



Mayor and Cabinet

Response to comments of the Sustainable Development Select Committee on the Levelling Up Fund Programme in Lewisham Town Centre

Date: 24th January 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part1

Ward(s) affected: All.

Contributors: Spike van der Vliet-Firth – Acting Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships

Outline and recommendations

That Mayor and Cabinet note the officer response to the comments raised by the Sustainable Development Select Committee.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Mayor and Cabinet – 15 June 2022

Mayor and Cabinet – 26 July 2023 (Project 2 – Culture and Business Hub)

Sustainable Development Select Committee – 12 September 2023

Mayor and Cabinet – 1 November 2023 (Project 1 & 3 – High Street and Market Procurement Authorisation)

1. Summary

- 1.1. On Tuesday 12 September, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered a report from officers on the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund Programme in Lewisham Town Centre. The Committee reflected on the contents of the report – and received a presentation from officers. Following questions to officers, the Committee agreed to refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet.
- 1.2. This paper provides an officer response to the comments from Sustainable Development Select Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Mayor and Cabinet note the officer response to the comments raised by the Sustainable Development Select Committee.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The 2022-2026 Corporate Strategy priority “A strong local economy” includes the following commitments:
 - Invest in our high streets and create more pedestrianised spaces.
 - Provide support for our independent businesses and protect and improve our local street markets.
 - Actively work to attract jobs and businesses to Lewisham and create more spaces for pop up stores and markets.
 - Continue to work with businesses across the borough, encouraging them to become London Living Wage employers.
- 3.2. The Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan was adopted by the Council in 2014. It sets out nine objectives including ambitions for Lewisham to become a metropolitan town centre, increase commercial floorspace in the town centre, enhance features such as the street market, support walking and cycling, improve safety and increase leisure provision.
- 3.3. In March 2021 the Government set out its ambition to “Build Back Better” through the pillars of infrastructure, skills, innovation, “Levelling Up” across the UK, transition to net-zero and a vision for a Global Britain. The Government considers Levelling Up to mean addressing inequalities between geographic areas, giving everyone the opportunity to flourish and raising living standards and wellbeing.
- 3.4. The ‘We Are Lewisham’ cultural strategy 2023 – 2028 is our plan for securing the legacy of our 2022 London Borough of Culture and builds on Lewisham’s strong cultural foundations for creating the conditions which allow creativity to thrive. The key priorities of the cultural strategy include:
 - Creative communities – everyone will have access to the positive benefits of engaging with cultural and creative activities.
 - Creative places – cultural and creative places will meet the changing needs of Lewisham’s communities and creatives.
 - Creative enterprise – the conditions will be right for the cultural and creative industries to thrive and be more accessible to a broader range of communities in Lewisham.
 - Creative connections – creative ways of connecting public sector organisations and communities tested during our year as London Borough of Culture will become part of the way we work together.

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4. Response to views of the Sustainable Development Select Committee

- 4.1. The Committee recommends that further consideration be given to the development of the night-time offer in Lewisham Town Centre – including food and beverage options, as well as the potential for live music. This should build on existing knowledge and experiences of success elsewhere in London.
- 4.2. The Levelling Up Fund programme is considering how this transformation can help activate the evening and night-time economy in Lewisham, in line with the 2018 'Evening and Night Time Vision for Lewisham'. The permanent market canopy has the potential to unlock delivery of night-time markets and public performances, subject to further work to understand and mitigate the impact on residents. Officers are examining the delivery of night-time markets and related cultural activity happening elsewhere in London. Night-time economic activation is also being considered in relation to the expansion of hospitality and leisure arising from nearby development such as Lewisham Gateway.
- 4.3. The Committee believes that further work should take place with young people, people who are disabled and members of groups with other protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010) – as well as a cross section of people from different socio-economic backgrounds to co-design the work taking place – particularly in relation to the accessibility and suitability of public spaces.
- 4.4. Extensive engagement with local residents, including those with protected characteristics, is a foundation of the programme's communication and engagement strategy. Gaining the broadest range of views possible will be reflected in our upcoming public consultations and engagements. In the last three months, focus group with members of the Disabled People's Commission and discussions with the Black VCS network have taken place with more focus groups planned in the months ahead. Through the Town Centre Partnership we engaged with local young people in the development of our initial bid, and we intend to deliver more engagement with young people. On 23rd November 2023, we hosted a night surgery with the Mayor's Night Czar, Amy Lamé. We held a focus group during the visit with local young people at Lewisham Shopping Centre, to talk about their relationship with the evening and night time economy.
- 4.5. The Committee recommends that further work should take place to communicate, to residents and business, the alternative arrangements in place following the temporary closure of Lewisham Library.
- 4.6. Officers recognise the need to communicate the temporary closure of Lewisham Library on a consistent basis. In recent months this has been communicated to residents and businesses through Lewisham Life, local leaflet distribution, applying vinyl to library windows, attending local ward assemblies and engagements with the 'Lewisham Town Centre Partnership' of businesses. We will be communicating with residents and businesses to update them about the Levelling Up Fund programme routinely, including in upcoming public consultations.
- 4.7. The Committee believes that a system of impact measurement should be developed to ensure that the redevelopment is meeting its intended objectives. Members ask that this includes an assessment of the availability of workspaces in the refurbished library for students.
- 4.8. The Levelling Up Fund Programme has budgeted for external evaluation partners to help ensure the redevelopment meets its intended objectives and this can include measuring the impact of our transformation intervention. Lewisham are obliged to

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report progress of our project to Government, which includes assessment of our progress against the aims outlined in our original bid. As a result, this forms a key component of our project performance monitoring and the Programme has committed to sharing our evaluation findings to external audiences. Metrics include increases in footfall, consumer spending, number of occupied market stalls, number of cultural events, mode shift in transportation, change in perceptions of place and public realm improvement.

- 4.9. The Committee notes the Council's objective to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030 – and it encourages the ambitious delivery of energy efficiency and retrofit measures as part of the renovation of Lewisham Library. Members would encourage bids for external funding to enhance this work.
- 4.10. The Levelling Up Fund Programme remains committed to Lewisham's net-zero neutrality objectives and this includes exploring potential to contribute to this objective in the design and delivery of our Programme. Sustainability and carbon minimisations forms a key design element of each project. A bid to support the Culture and Business Hub in the current library has been submitted to the Government's 'Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme'.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, there may be future implications arising from implementation of the Committee's recommendations in latter stages of the Levelling Up Fund Programme. These will need to be considered as part of a future response.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. The Constitution provides for select committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider the report and the proposed response from the relevant Executive Director; and report back to the Committee within two months (not including recess).

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1. Lewisham's Levelling Up Programme aims to have an overall positive equalities impact. Economic growth will enable the creation of more jobs within the town centre which could help address some of the existing inequalities in the local labour market. The Communications and Engagement Strategy has this principle embedded, and demonstrated in the groups we have targeted or will target for specific engagement. Throughout the delivery of the programme, appropriate milestones will be identified where we can engage directly with key groups throughout the design and testing phases.
- 7.2. A high level Equalities Analysis Assessment was carried out at bid level, but an in depth assessment will be carried out at project level for the high street/public realm and the Culture and Business Hub ensuring cohesion and consistency across both.

8. Climate change and environmental implications

- 8.1. Securing additional external funding sources such as Public Sector Decarbonisation Programme will have a direct impact on how we maximise the environmental benefits from transformation of Lewisham Town Centre. The projects being delivered through the Levelling Up Fund will have a positive biodiversity impact through the

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enhancements and greenery delivered through the high street. Enhanced greening will include planting of trees, as well as surface level planting and installation of green pocket spaces.

- 8.2. The programme will also have a positive environmental effect through, for example, improving the recycling rates of the street market and reducing food and other waste, and reducing the impact of the library building by improving insulation and updating machinery and plant.

9. Crime and disorder implications

- 9.1. Expansion of economic activity in the post-6pm window through night markets and public events is shown to have a positive impact on crime and disorder. Evening economic activity is being considered for how it can address issues of public disorder and in particular public urination. Improvements to the public realm on the High Street will aim to reduce crime and improve actual and perceived safety. The programme will also improve economic prosperity for local residents, having a positive impact on reducing crime and disorder

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1. Improved economic prosperity for local residents is expected to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

11. Background papers

- 11.1. Mayor and Cabinet - Comments of the Sustainable Development Select Committee on the Levelling Up Fund Programme in Lewisham Town Centre, 1st November 2023.

12. Report author(s) and contact

- 12.1. Spike van der Vliet-Firth - Acting Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships
- 12.2. spike.vandervliet-firth@lewisham.gov.uk / 07736373934
- 12.3. Finance Implications – Shola Ojo, Strategic Business Partner Finance
- 12.4. Shola.ojo@lewisham.gov.uk
- 12.5. Legal implications- Melanie Dawson, Principal Lawyer for Place
- 12.6. Melanie.dawson@lewisham.gov.uk

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