable workspace providers in Lewisham.
- 4.3. Alternatives for workspace providers struggling with the affordability gap in new-build spaces, is to make use of existing unused or underused buildings. Lewisham Council is uniquely placed to assist with this.
- 4.4. As property owners, councils often have unused or underused assets that can be repurposed as workspaces. This will not only help councils reduce the financial pressure on them of maintaining empty properties but will also generate long-term economic, social and cultural benefits.
- 4.5. Repurposing existing property assets to create affordable workspaces enables the Council to generate employment opportunities, revenue, and support SMEs, artists, and the community at large, aligning with broader regeneration strategies. Utilising their own assets allows councils to influence social outcomes, such as offering rent-free or low-rent spaces and requiring workspace providers to prioritise discounted access for lower socio-economic backgrounds or provide training opportunities to underrepresented groups.
- 4.6. Maximising the potential of underused assets by converting them into valuable community spaces can be very effective, as demonstrated by Southwark’s

⁴ [British Council for Offices Affordable Workspaces: A Solution, Not a Problem](#)

successful project at Peckham Levels¹⁸. The Task and Finish Group visited Hatch Peckham, located in Peckham Levels and operated by Facework Group, a social enterprise which offers inclusive and adaptable co-working spaces. Facework Group also manages another location called Hatcham House in New Cross.

Transforming a Council-owned asset: Peckham Levels



The Peckham multi-storey car park owned by Southwark Council was underutilised for a number of years before being repurposed and transformed into a creative and cultural hub. Peckham Levels offers varied uses such as studios for creatives, office spaces for SMEs, co-working space, retail units, food and drinks stalls and much more. 20% of the studios in Peckham Levels are rented at around one-third of market rent.

In Peckham Levels, there are nearly 100 independent creative businesses, 50 studios, a 70-desk co-working space, event and gallery space, retail units, food and drink outlets, and shared facilities for creatives such as ceramics and kiln room, 3D printers, laser cutters, dark room and photo studio, rehearsal spaces and printing press. This transformation of an underused council-owned asset has supported over 450 local jobs in Peckham while providing a boost to Peckham's cultural identity.

- 4.7. The Task and Finish Group recognises the urgent demand expressed by workspace operators in Lewisham to repurpose underutilised council-owned assets. The Affordable Workspace Forum, comprising knowledgeable workspace providers, has identified several potential spaces in the borough that the Task and Finish Group will share with the Council's Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team.
- 4.8. The Task and Finish Group has also conducted a review of the corporate asset register to try to identify assets that are currently underutilised or unused. The Group intends to share these findings with the Council's Estates team to promote effective asset management and explore opportunities for maximising utilisation of these resources.
- 4.9. During its evidence gathering, the Task & Finish Group learned that community stakeholders faced challenges in accessing information about Council-owned assets. They heard that accessing up-to-date and user-friendly information from the Council's asset register that is available on the website, was difficult.
- 4.10. The idea of repurposing Council-owned properties to provide workspaces is not new to Lewisham. Lewisham has successfully done this in Catford Town Hall, the Place/ Ladywell housing and Dek Deptford. The Group believes that the

¹⁸ [Peckham Levels- Local Government Association Case Study](#)

Council should prioritise additional initiatives of this nature. Lewisham should assess its building stock and proactively manage its property assets to maximise their potential for repurposing.

- 4.11. In 2019, Lewisham Council was one of the first local authorities in London to declare a climate emergency¹⁹. As a climate conscious council, Lewisham should prioritise repurposing assets over demolition to promote sustainable development.

Meanwhile Use

- 4.12. Along with repurposing its existing underused and unused assets, the Group concluded that the Council should also encourage meanwhile use of spaces. This should include sites that are awaiting development. Meanwhile use of spaces in pre-development stage and vacant or hard to let units on high streets is a great way of reducing the cost of keeping an empty site while strengthening town centres and increasing footfall at sites of future development.
- 4.13. The Task and Finish Group discovered that workspace operators are often very willing to take on meanwhile use spaces which offer them the chance to trial new initiatives, test their concepts and engage with the community. Many major projects started as meanwhile use or temporary projects such as London Eye- a temporary structure that has become the most popular paid tourist attraction in the UK²⁰.
- 4.14. Sister Midnight, Lewisham's first community-owned music space, is an exemplary meanwhile use that has generated significant community interest.

Sister Midnight has secured a 7-year lease on the former Brookdale Club in the Catford Centre. With renovations underway and an expected opening in late 2023, Sister Midnight will serve as a live-music venue and provide affordable studio spaces for local artists along with being a community space. The Task and Finish Group members visited Sister Midnight (picture below) and were very impressed by their ambitious plans for community events.



- 4.15. In its various site-visits and in its discussions with the Affordable Workspace Forum, the Task & Finish Group found that the ideal lease term for a meanwhile use space was generally at least 5-7years. Short-term leases on these spaces could prevent meaningful investment, increase risk for the workspace provider and stifle economic growth.

¹⁹ [Lewisham's Climate Emergency Declaration](#)

²⁰ [Meanwhile, in London: Making use of London's empty spaces](#)

- 4.16. However, it's important to note that what may be considered an ideal lease term for a meanwhile use space by one organisation might not be ideal for another. Therefore, meanwhile uses for less than 5-7 years should also be considered as there are some workspace operators who are willing to take on spaces on shorter leases. For instance, Facework Group that runs Hatcham House in New Cross is currently trying to secure the old New Cross Gate post office on a 2-year meanwhile use basis to be able to provide affordable workspace units.
- 4.17. To facilitate the repurposing of unused or underused assets and encourage meanwhile use of spaces, Lewisham Council needs a comprehensive understanding of its assets and development pipeline. The Task and Finish Group discovered that workspace providers in the borough faced difficulties in accessing information about Council assets and upcoming developments. By making this information easily accessible, the Council can foster a collaborative approach with workspace providers, enabling them to identify suitable sites and actively engage in increasing workspace provision in the borough.

Role of Planning in securing workspaces

- 4.18. The London Plan 2021 recognises the important role of planning policy and processes in providing affordable workspaces. Working within Planning policy to protect existing spaces and secure new ones is crucial in maintaining a supply of such spaces across the borough.
- 4.19. The draft Lewisham Local Plan commits all major commercial developments, including mixed-use developments with a commercial component, to ensuring that 10% of new employment floorspace is delivered as affordable floorspace, which is crucial to growing Lewisham's economic base.
- 4.20. Planning obligations can be used to secure affordable workspace in new developments and to set-out the social, cultural or economic development objectives.

Planning obligations are legal obligations that are entered under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure policy objectives, support the provision of infrastructure and mitigate any potentially harmful impacts²¹. Section 106 sets out that planning obligations can be used for the following:

- restricting the development or use of the land in any specified way;
 - requiring specified operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over the land;
 - requiring the land to be used in any specified way;
 - requiring a sum or sums to be paid.
- 4.21. Through planning obligations, developers either make in-kind contributions which include provision of particular facilities in the development (such as workspace) or financial contributions which fund initiatives that are necessary to mitigate the adverse impact of the development.
- 4.22. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is another planning tool that ensures new developments contribute to improving the infrastructure, environment and

²¹ [Securing Cultural Infrastructure and Workspace planning practice note- London City Hall](#)

facilities in the borough. The CIL is a charge which can be levied by local authorities on new developments in its area. This levy can then be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure required for the development of the local area and community²².

Total CIL collected 2015 - 2020	Total
Total CIL receipts	£21,750,289
Total admin fee deducted for 2020-21	£244,580
Balance of CIL receipts	£21,505,709
Total amount of the neighbourhood proportion of CIL receipts (25% of receipts)	£5,376,427
Remaining CIL receipts excluding neighbourhood proportion	£16,129,282

Table 2- CIL Accounts 2015-2022, Lewisham Council²³

- 4.23. Planning tools such as Section 106 and the CIL play an important role in securing affordable workspaces for the local community and the Council should have clear guidelines and processes for its use of these tools. To create successful affordable workspaces, the desired outcomes and objectives should be embedded early on in the planning application processes. During its engagement with developers in the borough, the Task and Finish group discovered that there is room for improvement in the Council's approach to developer engagement during the pre-application stage. They realised that adopting a more proactive stance would be beneficial.
- 4.24. The Council in its engagement with developers should lay out its vision for the development of the local area and set out the needs of the local community. As a result, the developer can ensure that the space provided is suitable for its intended purpose and customised to meet the specific requirements of the community.
- 4.25. The Task and Finish Group is aware that officers from the Council's Planning team are working on developing a Good Developer Engagement Protocol which will be an item of discussion at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The Group hopes that its findings will be taken into account while developing this protocol and sees this as a great first step towards enhancing engagement with developers.
- 4.26. While enhancing engagement with developers during the pre-application stage and fostering their understanding of the local community's needs is a commendable step, it is equally vital to establish a robust assurance framework that guarantees the effective enforcement of Section 106 and CIL agreements. The assurance framework would provide the necessary oversight and mechanisms to ensure that developers fulfil their obligations, safeguarding the provision of affordable workspace and promoting sustainable development practices.

²² [Community Infrastructure Levy- UK government guidance](#)

²³ [Authority Monitoring Report 2021-22- Lewisham Council](#)

- 4.27. An affordable workspace is leased to a workspace operator after a planning application has been determined. However, for successful delivery of well-considered and fit for purpose workspaces, it is advisable for developers to engage with workspace operators early during the design/ pre-application stage. The Task and Finish Group heard this feedback from the workspace providers in Lewisham and also saw that developers in the borough had the appetite to do this. The Council can play an important role in facilitating this early engagement by developing and maintaining a list of affordable workspace providers in the borough that the developers can use.
- 4.28. The Council can also facilitate proactive engagement between workspace providers and developers by providing a comprehensive timeline of new developments in the borough that possess planning permissions or resolutions to grant planning permission. Workspace providers can utilise this information to pre-emptively approach developers.
- 4.29. By providing a timeline of new developments in the borough, the Council's planning team can also play an important role in encouraging meanwhile use of spaces. Sites that are in pre-development stage can be used as meanwhile spaces to increase footfall and generate a buzz around the upcoming development. The Task and Finish Group has found that there is great appetite amongst workspace providers in the borough to deliver meanwhile use spaces. For example, The Albany is looking for spaces that can be utilised for rehearsals, aiming to address the increasing demand for affordable rehearsal spaces. Similarly, the Facework Group that runs Hatcham House, is actively searching for additional locations to expand their provision of co-working spaces.

Supporting Affordable Workspace Providers in the borough

- 4.30. The Task and Finish Group welcomes the work of the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team on developing the Affordable Workspace Strategy and is grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy.
- 4.31. Developing an Affordable Workspace Strategy is a great first step in bolstering the Council's focus on providing more affordable workspaces in the borough. The Task and Finish Group believes that the Council needs to build on the momentum generated by the development of this strategy and take further steps to improve the provision of workspaces in the borough.
- 4.32. As part of the work on the Affordable Workspace Strategy, the Council has convened an Affordable Workspace Forum consisting of the borough's workspace providers. The Task and Finish group met with this forum in January 2023 and again in April 2023 and also conducted a short survey with the members of this forum. This helped the Group gain an understanding of the current workspace provision in the borough and the challenges faced by affordable workspace providers.
- 4.33. One challenge that was consistently reported by all workspace providers was the high cost of utilities, especially since last year with the cost-of-living crisis and how this affected their ability to keep the workspace affordable for end users. Adding to these costs were high business rates which were contributing to the 'affordability gap' for providers.

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- 4.34. The Task and Finish Group learnt that any assistance that the Council could provide with managing the high business rates would help with managing the 'affordability gap' for the workspace providers. In its conversation with officers from Brent Council, the Group learnt about the discretionary business rates relief scheme for workspace providers that Brent is trying to deliver.

Under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (1988), councils have the discretionary power to award relief on business rates. For example, Waltham Forest has provided targeted business rates relief for workspace providers who are not-for-profit, reinvest surpluses into affordable workspace within the borough, and can prove that they will achieve 'local social, economic and cultural benefits'.

- 4.35. Workspace providers also reported that a significant amount of time was spent in finding appropriate sites for workspace provision. They expressed that the absence of a comprehensive timeline of new developments from the Council, as well as the lack of a reliable list of council-owned assets, hindered their ability to proactively engage with the Council regarding potential sites.
- 4.36. The Task and Finish Group found their interactions with the Affordable Workspace Forum very useful, however, the Group also acknowledges that this forum did not encompass all providers in the borough, indicating the possibility of missing out on certain insights.
- 4.37. In its evidence gathering phase, the Task and Finish Group had the opportunity to visit several creative and co-working spaces. A few of these spaces were in Lewisham's Creative Enterprise Zone. As part of the Creative Enterprise Zone initiative, SHAPES Lewisham was established as a creative network to promote and further develop the creative community in Lewisham. The SHAPES Lewisham website holds a directory of workspaces in the borough. The Task and Finish Group's research suggests that this website is not up-to-date and does not display all of our workspaces. In its interactions with workspace providers and users in Lewisham, the Group also learnt that the workspace map on the website is difficult to use.



Mother House Studios, an artist studio space with integrated childcare in Catford, does not show up on SHAPES Lewisham's Cultural Map when you select the option of creative workspaces.

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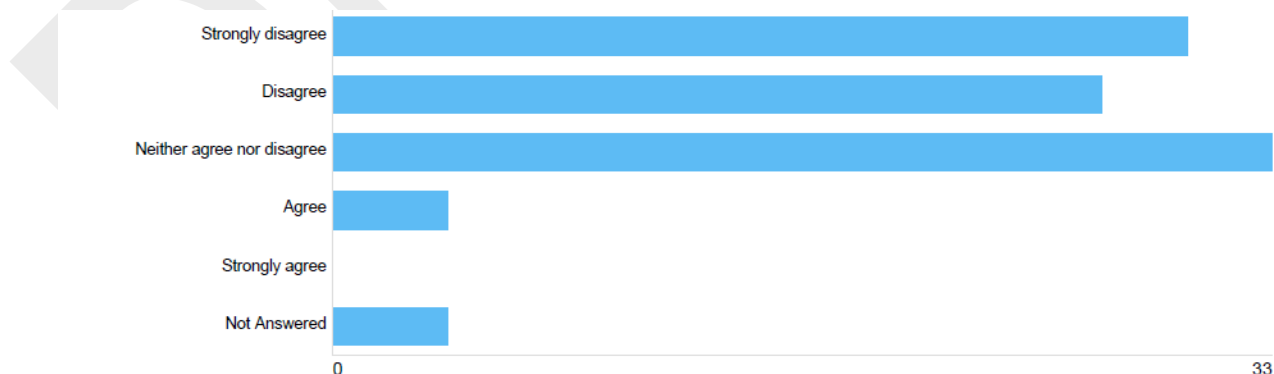
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Importance of workspaces in the Cultural Infrastructure of Lewisham

- 4.38. As a diverse and vibrant borough, Lewisham is home to a rich and dynamic artist and creative scene. The need for dedicated creative workspaces arises from the recognition of the immense value that artists, creative organisations and cultural practitioners bring to the local economy and social fabric. By offering affordable and well-equipped spaces, Lewisham can attract and retain creative talents, which in turn contribute to the overall cultural enrichment, employment opportunities and community engagement.
- 4.39. Creative workspaces form a vital part of the borough’s cultural infrastructure. They serve as collaborative hubs that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills as well provide a platform for showcasing artistic endeavours which enhance the visibility and appreciation of Lewisham’s creative industries.
- 4.40. Compared to workspaces for SMEs, creative workspaces have more distinct fit-out requirements that are tailored to the specific art form they serve. For instance, a dance rehearsal studio will have a markedly different set-up compared to a music recording studio, and both will differ from the workspace needed by a graphic designer.
- 4.41. Lewisham’s year as London Borough of Culture has brought the borough’s creativity in the limelight and has also highlighted what the creative sector needs in order to flourish. The Task and Finish group attended the Lewisham Creative and Cultural Summit on the 25th of April 2023 where more than 80 creative individuals/ artists and representatives from creative organisations, echoed the dire need for more creative workspaces in the borough.
- 4.42. The Task and Finish Group also conducted a survey, in collaboration with the Council’s Culture team, to ask people in the creative and cultural sector about the current provision of creative and co-working spaces in the borough. This survey received 98 responses.
- 4.43. When asked if they think creative and co-working spaces in Lewisham meet the demand, only 4.08% of the respondents agreed.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly disagree	30	30.61%
Disagree	27	27.55%
Neither agree nor disagree	33	33.67%
Agree	4	4.08%
Strongly agree	0	0.00%
Not Answered	4	4.08%

Response to the survey question: Thinking about the provision of creative and co-working space in Lewisham, please tell us the extent to which you agree with the

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following statements- Creative and co-working spaces in Lewisham meet the demand for creative and co-working spaces in the borough.

- 4.44. The survey also highlighted that only 5.1% of the respondents thought that creative and co-working spaces were distributed evenly in the borough. The Task and Finish Group's evidence gathering sessions and stakeholder engagement also emphasised that there was a clear lack of creative and co-working spaces in the south of the borough.
- 4.45. The Task & Finish Group also recognises the important role played by 'hubs' or 'creative clusters' in driving a vision for neighbourhoods and the borough development, shaping the overall identity of the area.
- 4.46. Live arts performances, especially music events, can play a key role in helping to define such 'hubs' and in attracting investment and businesses strongly linked to the local area and its workforce. They also help in enhancing the reputation and liveability of emerging neighbourhoods, ultimately strengthening Lewisham's reputation and vision as a hub of creativity, both during and after its time as the London Borough of Culture.
- 4.47. The Task and Finish Group met with representatives from the Musicians' Union and learnt about the need for more affordable rehearsal spaces and recording studios for musicians in the borough. Additionally, the Group became aware of the demand for increased live-music venues in the borough. The Group hopes that the Council will build upon the dialogue initiated by the Group with the Musicians' Union to inform the implementation of its cultural strategy.
- 4.48. In addition to creative workspaces and live music venues, community centres also form an integral part of the cultural infrastructure of an area, providing essential spaces for community engagement.
- 4.49. Community centres serve as hubs for social interaction, cultural exchange and personal development, enriching the lives of residents in numerous ways. Community centres are often centrally located and easily accessible to residents along with serving as natural gathering and networking places. These characteristics make a good case for utilising underused community centres to provide affordable workspaces. Lewisham needs to assess if it is using its existing community centres to their full potential.
- 4.50. The Task and Finish Group met with officers from Lewisham Homes to discuss underused community assets such as community centres and one centre that came up was the 2000 Community Action Centre on the Pepys Housing Estate. The Group learnt that this centre is well used by residents but needs some investment if it is to be used to its full potential. The Task and Finish Group members visited this centre in May 2023 along with a Business Development Officer from the Council.
- 4.51. The Council is currently finalising its delivery plan for the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) allocation in relation to capital grant schemes for delivery of affordable workspaces within the Creative Enterprise Zone of Deptford and New Cross. The Task and Finish Group contributed to the discussion between the Council and the 2000 Community Action Centre by organising this site-visit, which aimed to explore the possibility of providing assistance to the centre in order to transform it into a functional workspace. Once the UKSPF allocation has been agreed, the Council has agreed to providing further information to the

community centre about any assistance it can provide.

- 4.52. The Task and Finish Group also visited Pepys Community Library which is a 5-minute walk from the 2000 Community Action Centre. This library is an important venue for the local community and has underused spaces that have the potential to be transformed into workspaces. Lewisham Council officers agreed to explore if some assistance could be provided to Pepys Community Library to develop it as an affordable workspace especially for start-up creative businesses.



Cllr Rudi Schmidt, the Chair of the Task and Finish Group and Joe Lee, Principal Business Development Officer from Lewisham Council at the Pepys Community Library

- 4.53. The Task and Finish Group visited the Lewington Centre in the north of the borough that is managed by L&Q. This community centre has huge amounts of space that is not being utilised to its full potential. It has a fully fitted commercial kitchen and a café space along with meeting rooms and a big multi-purpose hall. By organising this visit, the Task and Finish Group took proactive steps to initiate efforts for optimising the utilisation of this community centre. The Group hopes that by bringing this community centre to the attention of Council officers and other workspace providers in the borough, it has hopefully kickstarted the process of ensuring this centre gets utilised to its maximum potential.



Councillors Rudi Schmidt and Liam Shrivastava with Lewisham Council officers Joe Lee and John Bennett visiting the Lewington Centre.

- 4.54. Utilising underused spaces in community centres and libraries to offer workspaces presents an excellent opportunity to increase workspace provision

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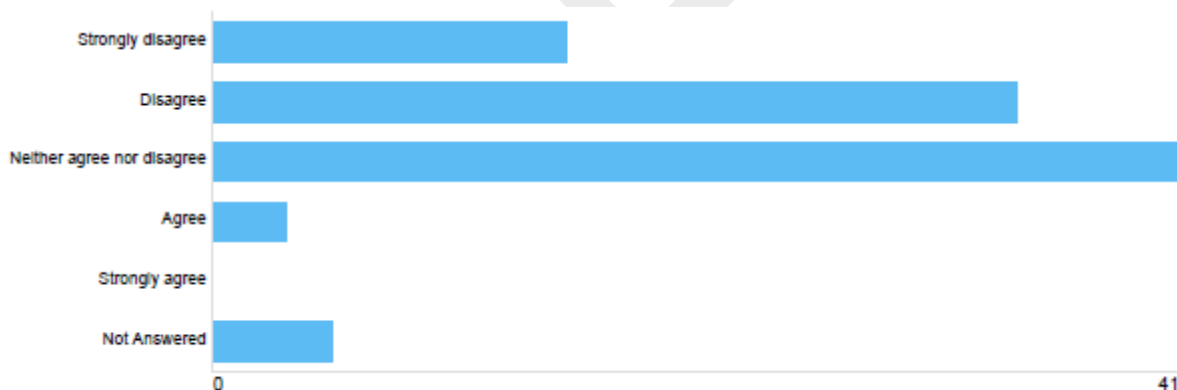
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in the borough. If these community centres or libraries are owned by the Council, there is an opportunity for the Council to exert greater control over the social value outcomes generated from those workspaces. In such instances, the Council should explore strategies to maximise social value benefits. For instance, during the revamping of Lewisham Library to incorporate workspaces, possibilities could be explored to allocate certain portions of those spaces for free use by residents from marginalised or disadvantaged communities.

Equalities and Diversity in Workspaces- Access to all

- 4.55. Ensuring equal access to workspaces for all residents in Lewisham is of paramount importance. In a diverse and inclusive community like Lewisham, it is crucial that everyone has the opportunity to participate in economic activities and access resources necessary for personal and professional growth. Eliminating barriers to entry, such as physical accessibility, affordability and discriminatory practices, is essential for creating a level playing field for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities.
- 4.56. In the survey of people in the creative and cultural sector in Lewisham, when asked whether creative and co-working spaces in the borough are accessible to all, only 3.06% of the people agreed that those spaces were accessible to all.



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly disagree	15	15.31%
Disagree	34	34.69%
Neither agree nor disagree	41	41.84%
Agree	3	3.06%
Strongly agree	0	0.00%
Not Answered	5	5.10%

Response to the survey question: Thinking about the provision of creative and co-working space in Lewisham, please tell us the extent to which you agree with the following statements- Creative and co-working spaces in Lewisham are accessible to all.

- 4.57. The Task and Finish Group also asked workspace providers in the borough about any specific groups that they believed faced challenges in accessing affordable work and creative spaces. The key groups that appeared to be facing these access challenges were- young residents (16-25), residents with disabilities, residents from minority ethnic backgrounds, residents with childcare needs and residents from lower income households.
- 4.58. Most workspaces in the borough have EDI policies (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and work hard to ensure their workspaces are accessible to all

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groups of residents. However, ensuring equal access to workspaces requires a collective effort rather than relying solely on the responsibility of a single organisation.

- 4.59. The Council is in a favourable position to take the lead and proactively encourage, facilitate, and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among workspace providers. This collaboration will enable the sharing of best practices and foster a collective effort towards the shared objective of ensuring equal access for all residents.
- 4.60. The Council's planning team can play a pivotal role in ensuring equal access to spaces for all by implementing inclusive design standards, collaborating with stakeholders and embedding accessibility requirements in the planning process.
- 4.61. Embedding equalities in the guidance provided to developers during the pre-application stage is also a crucial method for the Council to ensure that the agenda for equal access for all is integrated early on and effectively implemented throughout the development process.

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5. Draft recommendations

The Task and Finish Group is proud of the actions it has already undertaken during its research and evidence gathering. These actions encompass feeding into the Affordable Workspace Strategy, compiling a list of underused assets for the Estates team based on a review of the asset register and discussions with workspace providers, initiating discussions for the improved utilization of community spaces such as 2000 Community Action Centre, Pepys Community Library and Lewington Centre, and initiating a constructive dialogue with the Musicians' Union.

- 5.1. The Council should review and update its policies to prevent demolition and sale of Council-owned assets that have potential for repurposing with minimal investment. Choosing to repurpose buildings instead of demolishing them would create lasting economic value and promote sustainability.
- 5.2. If and when disposing of assets, the Culture and Economy, Jobs and Partnerships teams should be consulted to assess the impact on local jobs and cultural facilities. Cross-directorate coordination is crucial in considering the future of council-owned buildings, with all repurposing options explored before making disposal decisions.
- 5.3. The Council should create more awareness around community groups being able to nominate assets to be considered as 'Assets of Community Value' (ACV). Listed ACVs stay on the Council's list for up to 5 years and offer the nominating community the 'Right to Bid' for the asset when it comes up for sale, ensuring the preservation of valuable assets for the local community.
- 5.4. The Council should review its current approach to asset management to ensure it is strategic and pragmatic. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider having asset management on its agenda for in-depth scrutiny. This would provide valuable insight into the Council's current practices and opportunities for improvement.
- 5.5. The Council should assess its existing underused cultural spaces, such as community centres and libraries, to identify potential areas that can be repurposed as workspaces with appropriate investments.
- 5.6. To strategically utilise Council-owned assets, the Council should develop a comprehensive database of potential sites for short-, medium- and long-term workspace provision. This database should be compiled through a survey of properties in the borough.
- 5.7. The Council should ensure regular updates to its online corporate asset register, providing comprehensive details on the current use of the asset along with the dates for when the information was last updated.
- 5.8. The Council should develop a clear 'Meanwhile Space Strategy' that promotes and encourages the use of vacant high-street units and pre-development sites for meanwhile use purposes.
- 5.9. To enhance workspace provision in the borough, the Council's planning department should:
 - integrate equalities and the Fairer Lewisham Duty into developer guidance during the planning pre-application stage. Additionally, they

should actively collaborate with developers to ensure that proposed plans align with the needs of the local community and uphold our corporate priorities around equalities, diversity and inclusion. The Good Developer Engagement Protocol serves as an opportune framework to incorporate these objectives.

- review its use of key developer funding streams- Section 106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), to understand if these are being used efficiently for delivering affordable workspaces and wider cultural facilities.
 - enhance transparency in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 processes to provide reassurance to local stakeholders, including Councillors, that decision making will align with local needs.
 - actively encourage developers to utilise Lewisham's Infrastructure Delivery Plan to inform their planning applications. This plan identifies the necessary infrastructure required to support planned growth in the borough and can ensure that proposed developments align with identified infrastructure needs.
- 5.10. The Council should develop a document that provides a timeline for upcoming new developments in the borough that have planning permissions or the resolutions to grant planning permission. This document should be accessible on the Council's website. This will enable workspace providers to approach developers proactively, fostering early-stage collaborations.
- 5.11. The Council should update the SHAPES Lewisham website to correctly display all the workspaces in the borough and look into improving its accessibility. GLA's Cultural Infrastructure Map draws information from SHAPES Lewisham. Having incomplete data on the SHAPES Lewisham website is leading to the GLA's map not showcasing all the workspaces that Lewisham has to offer.
- 5.12. The Council should develop an accredited Affordable Workspace Provider List, that developers should consult with for delivering affordable workspaces as part of new developments. The Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team should develop an accreditation framework to assess workspace providers before they can be added on to this list and this framework should recognise and reward workspace providers for various social outcomes.
- 5.13. The Council should proactively assess the social value impact of workspaces by conducting meetings/ conferences with workspace providers twice a year. These sessions will help us understand the demographics of the residents using our workspaces, demand trends and market challenges/opportunities. Cockpit have done some incredible work on assessing the impact of their spaces on the community showcased in their award-winning annual report- The Cockpit Effect, making them a valuable choice to lead these meetings/ conferences.
- 5.14. The Council should explore utilising the Affordable Workspace Forum to enhance the workspace provision in the borough. Additionally, it should consider implementing a business support programme for the forum members to help them thrive as small businesses in the borough.
- 5.15. The Affordable Workspace Strategy recognises the shortage of rehearsal

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spaces in Lewisham but providing more of these spaces has been assigned a 'low-medium priority' in the strategy. However, evidence collected by the Task and Finish Group highlights the significant demand for affordable rehearsal spaces. As a result, the Group recommends that the Council take a more proactive role in supporting the provision of these spaces and give it a higher priority.

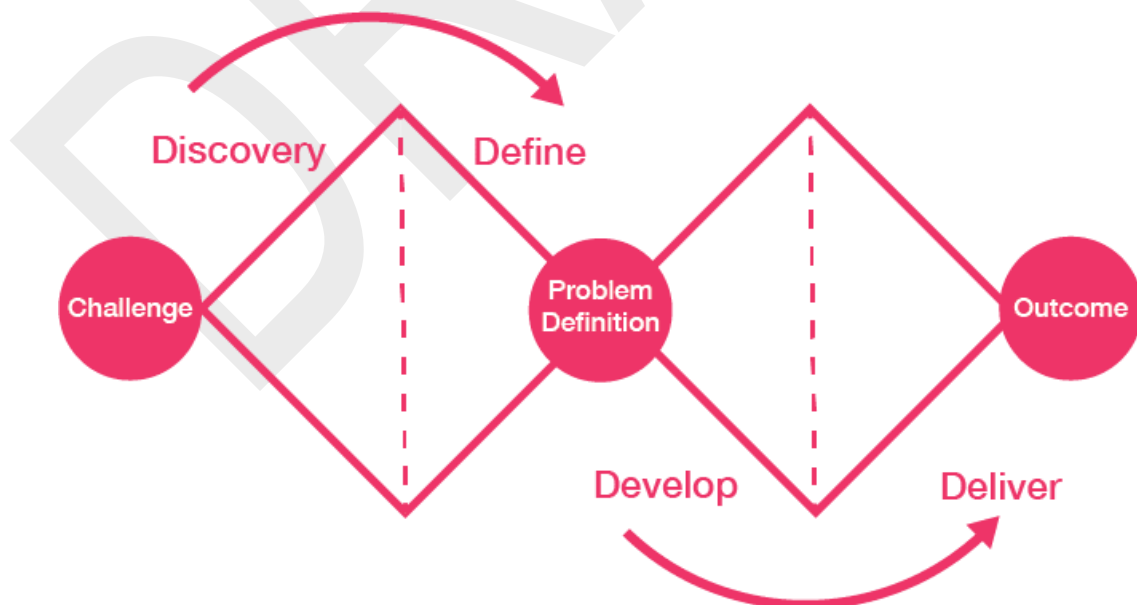
- 5.16. The Council should explore whether it can operate a discretionary business rates relief scheme specifically for affordable workspaces that demonstrate a significant contribution to the upliftment of local community and have a positive social value impact.
- 5.17. The Council's Cultural Strategy should acknowledge the fundamental role of creative and co-working spaces in supporting the cultural sector. It should outline the Council's vision and actions necessary to increase the provision of more such spaces in Lewisham as well as protect and promote existing workspaces.
- 5.18. The Council should carry out a review of cultural infrastructure in the borough which would help us identify the key gaps in the provision of creative and co-working spaces in Lewisham. GLA's Cultural Infrastructure Map is a useful tool but has some gaps. The Council should liaise with GLA to ensure that their Cultural Infrastructure Map has up-to-date information about all workspaces and wider cultural facilities in Lewisham.
- 5.19. The Council should maintain the dialogue initiated by this Task and Finish Group with the Musicians' Union to gather input from South London Musicians regarding potential music hubs and venues. This input will help inform the work of the Cultural Strategy moving forward.
- 5.20. The Council should explore how the Lewisham Strategic Partnership could work together and provide support to improving the provision of affordable workspaces in Lewisham as part of a wider one public estate approach.
- 5.21. The Public Accounts Select Committee should scrutinise the Council's capital programme and investigate whether there are any opportunities for the Council to acquire land and buildings including industrial sites and vacant units in town centres for workspace provision.
- 5.22. While the Task and Finish Group made a sincere effort, they were unable to address a specific line of enquiry concerning the support required by young people in accessing communal spaces due to time constraints. As a result, the group recommends that the Children and Young People Select Committee thoroughly examine this matter and explore it through their scrutiny process.
- 5.23. The Council should explore innovative ways of attracting inward investment, including investigating various options such as public-private partnerships or public share offers. These approaches can help deliver the necessary investment, development and services to stimulate economic growth and recovery.

6. How the Task and Finish Group was run

6.1. The Task and Finish Group was run as a project, utilising an Agile methodology, with the intention of being:

- Collaborative – scrutiny officers, directorate officers and councillors working together to address a topical issue of concern, using a shared space on MS Teams
- Time limited – to suggest solutions in a timely manner, with allocated tasks, progress checks and deadlines
- Flexible – with a mixture of formal and informal meetings, visits, research, user engagement etc.
- Focussed on residents – service user experience is key, the issues clearly defined, and solutions suggested, on the basis of understanding residents' experience
- Focussed on solutions – the aim was to take evidence from a wide range of sources and good practice to develop affordable, practical solutions that are evidence based and implementable and that will have a positive impact on the lives of residents.

6.2. A 'double diamond' approach was taken which split the project into two parts (diamonds). The first part was the 'discovery' stage. The issue (the topic of the task and finish group) was the starting point and then research and evidence collection was carried out to really understand the issue and define it more clearly. Once the issue was well understood and well defined, the second stage began. Further research and evidence collection was carried out, seeking inspiration from elsewhere and working with a range of different stakeholders and experts to investigate potential solutions. This led to the Group's clear set of carefully considered recommendations.



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Report author and contact

If you have any questions about this report please contact Scrutiny Manager- Nidhi Patil (nidhi.patil@lewisham.gov.uk)

Appendix 1- List of engagement and evidence gathering

Session	Date
December 2022	
Site-visit to: Hatcham House The Albany Cockpit Arts studio	2 December 2022
January 2023	
Site-visit to L&Q- Lewington Centre	13 January 2023
Affordable Workspace Forum	26 January 2023
February 2023	
Meeting with Lewisham Musicians' Union	14 February 2023
Site-visit to Sister Midnight Venue	22 February 2023
March 2023	
Asset Register Analysis Session	6 March 2023
Share Offer Launch & Community Meeting- Sister Midnight	30 March 2023
April 2023	
Cultural Strategy- Creative & Cultural Sector Survey- Call For Evidence published	3 April 2023
Meeting with Cabinet Member for Businesses, Jobs and Skills	4 April 2023
Affordable Workspace Forum	20 April 2023
Lewisham Creative and Cultural Summit	25 April 2023
Workspace Provider Survey	26 April 2023
Meeting with Lewisham Homes to discuss Underused Community Assets	26 April 2023
Site-visit to Mother House Studios	28 April 2023
Site-visit to Peckham Levels	28 April 2023
Site-visit to Art Hub Studios in Creekside	28 April 2023
May 2023	
Meeting with Head of Business Development, The Albany	2 May 2023
Meeting with Officers from Brent regarding their Affordable Workspace Strategy	12 May 2023
Meeting with Apollo Business Centre Workspace developer	12 May 2023
Site-visit to Pepys Community Library	16 May 2023
Site-visit to 2000 Community Action Centre	16 May 2023

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Appendix 2- Additional sources and background reading

A Better Approach to Affordable Workspaces: The Opportunity to Act- [The Opportunity to Act — REDO \(weareredo.com\)](#)

Brent Council's Affordable Workspace Strategy- [Affordable Workplace Strategy | Brent Council](#)

British Council for Offices Briefing Note on Affordable Workspaces- [Affordable Workspace: A Solution, Not A Problem](#)

Cockpit Studio: The Cockpit Effect 2023- [The Cockpit Effect 2023 | Cockpit \(cockpitstudios.org\)](#)

Creating Open Workspaces- [Places of work | London City Hall](#)

Creating Public Value: How Buildings Can Better Serve Our Communities- [Future of London: Creating Public Value: How Buildings Can Better Serve Our Communities — 3Space](#)

Creative places: Supporting your local creative economy- [Creative places - supporting your local creative economy | Local Government Association](#)

Delivering impact Social value in Islington's Affordable Workspaces- <https://www.islington.gov.uk/~media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/economicdevelopment/publicity/publicconsultation/20222023/affordable-workspace-social-value-impact-report.pdf>

Delivering Affordable Workspace in London: Business London- [Delivering Affordable Workspace in London](#)

Meanwhile, in London: Making use of London's empty spaces- [Centre for London | Meanwhile, in London: Making use of London's empty spaces](#)

Sixth Special Report - Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report- [Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

Waltham Forest Cultural Infrastructure Study- [Cultural Infrastructure Study](#)

Workspace that Works- [Workspace that Works - Future of London](#)

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