



## Mayor and Cabinet

### **Response to recommendations of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group**

**Date:** 20 September 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Executive Director, Place

### **Outline and recommendations**

In July 2023 the Workspaces Task and Finish Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee published its report and recommendations to protect and create workspace within the borough. This report is the response to those recommendations from the Executive Director of Place.

### **Timeline of engagement and decision-making**

The Workspaces Task and Finish Group was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2022.

The scope and key lines of enquiry for the review were agreed on 16 November 2022.

Between November 2022 and June 2023, the group carried out a range of evidence gathering and engagement sessions. The group met on 5 July 2023 to agree its final report and recommendations.

The final report was presented to Mayor and Cabinet on 19 July 2023.

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. In July 2023 the Workspaces Task and Finish Group (TFG) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee published its report and recommendations to protect and create workspace within the borough. This report is the response to those recommendations from the Executive Director of Place.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet are asked to note the responses provided by the Executive Director of Place to the recommendations of the Workspaces Task and Finish Group.

## **3. Policy Context**

- 3.1. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-26 identifies seven corporate priorities which are the driving force behind what Lewisham Council does as an organisation. It sets out a vision for the borough and the priority outcomes that organisations, communities and individuals can work towards to make this vision a reality.
- 3.2. The scope and recommendations of the Workspaces TFG aligns most closely with the corporate priority for a "Strong Local Economy". It also aligns with the Affordable Workspace Strategy and Cultural Strategy, both approved by Mayor and Cabinet in July 2023.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1. The Workspaces Task and Finish Group (TFG) was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 September 2022. The scope and key lines of enquiry for the review were agreed on 16 November 2022. The purpose of the Workspaces TFG was to explore how the Council can maximise strategic opportunities for inclusive, creative and community workspace in Lewisham, following our year as Borough of Culture, and to ensure that we grow and retain talent within the Borough and attract inward investment.
- 4.2. Between November 2022 and June 2023, the group carried out a range of evidence gathering and engagement sessions. The group met on 5 July 2023 to agree its final report and recommendations.
- 4.3. The final report was presented to Mayor and Cabinet on 19 July 2023. Mayor and Cabinet asked the Executive Director of Place to provide a response to the recommendations.

## **5. Response to TFG Recommendations**

- 5.1. The response from officers to the recommendations of the Workspaces TFG is set out in Appendix A.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1. Responses to the recommendations from the Workspaces TFG need to be managed within existing service budgets and funding. There is no additional funding available to implement any of the recommendations.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1. There are no significant legal implications arising from this report.

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**8. Equalities implications**

8.1. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report as this provides a response to the TFG recommendations. However, each of the areas of work that the recommendations relate to is aiming to have a positive equalities impact through, for example, increasing the availability of affordable workspace in the borough.

**9. Climate change and environmental implications**

9.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

**10. Crime and disorder implications**

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

**11. Health and wellbeing implications**

11.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

**12. Background papers**

12.1. [Workspaces Task and Finish Group Final Report, July 2023](#)

**13. Glossary**

13.1. [Link to Oxford English Dictionary here.](#)

Term	Definition
Affordable workspace	Workspace which is provided at below market rent
CDI	Creative and Digital Industries
CEZ	Creative Enterprise Zone in Deptford and New Cross

**14. Report author(s) and contact**

- 14.1. John Bennett, 020 8314 7791, [john.bennett1@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:john.bennett1@lewisham.gov.uk)
- 14.2. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources
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- 14.4. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR
- 14.5. Melanie Dawson, Principal Lawyer – Place, [melanie.dawson@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.dawson@lewisham.gov.uk)

**15. Appendices**

15.1. Appendix A – Officer Response to Recommendations

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## Appendix A – Officer Response to Recommendations

No.	Recommendation	Response
5.1	<p>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.</p>	<p>The ongoing Asset Review (linked to the preparation of the Strategic Asset Management Plan) across the Council's corporate, operational and office estate, seeks to enable better utilisation of the Council's assets, land supply for housing development and to enable service transformation. It also identifies assets where disposal is considered an opportunity to provide a capital receipt for the Capital Programme and reinvestment in core Council objectives.</p> <p>The asset review will ensure efficient and appropriate use which maximises social, economic and monetary value.</p> <p>As part of that, officers undertake an options appraisal to fully explore all possible options for an asset including repurposing buildings or service or commercial use where viable.</p>
5.2	<p>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</p>	<p>The Asset Review Board is made up of representatives from across all Directorates, including the culture and economy, jobs and partnerships teams. All assets subject to review are deliberated and discussed at the board before a recommendation is made to the Regeneration and Capital Board.</p>
5.3	<p>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.</p>	<p>The process for making an application to nominate an assets of community value alongside what ACV status means is clearly set out on our AVC webpage, <a href="https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/community-support/community-assets">https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/community-support/community-assets</a></p> <p>The webpage can be found by via google search using a combination of the words <i>Lewisham Council Assets of Community Value</i></p>

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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.	Officers are currently working on developing a Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) to be approved by M&C. It will set out how the Council intends to manage its asset portfolio, enabling better decisions to be made around the future use and maintenance of the estate and ensure limited finances are spent in the best way possible.
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.	The Council and partners are continuously looking at how existing assets can be maximised for the benefit of the local community. Recent workspace examples include placing a new Business Centre (BIPC Local) in Catford Library and the use of a former respite centre in Hither Green for affordable workspace on a meanwhile basis (House on the Hill). A structured review of all the spaces within the council's cultural assets would require additional funding which is not currently available. In the meantime, officers will seek to identify opportunities as and when they arise.
5.6	The transformation of Lewisham Library offers the Council a golden opportunity to optimise the provision of affordable workspaces and promote the idea of flexible workspaces. The revamped space could cater to a diverse range of age groups, incorporating flexible workspaces for adults and informal study areas for young people. In light of this, the Task and Finish Group recommends that the Council consider the Group's findings while planning the transformation of Lewisham Library, ensuring the expansion of workspaces to meet the community's needs.	The Levelling Up Fund programme will transform Lewisham Library into a Cultural and Business Hub which will provide a range of facilities and support to local residents and businesses. One key aspect of the transformation will be to create a dedicated business workspace in the library. Early engagement is currently taking place to look at workspace operators in the borough and elsewhere in London. This, along with the Workspace TFG report and the new Affordable Workspace Strategy, will help to shape the specification for the business space which is developed.
5.7	To strategically utilise Council-owned assets, the Council should develop a comprehensive database of potential sites for short-,	There is ongoing work to develop a comprehensive asset database for the council. This will draw together all existing information on the council assets portfolio and update where possible to assist in the above asset review work and support service requirements in the

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	medium- and long-term workspace provision. This database should be compiled through a survey of properties in the borough	short, medium and long-term, including workspace provision.
5.8	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.	The production of the asset register noted 5.7 above will help ensure the Council's publicly available asset register is kept up to date.
5.9	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.	The Affordable Workspace Strategy and action plan, approved by Mayor and Cabinet in July 2023, includes a dedicated focus on meanwhile space. This includes vacant high street units and sites which will be brought forward for development, as well as other under-used assets in the borough. The strategy also provides guidance on the minimum requirements from workspace operators for meanwhile spaces such as lease length and size.
5.10	<p>To enhance workspace provision in the borough, the Council's planning department should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 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.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> review its use of key developer funding streams- Section 106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), to understand if these are being used efficiently for</li> </ul>	<p>The Planning Service is currently drafting Good Development Engagement Protocol. This was considered and be influenced by recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2023. Equalities will be a key issue for developers to consider and report to the Council as part of the application Statement of Community Involvement document.</p> <p>The Councils Draft Local Plan supports the delivery of affordable workspace. Policy EC4 – this states that developments should provide 10% as low-cost workspace. The policy also resists the loss of low-cost workspace in redevelopment proposals. Where developments provide low-cost workspace this will be secured by S106 agreement.</p> <p>The Council has a robust process and governance structure in place for the allocation and spend of both S106 and CIL which has been agreed by Mayor and Cabinet. The use of S106 and CIL is regularly monitored by the Developer Contributions team, the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team and the Culture team to ensure these are being used efficiently for delivering affordable workspaces and wider cultural facilities amongst other priorities. For S106, a strategic sums spreadsheet of all S106 sums is distributed bi-annually to all relevant teams to consider how they use the sums collected within the</p>

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	<p>delivering affordable workspaces and wider cultural facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ 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.</li> <li>□ 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.</li> </ul>	<p>legal definitions of the S106 agreement. Meetings are held regularly between the Developer Contributions team and relevant council departments to discuss upcoming projects and priorities for spend. The Planning Service promotes the Infrastructure Delivery Plan when developers are considering development proposals. This is useful to inform of necessary infrastructure that makes development acceptable.</p> <p>With regard to transparency, the Council publishes an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) which outlines all matters relating to S106 and CIL including; total S106 and CIL receipts, sums collected for the financial year, sums allocated and sums spent. All S106 agreement are publicly available connected to approved planning applications. The Developer Contributions team is in the process of reviewing its webpages to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Within this review we are considering how to ensure that the agreed process of agreeing, monitoring, collecting and spending developer contributions is easy for all stakeholders to understand.</p>
5.11	<p>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.</p>	<p>There are existing development update pages on the <a href="#">website</a>. These are updated periodically, and there is significant scope to modernise these pages with better coverage across the borough. This could include interactive mapping.</p>
5.12	<p>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</p>	<p>SHAPESLewisham is updated via the workspace providers themselves. Studio Raw are working with the Council to continue to drive membership numbers on the SHAPESLewisham website. This is done so that SHAPESLewisham provides up-to-date information on workspace provision and to reduce the administrative burden on the Council to maintain the information on the SHAPESLewisham website and to give greater autonomy to the local workspace providers. The Lewisham Council website currently points users to the SHAPESLewisham website and so would not need to host its own map. However, action will be taken to increase the prominence of the</p>

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	workspaces that Lewisham has to offer. The Council may also consider the possibility of incorporating a map of workspaces on the Lewisham Council website, akin to the implementation by Brent Council, to provide a user-friendly resource for individuals seeking information on affordable workspaces.	SHAPESLewisham information on the council website.
5.13	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.	This recommendation will be enacted by the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service in Autumn 2023. The application process has been drafted based on feedback from local and regional workspace operator forums. This list will then be updated annually and kept on the Council website. The Accredited Affordable Workspace Provider List will be developed and maintained by the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service from within existing resources.
5.14	<p>The Council should proactively assess the social value impact of workspaces by conducting meetings or conferences with workspace providers twice a year.</p> <p>These sessions will help us understand the demographics of the residents using our workspaces, demand trends and market challenges/opportunities.</p> <p>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</p>	The Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service convenes quarterly meetings of the Lewisham Affordable Workspace Provider Forum. This forum began in 2022 and provides an opportunity for local workspace operators to network and share information with the council. Currently the sharing of information on demographics and trends is ad-hoc. The introduction of the accreditation process will allow the Council to collect this data and use it for the purposes suggested by the TFG.

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	meetings / conferences.	
5.15	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.	The Economy, Jobs and Partnerships team is committed to working with the Affordable Workspace Forum to engage on new developments and new workspace opportunities. The new Affordable Workspace Strategy was co-designed with the Forum and the new accreditation process will further cement their role in providing more workspace in the borough. At the next Forum meeting officers will raise the question of business support to assess the interest and needs. Should the forum members require business support, this will be commissioned using UKSPF Local Business Support funding which is available until March 2025.
5.16	The Affordable Workspace Strategy recognises the shortage of rehearsal 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	The Strategy has been updated and the recognition of rehearsal spaces has been moved up from low-medium priority to medium. It has not been prioritised higher as whilst demand for rehearsal space is high, as referenced in the TFG report, the economic outputs such as jobs which are created by rehearsal space are lower than through other types of workspace such as offices, maker spaces and creative studios.
5.17	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.	The discretionary business rate relief scheme is open to all charities that qualify for the 80% mandatory relief. Workspace providers that are registered charities and demonstrate social value impact will be considered with all applicants for this scheme. Any further discretionary business rate relief schemes would require additional budget to be allocated.
5.18	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	We are Lewisham: Cultural Strategy for Lewisham 2023-2028. Priority 2 of 4 priorities is Creative Places - outcome Cultural and creative places meet the changing needs of Lewisham's communities and creatives. Actions against this priority include; addressing the shortage of creative workspace; protecting existing workspace; creating creative

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	and actions necessary to increase the provision of more such spaces in Lewisham as well as protect and promote existing workspaces.	workspace in public sector buildings through our Creative Lewisham Enterprise Workspace project (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) and the development of a flagship culture and business hub at Lewisham Library (Levelling Up Fund).
5.19	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 coworking 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.	This work is being carried out between LBL Economic Development and Culture teams. Currently a Goldsmiths MA Student is working on the Cultural Infrastructure Map data sets to highlight the gaps and errors to support robust cultural mapping baseline. The Culture team are in contact with the GLA team responsible.
5.20	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.	Economy, Jobs and Partnerships will work with the Culture team to continue conversations with the Musicians Union. This will support the development and work of the Creative Enterprise Zone and the Culture Strategy.
5.21	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.	The Investment and Opportunity Partnership, one of the working groups of the Lewisham Strategic Partnership, is currently producing an Investment and Opportunity Strategy which will guide economic development in the borough. Workspace, including affordable workspace, will be included in the scope of this strategy.
5.22	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	Not for officers to respond

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	including industrial sites and vacant units in town centres for workspace provision	
5.23	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.	Not for officers to respond
5.24	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.	A number of teams at the Council are collaborating on updating the Council's approach to inward investment. This includes updating the Lewisham.London website which was established to showcase investment opportunities across the borough, and a senior level presence at events such as UK Real Investment and Infrastructure Forum and London Real Estate Forum.

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