



1. Sustainable Development Select Committee

Lewisham Town Centre Improvements Programme

Date: 10 September 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Lewisham Central

Contributors: Laura Ahern and Spike van der Vliet-Firth – Economy, Jobs and Partnerships

1. Outline and recommendations

In January 2023, Lewisham Council successfully secured £19m from the Government's 'Levelling Up Fund' to deliver interventions in Lewisham Town Centre that will revitalise the marketplace, create a flagship Culture and Business Hub, and connect the town with better, safer walking and cycling infrastructure.

The delivery of this programme is now underway and will transform economic and community activity, provide opportunities for local businesses, increase cultural activity, and stimulate the night-time economy. It will increase footfall and consumer spend, unlock private investment, create jobs, and give residents a place to be proud of. This report provides an update on the programme delivery to date and sets out key delivery milestones.

The recommendation for Sustainable Development Select Committee is:

- To note the progress made to date in the delivery of the Lewisham Town Centre Improvements Programme.

2. Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Mayor and Cabinet: Bid Outline and Submission – 15 June 2022

Mayor and Cabinet: Procurement Approval (Culture and Business Hub) – 26 July 2023

Sustainable Development Select Committee – 12 Sept 2023

Mayor and Cabinet: Progress Update and Procurement Approvals (High Street) – 1 Nov 2023

Mayor and Cabinet: Project 1 – Market Canopy Procurement Approval – 18 Sept 2024
(pending decision)

2. Summary

- 2.1. This report outlines progress made to date in the delivery of the Lewisham Town Centre Improvement Programme funded by the 'Levelling Up Fund'. In September 2023, the Sustainable Development Select Committee received a briefing on the programme mobilisation following the funding award. This briefing aims to highlight progress made against the ambition of the original proposal.
- 2.2. It is recommended that Sustainable Development Select Committee: Note the progress made to date in the delivery of the Lewisham Town Centre Improvements Programme.

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 Town Centre to become a metropolitan town centre, increase commercial floorspace in the area, enhance key town centre features such as the street market, supporting increased walking and cycling, improving safety and increasing leisure provision.
- 3.3. The Council's 'We Are Lewisham' Cultural Strategy 2023 - 2028 is our plan for achieving 2022 London Borough of Culture year legacy for building on Lewisham's strong cultural foundations. The Council aims to create the conditions which allow cultural participation and creative enterprise to flourish. 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.

4. Background & Programme Ambition

- 4.1. In July 2022 Lewisham Council submitted a bid to the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) for improvements in Lewisham town centre. The outline bid proposal was approved by Mayor and Cabinet in June 2022.
- 4.2. In January 2023, the former Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), now Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced that Lewisham Council had successfully secured £19m to revitalise

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Lewisham Town Centre. The funding will be combined with £5m of match funding from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Several months later, Lewisham was provided the contracts which formalised the funding and allowed officers to begin mobilising the regeneration project.

- 4.3. This funding is being used to revitalise Lewisham's Street market, create a new Cultural and Business Hub within a fully refurbished Lewisham Library, and improve the pedestrian and cycle connectivity throughout the high street.

Lewisham street market

- 4.4. The street market plays a vital role to the Lewisham's local economy, providing jobs and supporting a loyal customer base, with the market being particularly well-used by lower income residents and older people. The market has stood for generations and is loved by local residents who vocalise their support for the offer and traders. Although the market is successful it is broadly recognising that investment is required to enhance the operations, conditions, and capacity leading to an increased footfall for the market. Several issues had the potential to threaten the market's long-term viability. In particular, there were significant waste challenges and this town centre space lacked activation outside of the market operation hours.
- 4.5. The programme is supporting the rejuvenation of the market. Most notably, planning permission has been granted for the Market Canopy which will form the centrepiece of a modernised market. It will contain improved stalls, significantly improved waste management infrastructure, improvements to the pavement, railings and public furniture including new planting, new lighting and electricity facilities.
- 4.6. The investment in infrastructure is being paired with initiatives that complement the market's offer and expand the diversity of groups who use the market, without losing or alienating existing customers, including an evening market, "pop up" trading opportunities and space to support food and drink, cultural and seasonal events.
- 4.7. These changes will attract more visitors to the market and town centre, extend hours of economic activity in the town centre into the evening and nighttime, enhance local pride, improve the environmental impact of the market and improve safety.

Cultural and Business Hub

- 4.8. The current Lewisham Library located at the end of the high street is an important community asset. However, before it temporarily closed it was in poor condition, had limited accessibility and the space is underutilised. At the same time, there is a lack of flexible and accessible business spaces in the area, with demand significantly outstripping the capacity. There is also a limited cultural offer in the town centre to attract and retain visitors.
- 4.9. One of the key challenges for the library is to adapt to changing needs and expectations of service users. This programme aims to realise the building's potential to become a magnet that offers culture, business support, local history and a hospitality offer.
- 4.10. The project is focussed on the renovation of the building to create a centrally located multi-purpose culture and business hub, which will include:
 - A much more accessible space for library services with a strong traditional library service offer coupled with modern media facilities.
 - Workspace and support for local businesses and entrepreneurs

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- Flexible community and cultural space for hosting events, performances and exhibitions
 - A hospitality café offer.
- 4.11. The new hub will be used to support a variety of services including business advice and support services for residents looking to start, grow and enhance their business, a rich cultural programme; activities for children and young people, and employment support and training.

Reimagined and connected High Street

- 4.12. There are a wide range of issues facing Lewisham High Street. These include the high volume of buses and vehicles that have a significant impact on the safety and attractiveness of the environment. Residents have difficulty navigating between the key areas such as the train station, market, shopping centre and high street. The city centre enjoys limited greenery and the cycling infrastructure does not support the Council's active travel ambitions. The public realm around the high street is not pedestrian friendly and this has an impact on the attractiveness from visitors outside the local areas, which means people are less inclined to spend time or shop there. We also know residents are concerned about accessibility for pedestrians.
- 4.13. The overall aim is to create an enhanced public realm that supports positive experiences when visiting the town centre and increases the safety of residents, visitors and businesses. The planned interventions are:
- Improvement of access routes to and from High Street (wayfinding and signage, redesign of junctions and pedestrian crossings, pavement improvements).
 - Development of mobility hubs to encourage people to use cycling, walking and electric cars.
 - Improvements to cycling infrastructure.
 - Public realm enhancements and greenery, which will improve the attractiveness of the high street as well as increase biodiversity. Enhanced greening will include planting of trees, as well as surface level planting and installation of green pocket spaces.
 - Restoration of the historic clock tower.
 - Safety features such as improved lighting.

5. Project progress update

- 5.1. In September 2023, the committee was made aware of the overall design principles that were being taken following the government grant award. The programme has moved on significantly from the brief development and initial concept design which was taking place in autumn 2023. Officers are pleased to report positive and significant progress against the overall programme vision.
- 5.2. Over the last year, several key milestones have been met and the project teams have made significant progress transitioning through the design phases and into construction. Work is already underway on the high street improvement; planning permission has been granted for the Market Canopy design and the Culture and Business Hub planning application is currently being considered. This positive progress is despite a few challenges and constraints experienced along the way – not least a delayed contract award from MHCLG. The government has agreed to a target completion date for the programme by March 2026. The £19 million government grant needs to be drawn down

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by this date, and the programme will spend this allocation before our internal match funding.

- 5.3. The project team are also mindful of the opportunity this programme has for leveraging further investment into Lewisham town centre and for contributing to the wider placemaking of this strategic town centre. The programme development has closely considered emerging plans from Landsec for the future redevelopment of Lewisham Shopping Centre. There is also dual benefits between the programme and the imminent opening of Lewisham Gateway.
- 5.4. This programme has also provided a evident ambition for the wider town centre. This clear vision has contributed to the success award of nearly £2.5m from the GLA's Civic Partnerships programme to drastically improve Riverdale Sculpture Park. Matched with £1 million of funding, this project will de-culvert access to the Ravensbourne River and open up new green space access for local residents. This significant investment in green space compliments the objective to improve Lewisham as a destination. Officers will continue to seek out opportunities that maximise investment in the town centre.

Revitalisation of Lewisham Market and reimagined and connected high street

- 5.5. The technical design of the market canopy and public realm is in its final stages, with a target completion for the construction by March 2026. The high street improvements are expected to be completed by September 2025. The planning application for the market canopy was submitted 31st May 2024 and was approved 31st July 2024, following several pre application meetings, a design review panel and a substantial public engagement exercise. This granting of planning permission without the need for committee decision speaks to the strength of our extensive engagement with affected stakeholders, in particular the Market Traders.
- 5.6. A decision is scheduled for Mayor & Cabinet 18th Sept 2024 to seek approvals for the procurement of the market canopy. This will allow a final project delivery timeline to be developed with clear cost expectations. We await to see how the market will respond to the brief. The following approvals are recommended to Mayor and Cabinet:
 - Approve Officers to undertake a procurement exercise to find a suitable Contractor to manufacture and install the new canopy to the value of £1,600,000.
 - Approve the award of contract to the preferred contractor to supply and install the structure provided the contract value is within authorised limits of £1,600,000.
 - Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Place (in consultation with Director of Law and Corporate Governance and Senior Programme Manager) to select the preferred contractor in accordance with the selection and award criteria published in the tender documentation and agree final form of contract.
- 5.7. To enable construction to begin on the high street, bus diversions commenced 3rd August 2024. Construction began on site from 5th Aug initially outside St Saviour's Church. The diversions are expected to stay in place until Spring 2025. Several routes are being diverted with Molesworth Street and Rennell street. FM Conway have been working to refine the programme to minimise the disruption time. Extensive communications announcing the disruption were completed by the Council and TfL.
- 5.8. To improve accessibility and feelings of safety at night, high street LED lights have now been installed and are fully operational in the town centre.
- 5.9. Tender documentation has been developed for the renovation works for the clock tower, in partnership with Lewisham Council Procurement. This work will be procured through a

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selective tender process to ensure the contractor chosen has sufficient experience working on similar grade 2 listed structures. The restoration works will be organised to alongside market canopy construction.

- 5.10. Work is underway to improve the market service area, Burton's Yard. This includes significant improvements to the waste management facilities and the storage of market stalls outside of operational hours. Construction of these improvements is currently underway and due to complete in early September 2024. The team is working closely with the markets management team to ensure minimal disruption to daily market operations.
- 5.11. The market canopy also provides potential for improving the market and cultural offer in the town centre. Officers from across the Council are working with market experts to help understand the opportunities to enhance the existing market and new opportunities for an offer – particularly outside of current trading hours. Feasibility work on how this will be curated, managed and minimise impact on local residents is underway. Licensing and Community Safety provided valued input on potential constraints. Following this, a series of external workshops with key stakeholders and potential operators will be held as a way of soft market testing for potential operational models. This will conclude with a post-construction and mobilisation plan.

Project 2: New Culture and Business hub

- 5.12. Following completion of the developed design for the Culture and Business Hub, the planning application was submitted 25th July 2024 with the determination period of up to 12 weeks currently underway. RIBA Stage 4 (Technical Design) is now underway.
- 5.13. A significant amount of work has been done to reach the current designs for both the external façade and each level floor plan. Design work has been informed by a combination of targeted engagement sessions, internal service team workshops, soft market testing with potential hospitality and workspace operators, as well as detailed survey results and financial modelling. The programme team are moving to developing the strategy for developing the brief for the interior.
- 5.14. The project team has been working closely with the comms team to agree a three-step process to finalise the identity and branding for the hub. This process will include internal and external engagement activities and will ensure that the branding and identity is integrated with the build design, internal finishes, loose furniture and wayfinding of the building.
- 5.15. A report was taken to Mayor & Cabinet on the 10th July 2024 which obtained approvals to procure a main works contractor and delegate the contract award decision to the Executive Director for Place, as well as the authorisation for the disposal of the Library Resources Centre on Hither Green Lane, ringfencing the capital receipt from the sale to the Project 2 budget.

6. Programme Milestones

Project 1: Revitalisation of Lewisham Market and reimagined and connected high street

Milestone	Date
Completion of Burton's Yard construction works	Sept 2024
Tender exercise for clock tower works	TBC

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Clock tower works	TBC
M&C procurement approval	18 th Sept 2024
High Street RIBA stage 4 completion	End of Sept 2024
High Street construction	August 2024
Market construction	TBC
Project completion	March 2026

Project 2: New Culture and Business hub

Milestone	Date
Planning determination	July – Oct 2024
Internal stakeholder workshop – branding/identity	Oct 2024
RIBA work stage 4 (Technical Design) – report and cost plan	Oct 2024
Main Contractor tender process	Oct 2024 – Feb 2025
Construction on-site	March 2025 – June 2026
Inspection + snagging / practical completion	July – Aug 2026
Culture and Business Hub opens	Sept 2026

7. Communications and engagement

- 7.1. A dedicated Levelling Up webpage was created at the start of the programme signposting to all of the latest information and a list of FAQs – updated as and when required. The Council continues to navigate traffic towards this website.
- 7.2. The consultation programme for design development was two-fold. The Council first undertook targeted engagement with local groups, including those who might have accessibility needs to consider. We also did targeted engagement with local young people on their perceptions of the town centre currently and proposed designs. This feedback incorporated into the Council’s six-week consultation in March 2024. This gave

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members of the public an opportunity to share their views and ideas on the early designs for the market, high street and library.

- 7.3. The central feedback tool was a survey available online and in print. This was complemented by pop-up sessions in Lewisham Shopping Centre, Market and the Glass Mill Leisure Centre, alongside targeted engagement for community and advocacy groups who are, historically, underrepresented in consultations. All this engagement activity was promoted through a comprehensive communications campaign.
- 7.4. The Council also ran an extensive programme to engage council staff which included, hosting exhibitions and information sessions at Laurence House and Wearside, given how many of our staff are residents themselves. There was excellent interest and footfall in our concept designs at Unit 25 Lewisham Shopping Centre, where the team ran a number of pop-up sessions.
- 7.5. Nearly 1,500 people shared feedback on our designs during the consultation. They are, overall, really excited about the changes to come and see them as an opportunity to put Lewisham base on the map. The results have informed the design process and were included in the planning applications. We will be making our findings public shortly, with a published summary report followed by a “You Said, We Did” campaign to highlight how the public engagement has helped to shape the scheme.

8. Risks

- 8.1. The programme continues to effectively manage programme risk on a continual basis. This risk management is shown in our overall expected progress for autumn 2024 being on track. A number of key risks were identified in the inception of the programme. Risk registers are being kept for each of the projects.
- 8.2. Since the bid submission, there has been a rise in material and labour costs. Inflationary pressures have had an impact on already tight budgets, therefore detailed cost reviews were required, as well as detailed cost plans being issued at the end of each RIBA work stage. In addition, throughout the programme to date, detailed surveys have been required for the library building as well as the high street which has been required in order to make informed decisions on design and construction approach.
- 8.3. The project teams have continued to look for additional match funding opportunities. Where this has not been possible, the project teams have explored the need for value engineering, and even in some cases de scoping elements of the original proposals. One example of this is the removal of the ‘rooftop bar’ element from submitted proposals for the Culture and Business Hub. Any project change requested require approval from MHCLG if the proposed change adjusts the agreed outputs.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The grant has conditions attached to it to for type of spend & also the timeframe of spend. These conditions will be monitored throughout the length of the projects, and if

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the conditions are not met then some of the grant may have to be returned. Any grant returned will mean a greater call on funding by the council.

9.2. There is a risk that the projects may overspend. Any overspends will likely have to be funded through alternative sources of funding. Risk management is detailed in the previous section.

9.3. Robust monitoring of spend is required to ensure that the projects do not overspend.

10. Legal implications

10.1. There are no legal implications arising from this progress update.

11. Equalities implications

11.1. The Lewisham Town Centre Improvements 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. Changes to the street market could allow opportunities for new traders which can be targeted at groups who are currently under-represented in the profile of existing traders (e.g. Black residents, women, young people). The cultural and business hub will increase access to cultural activities and business opportunities for local residents, and again could be targeted to promote or attract people with a variety of protected equalities characteristics.

11.2. A high-level Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA) was carried out at bid level, but in-depth assessments are being developed at project level for the high street/public realm and the Culture and Business Hub ensuring cohesion and consistency across both.

11.3. A full Equality Analysis Assessment has been undertaken following the completion of RIBA Work Stage 3 (Developed Design) for the high street and canopy. This utilised the Council's approved methodology and draw upon the extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken to date on this project.

11.4. Throughout the delivery of the programme, appropriate milestones have been identified where we are engaging directly with key groups throughout the design and testing phases.

11.5. Lewisham Disabled People's Commission Report, published in March 2023, sets out a number of recommendations that have been taken into consideration when delivering this programme. The report highlights a number of statistics and insights from engagement they have delivered for those who use, or don't use our town centres and high streets, and will inform some of the thinking particularly as we move into the design phases.

11.6. We continue to ensure all communications and consultation documents are available in a range of formats, including easy read.

12. Climate change and environmental implications

12.1. The projects being delivered have a positive biodiversity impact through the enhancements and greener delivered through the high street. Enhanced greening will include planting of trees, as well as surface level planting and installation of green pocket spaces.

12.2. The programme has a positive environmental effect through, for example, improving the recycling rates of the street market and reducing food and other waste, and reducing the environmental impact of the library building by improving insulation and updating

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machinery and plant. The programme also supports active travel through improvement to the public realm.

13. Crime and disorder implications

- 13.1. 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.
- 13.2. Health and wellbeing implications
- 13.3. Improved economic prosperity for local residents is expected to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.
- 13.4. Background papers

[Lewisham Town Centre Local Plan Adoption](#) – 26 February 2014

[Lewisham High Street Headcount and Survey](#) – November 2021

[Mayor and Cabinet: Levelling Up Fund bid](#) – June 2022

- 13.5. Glossary

Term	Definition
Public Realm	The space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces (definition from the London Plan).
De-culvert	A culvert is a structure that channels water past an obstacle. In this example, the river is culverted below ground, and de-culverting is the process of exposing the river back to surface level.

- 13.6. Report author(s) and contact

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- 13.7. Appendices

None

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