

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:
