



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### Asset Management Update – Non-Housing Asset Portfolio

**Date:** 3 October 2023

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Petra Marshall, Senior Programme Manager; Kplom Lotsu, Head of Capital Programme Delivery; Patrick Dubeck, Director of Inclusive Regeneration.

### Outline and recommendations

This report provides a summary of the Council's non-housing estate and current work underway to review the Council's assets. It provides an overview of the work beginning to develop a comprehensive, new Asset Management Strategy, opportunities for disposal of land and assets that are not considered strategic, community use of assets and the maintenance of the estate including the Corporate Estate Maintenance programme and the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Recommendation: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report which updates on current work on Council assets, in particular the emerging Asset Management Strategy, and provide feedback.

### Timeline of engagement and decision-making

8th September 2023 – Briefing with Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree focus of update

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council's effective utilisation of assets is critical to supporting the delivery of a range of services and to many of the Council's corporate plan objectives. This report provides a summary of the Council's non-housing estate and current work underway to review the Council's assets. It provides an overview of the work beginning to develop a comprehensive, new Asset Management Strategy, opportunities for disposal of land and assets that are not considered strategic, community use of assets and the maintenance of the estate including the Corporate Estate Maintenance programme and the ambition of being carbon neutral by 2030.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report which updates on current work on Council assets, in particular the emerging Asset Management Strategy, and provide feedback.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The Council's asset base supports a wide range of functions and services. This includes office accommodation, community facilities, adult learning, libraries, bereavement services, education and children services, housing, social care and health provision. The estate provides important Council income via commercial lettings. As such, the Council's assets directly contributed to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2022 - 2026 and its seven corporate priorities:

- Open Lewisham
- Quality Housing
- Children and Young people
- A Strong Local Economy
- Health and Wellbeing
- Cleaner and Greener
- Safer communities

- 3.2 Many of the priorities in the Corporate Strategy will equally be dependent on a strong Asset Management Strategy that maximises utilisation of our estate.

- 3.3 The newly adopted Affordable Workspace Strategy, Cultural Strategy and Physical Activity Strategy, emerging Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) amongst others, have interdependencies with assets.

## 4. Background – Council Assets

- 4.1 The Council is required to publish a register of assets it owns as part of the transparency agenda. A full list of the register is published on the Council's website and can be found here: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/planning/landandpremises/council-land-and-premises>.

- 4.2 There are approximately 860 assets within the Council's non-housing asset register. This does not include Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets, but covers the commercial, corporate and schools estate held within the General Fund (GF). It also includes assets held by the Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited (CRPL), the Council's wholly owned company.

- 4.3 The non-housing portfolio includes assets mainly used to deliver the Council's civic

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functions (offices, libraries, depot, hostels etc), help discharge statutory obligations (e.g. schools), generate revenue income stream (retail units, light industrial sites etc) and help deliver specific corporate objectives. These assets are held and accounted for by the various services and directorates using them. For example, schools assets are held by the Directorate for Children and Young People, while offices and civic buildings and the operational estate are maintained by the Directorate for Corporate Resources. The Directorate for Housing Regeneration and Public Realm holds 'corporate landlord' responsibility for all assets and has a key role in ensuring the use of assets is optimised to support the delivery of corporate objectives.

- 4.4 Alongside the core non-housing estate is a Council garage portfolio of approximately 1500 individual garage units across a number of estates and sites. Although this portfolio is tenanted and managed by Lewisham Homes, pending the in sourcing of the housing management function, overall responsibility lies with the Council's Property & Estates team within the Housing Regeneration and Public Realm Directorate.
- 4.5 The table below provides a breakdown of the Council's current non-housing asset portofio grouped broadly according to use type. This excludes the garage portfolio noted above.

<b>Asset Category</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Commercial (including CRPL portfolio)	313	36%
Operational (offices, libraries, community centres etc)	151	18%
Land holdings	143	17%
School estate	98	11%
Parks / Open Spaces	100	12%
Others (inc. hostels, allotments)	53	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>858</b>	

- 4.6 Included in the above are a very limited number of assets in 'transition' which are as a result of a small number of voids in the commercial estate or services no longer requiring them for service delivery. In these cases, for the commercial estate, they are marketed for re-let and in the case of surplus operational assets alternative options are sought for them. Some are placed into guardianship use as a form of securing the property while beneficial alternative uses are sought for the medium to long term. However, in an increasing number of cases, some assets in transition are also being used for other purposes including meanwhile uses such as workspace provision.
- 4.7 Further, the Council is expected to show leadership on carbon emissions from our estate and operations as part of the wider ambition for the borough to be net zero by 2030. The Council has recently completed assessment of the work and cost of decarbonising 32 of our corporate sites and a survey of a further 51 is currently underway. It is clear from the initial survey that the challenge and cost of meeting the Council's ambition to be net zero in the above timeframe will be significant.

## 5. Asset Management Strategy

- 5.1 The previous Strategic Asset Management Plan covered the period 2015-2020. A new strategy is needed, which will cover the use and management of the Council's assets, ensuring a consistent corporate approach is taken to inform Council decision making processes. Work is ongoing to review priority assets including considering future use, disposals and reducing the financial burden of underutilised assets, and therefore it is important the Council has a strategy that sets out its approach. This will better enable officers to recommend decisions around future use and maintenance of assets, and ensure resources are spent in the best way possible.

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- 5.2 The Asset Management Strategy is currently being prepared and will run from 2024 – 2030. It is expected to go to Mayor & Cabinet in spring 2024 for approval.
- 5.3 The Inclusive Regeneration division, with support from One Consulting Group, is delivering the Asset Management Strategy, leading engagement and gathering direct input from relevant services, with oversight provided by the Council’s Asset Review and Regeneration and Capital Boards. It will be a cross-directorate owned strategy, ensuring that future service needs are met and priorities for investment and maintenance in or rationalisation of our existing estate are identified.
- 5.4 The scope of the Asset Management Strategy includes the following areas: vision and governance; current asset base; acquisition and disposal approach; meanwhile use; sustainability and carbon reduction; public sector partnerships; and asset management. The Strategy will also include the emerging work on community and third sector use of Council assets together with an outline Asset Management Plan which details service asset use and future need.
- 5.5 In the meantime and in support of the strategy, a number of workstreams are underway in parallel to this strategy. A summary of these, including a review of community use of Council assets; approach to disposals; corporate estate maintenance programme; and a council-wide asset review is summarised below.

## **6. Asset Management & Corporate Estate Maintenance Programme**

- 6.1 A section of the estate is maintained directly by the Council as part of the Facilities Management services contract within the Directorate for Corporate Resources. This group of assets numbers approximately 100 buildings across 61 sites. These are buildings where the Council’s FM Services Team maintain statutory and regulatory compliance responsibility and carry out routine maintenance and response repairs.
- 6.2 Alongside the statutory and responsive repairs is the Corporate Estate Maintenance Programme (CEMP) which invests in and maintains the Council’s operational asset base in a planned and programmed manner. £4.9m from the Capital Programme has been committed across 2020 – 2024 and covers approximately 70 buildings. Benefits of the programme include less interruptions to critical operations due to building or equipment failure, longer asset life, improved efficiency and energy performance, increased safety and compliance, and reduced repair costs.
- 6.3 Running parallel to the CEMP has been the delivery of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funded improvements to selected corporate buildings. These include community/youth centres and adult education centres.
- 6.4 The Asset Management Strategy will be important in informing the CEMP and future applications for PSDS funding, ensuring prioritisation of funding in the right places, and informing the Council’s longer term capital strategy. In turn the CEMP (and its associated condition surveys) will help provide evidence on the condition of assets under review and the investment required.
- 6.5 Work undertaken through the CEMP and PSDS programmes is managed and monitored in the same way as all capital projects. Contractor performance is managed with the support of an Employer’s Agent / Contract Administrator and sound contract documentation.

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## **7. Community use of Council Assets**

- 7.1 The Council uses a number of its property assets to support the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The assistance is sometimes direct, by offering a fully maintained facility or in other cases assisting with concessionary / peppercorn rents. The Council recognises the value generated by the sector and that enabling access to assets is a form of support. As well as being directly involved in delivering services to citizens in the borough, VCS organisations also provide the essential infrastructure to enable the sector as a whole to develop and support individual citizens to be able to play an active role within their local communities.
- 7.2 The use of Council buildings by the VCS is underpinned by a 2014/15 review of Community Sector portfolio and a subsequent policy on the VCS use of Council assets. Community use of assets and the policy are currently being reviewed. Work is being undertaken collaboratively with Community Services to ensure a more consistent approach to third sector use of community assets and regularisation of tenancy arrangements for community occupied assets, whilst better recognising the value provided by community sector use and occupation of the Council estate.
- 7.3 This work will form part of the emerging Asset Management Strategy. Following a Member's briefing in June 2023 officers have continued to work on understanding the sector and assets, reviewing the existing policy, and visiting and negotiating tenancies with some organisations. Further updates will be provided in due course.
- 7.4 The Council and partners are continuously looking at how existing assets can be maximised for the benefit of the local community. 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.
- 7.5 Recent workspace examples include placing a new Business Centre (BIPC Local) in Catford Library, Bow Arts Affordable Workspace which has been in place in the Old Town Hall since 2016. Bow Arts created 35 bespoke semi-open plan studios that have supported over 95 artists with affordable high quality workspace including access to business support and training. The use of a former respite centre in Hither Green for affordable workspace on a meanwhile basis (House on the Hill). Officers continue to seek to identify opportunities for cultural, community and workspace use as and when they arise.

## **8. Asset Review**

- 8.1 Following a mandate from EMT in summer 2020, officers are carrying out a review across the Council's corporate, operational and office estate. The review seeks to identify prioritised opportunities to enable better utilisation of the Council's assets, land supply for housing development and to enable service transformation. It will also identify assets where disposal is considered an opportunity to provide capital receipt for the Capital Programme and reinvestment in core Council objectives. It will enable a more strategic approach to management and utilisation of assets, ensuring reducing capital budget for maintenance and investment are focused on key buildings which are 'sweated' as best

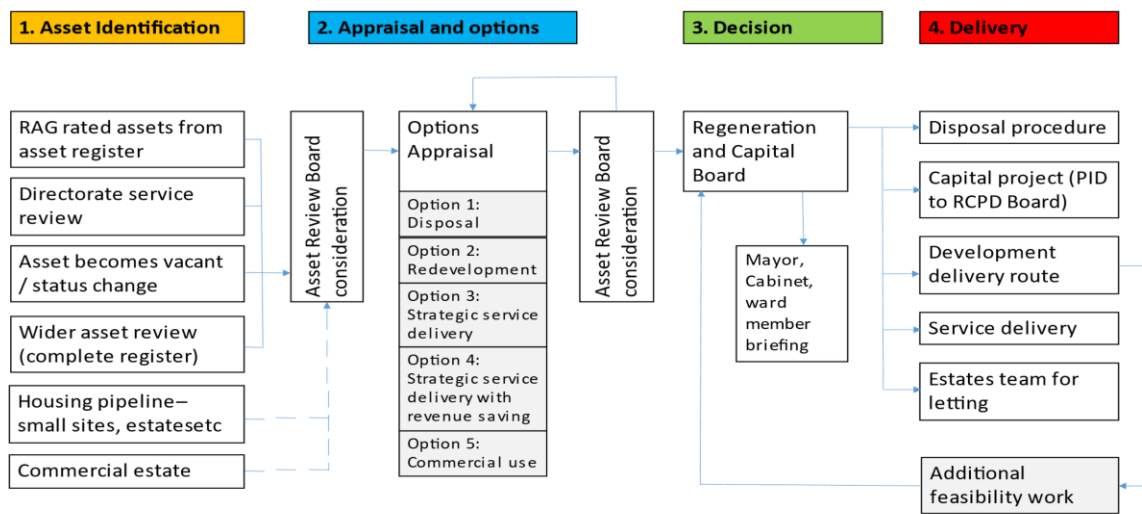
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they can be. The Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 will be part of the key guiding principles of the asset review in helping ensure the best use of and that investment is targeted in such a way as to support the ambition to achieve net zero.

- 8.2 In the short term, the review is concentrating on a small number of assets and sites. In the medium term, in line with the Asset Management Strategy, the ongoing asset review work will continue to look across the estate to ensure efficient and appropriate use which maximises social, economic and monetary value.
- 8.3 An Officer Board has been set up to support the Asset Review. The purpose of the Board is to challenge, scrutinise and drive forward the asset review and ensure it delivers its agreed outcomes and benefits. It will also oversee the development of the Asset Management Strategy as well as reviewing demands on our infrastructure and assets and how this will change over time, taking into account economic, political and social pressures. The Board feeds into the Regeneration and Capital Board. Terms of Reference, including membership can be found at Appendix 1. All decisions around assets are taken in accordance with current Mayoral scheme of delegation and standing orders.
- 8.4 As part of the asset review officers undertake an options appraisal to fully explore all possible outcomes for an asset. The range of options for an asset are fully considered before a recommendation made: strategic service use (with or without revenue saving), redevelopment (housing self-delivery, partner RSL, temporary housing etc), disposal, or commercial use.
- 8.5 The following table summarises the process and governance of the Asset Review



ASSET REVIEW PROCESS v1 December 2021

- 8.6 In reviewing the potential for strategic service use, officers consider whether an asset may be suitable for adult and children's social care residential need. Two assets have already been identified for this (Amersham and Northover) and will be converted for residential use for children in care and leaving care, creating substantial revenue savings annually. Officers reviewing HRA sites also seek to identify suitable sites.
- 8.7 In parallel to the review of General Fund assets, colleagues in Strategic Housing are undertaking a review of HRA 'small and complex sites', identifying Council owned land which has potential for development. Initial studies have been undertaken across a number of sites to determine their potential. This work includes sites which may be

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suitable for affordable workspaces or could be disposed of to help fund other Council projects. We are also working with our Public Sector and Housing Association Partners as part of the review. The review of all HRA assets is closely aligned with the General Fund Asset Review to ensure synergies, realise marriage values and all opportunities are realised.

- 8.8 To date, the review of Council asset has realised opportunities to work with smaller, charitable organisations to deliver affordable housing on small and complex sites. For example, the Council has delivered in partnership with the London Community Land Trust, 11 new intermediate homes at Brasted close (Citizens House), 36 new affordable homes at Church Grove working with RUSS and 4 supported homes for adults with autism at Stanstead Road in partnership with Birnkeck.

## **9. Acquisitions and Disposals**

- 9.1 One of the options for consideration in the Asset Review is disposal. Disposals enable capital receipts to support the Capital Programme, reduce the maintenance and running cost liability for the Council, release land for an alternative use, such as housing, and reduce the estate to a manageable and efficient size. The capital receipt generated can then be re-invested in other buildings which better meet the needs of the Council and its residents.

- 9.2 An Asset Disposal Process has been drafted (and is being tested) which sets out the steps needed to be undertaken when declaring a General Fund (GF) or Housing Revenue Fund (HRA) asset surplus to requirements and subsequently disposing of it. The process is consistent with the Council's commitment not to dispose of strategic assets and considers the long-term strategic value of land in any decision making. Asset disposal is part of a range of tools or approaches which ensures effective asset management, therefore a clear process is required to ensure assets are disposed of in a structured and controlled way, to ensure best value for the Council and no long-term negative impact.

- 9.3 Appendix 2 sets out disposals the council has made recently. A disposal register of potential future disposals is being developed by officers, who will work through the options appraisal approach outlined above to determine the best option for each asset. Once a recommendation is made, that will then go through the necessary approval channels, including Mayor & Cabinet where relevant.

- 9.4 The approach to (non-housing) acquisitions is being developed and will form part of the Asset Management Strategy. The draft Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Strategy sets out how the Council, through its housing procurement team and partners, will procure a sufficient supply through the private rented sector to meet demand for homeless households. This aligns with the Housing Strategy which sets out how the council will increase the supply of high-quality private rented accommodation, maintain a sufficient supply of cost-effective temporary accommodation and reduce the overall number of households in temporary accommodation.

## **10. Commercial Estate**

- 10.1 There are approximately 313 properties in the Council's commercial estate generating a total income of approximately £3m a year. This is in addition to the circa 1500 individual garage units generating a further £1.3m a year.

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- 10.2 The commercial estate consists of mostly secondary and tertiary parades, often on Council estates around the borough. Most of the retail parades are situated beneath residential blocks or on estates. The best performing retail parades are at Evelyn Street, New Cross Road and Randlesdown Road. The portfolio also includes a number of light industrial units located at Forest Hill and a number of nurseries dispersed across the borough.
- 10.3 There are also a number of offices within the general commercial estate, with the main one being the Old Town Hall in Catford, where five of the six floors are leased to public sector partners including DWP (Job Centre), Ingeus, SLAM, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust. The last floor is used by a work space provider to support low cost office and work space provision for start-up businesses. Since 2016 the affordable workspace provision has delivered an additional GVA of £3.3m, Bow Arts have also delivered school engagement sessions to over 4500 Lewisham School Children, trained over 140 teachers and awarded 104 qualifications all part of Bow Arts Artists in Lewisham Schools programme. The affordable workspace in the Old Town Hall has created over 100 jobs and provided affordable workspace provision to 78 Lewisham residents.
- 10.4 Included within the commercial estate is the Catford Regeneration Partnership Limited (CRPL) property portfolio. This is managed separately to the main Council portfolio and includes Winslade Way shopping centre, various retail units on Catford Broadway and Rushey Green and approximately 20 residential properties above retail units, let separately on Assured Shorthold tenancies. The approach here is a short to medium term management of the portfolio in a way which supports the Council's long term regeneration objectives for the town centre.

## 11. Strategic Partnerships:

- 11.1 **Local Lewisham Estates Partnership** – Lewisham has a well established Local Estates Partnership with public sector partners in the Borough. There is particularly close working with health partners, there being a significant health estate in Lewisham, including that held by Lewisham & Greensich Trust, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and the primary care providers. The partnership focusses on the best use of land to deliver upon share public sector objectives.
- 11.2 The Local Estates Partnership is a governance requirement for Boroughs to be eligible to receive One Public Estate Funding. The Council and its partners have a strong track record in successfully bidding and receiving grant funding. Indeed, the Lewisham Local Estates Forum has often been cited at a sub regional level as one of the most successful

## 12. Key Challenges and Opportunities with Council Assets

- 12.1 As the above report outlines there are many challenges and opportunities associated with non-housing assets. These can be summarised as follows:
- 12.2 Challenges
- An ageing estate which over time costs more to repair and maintain
  - In some instances, an under-utilised estate
  - Housing demand
  - Reducing capital monies
  - RAAC
  - The Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030
- 12.3 Opportunities
- Service transformation

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- Increased revenue generation from commercial lettings
- Capital receipts from disposal of non-strategic land
- Leaner better maintained estate
- Mixed use of the estate – meanwhile, workspace, community etc

### **13. Financial Implications**

13.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report; however the contents outline how the asset review will help generate revenue savings, reduced running costs, generate capital receipt and support strategic service delivery.

### **14. Legal Implications**

14.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Any assets subject to potential disposal or alternative use will have to follow the Council’s constitution and any statutory requirements.

### **15. Equalities Implications**

15.1 Due regard to equalities will be considered when making decisions on assets, and where required Equality Analysis Assessments may need to be undertaken by services who are changing their offer. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out as part of the overall Asset Management Strategy.

### **16. Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

16.1 There are no direct climate change and environmental implications arising from this report, however environmental consideration will be addressed in any capital project that takes places in the Council’s estate. The CEMP and the PSDS funded works seek to decarbonise corporate buildings and make improvements which reduce utility consumption, make buildings more efficient and contribute towards the Council’s target to be carbon neutral by 20230.

### **17. Crime and Disorder Implications**

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

### **18. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

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

### **19. Glossary**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
VCS	Voluntary and community sector
AMS	Asset Management Strategy

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Term	Definition
VCS	Voluntary and community sector
CEMP	Corporate Estate Maintenance Programme
PSDS	Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme

## 20. Report Author and Contact

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## 21. Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – Board Terms of Reference
2. Recent Disposals

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# APPENDIX 1

## Asset Review - Board Terms of Reference

### Background:

Following a mandate from EMT in summer 2020, officers are carrying out a review across the council's corporate, operational and office estate. The review seeks to identify opportunities to enable better utilisation of the council's assets, land supply for housing development and to enable service transformation. It will also identify assets that can be disposed of to provide capital receipt for the Capital Programme. It should enable a more strategic approach to management and utilisation of assets, ensuring reducing capital budget for maintenance and investment are focused on key buildings which are 'sweated' as best they can be. It will also enable rationalisation of office and service delivery space, particularly as staff working habits and the way in which services are delivered change.

In the short term the review is concentrating on a small number of 'low hanging fruit' assets and sites, seeking to deliver direct revenue savings and supporting the Capital Programme through receipts from disposals. In the medium term the asset review will undertake a wholesale review of assets across the estate to release value and ensure efficient and appropriate use.

### Purpose:

The purpose of the Board is to challenge, scrutinise and drive forward the asset review and ensure it delivers its agreed outcomes and benefits.

Specifically, the group will:

- Ensure asset options appraisals are moderated, scrutinised and challenged before recommendations are made to Regeneration and Capital Board.
- Agree change of use and recommending small, non-contentious or non-strategic sites for disposal where appropriate (All disposals will be in accordance with current Mayoral scheme of delegation and standing orders).
- Ensure proposals for assets are joined up across the council, and identify opportunities for mixed-use of sites.
- Ensure a consistent and corporate approach is taken when making recommendations for assets and that these are aligned to the Corporate Strategy and priorities.
- Ensure Asset Review is linked with housing and education portfolios and wider public sector partners (including One Public Estate), to ensure joined up approach to all assets within the borough.
- Oversee progress on agreed asset schemes, unblocking with directorate responsibility where relevant and required. Delivery to sit with appropriate service.
- Consider and analyse demands on our infrastructure and assets and how this will change over time, taking into account economic, political and social pressures
- Identify and realise opportunities for funding (internal and external) for particular asset schemes

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- Oversee the development of a Asset Management Strategy
- Ensure that any proposed changes to assets are consistent with the Council's agreed Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

### **Membership:**

Core membership to comprise:

- Director of Inclusive Regeneration (Chair)
- Director of Finance
- Director of Communities, Partnership and Leisure
- Head of Business Infrastructure, Compliance and Education Operations (CYP)
- Head of Strategic Housing and Regeneration
- Director of Resident and Business Services
- Head of Property, Assets and Capital Programmes
- Senior Programme Manager – Strategic Assets (officer servicing Board)
- Director of Planning (or representative)
- Director of Housing Services (or representative)
- Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships

Deputies to attend where core member is unable to.

The group will remain flexible in its membership, having additional members / guests partake on a one-off or semi-regular basis dependent on assets and topics being discussed. These may include:

- Other Directorate/service representatives as relevant

### **Governance:**

The Board will report to and feed into the decision making of the Regeneration and Capital Board.

The Board will interact with and sit within a wider governance structure of boards, including CYP Strategic Asset Board, and the Regeneration and Capital Programme Delivery Board.

### **Meeting logistics:**

The Board will meet bi-monthly with frequency to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. An agenda (and associated papers) will be issued in advance of each meeting, with action points circulated after each meeting.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Recent Disposals

Asset	Address	Sale price	Date sold	Further information
<b>Carston Close</b>	Carston Close, Burnt Ash Road, SE12 8TG	£100,000	May 2022	Small piece of land to enable Galliard to do landscaping as part of the Leegate development
<b>203 Deptford High Street</b>	203 Deptford High St, SE8 3NT	£450,000	December 2022	Dilapidated retail unit with storage/flat above (no separate access).
<b>Wide Horizons - Horton Kirby Centre</b>	Horton Road, Horton Kirby, Dartford, Kent, DA4 6BN	£475,000	September 2023	Former Wide Horizons outdoor adventure site in Kent which ceased operation in 2018 (company went into administration).

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