



## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **Report title: Future Lewisham – an economically sound future**

**Date:** 8 March 2022

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** John Bennett

### **Outline and recommendations**

This report provides an overview of the priorities and work of the Council's Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service in delivering the pillar of Future Lewisham for "an economically sound future". The report highlights current and planned activities. The Committee's views are sought on the Council's emerging economic priorities and programmes.

The recommendations of this report are:

To encourage the continued development of local economic priorities to be reflected in the Council's future strategies and plans.

To endorse the proposed introduction of a new employment service, Lewisham Works, to support local unemployed residents in to work.

To welcome the commitment to an annual headcount and survey of independent and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic owned businesses, and to encourage a focus on improving engagement and trust between these businesses and the Council.

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

Announcement of Future Lewisham priorities by the Mayor of Lewisham, 26 May 2021

Lewisham Works, Mayor and Cabinet, 9 March 2022

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked for a report to provide an update on plans to deliver the Mayor's Future Lewisham ambition for an economically sound future. This report details the work and plans of the Economy, Jobs and Partnership service in the Inclusive Regeneration directorate.
- 1.2. The report provides an update on the economic context; describes the work done

during the Covid-19 pandemic (Response); activities as residents and businesses moved out of lockdown (Recovery); and outlines current and planned activities which will support the local economy in the future (Renewal). The Committee's views are sought on the Council's emerging economic priorities and programmes.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To encourage the continued development of local economic priorities to be reflected in the Council's future strategies and plans.
- 2.2. To endorse the proposed introduction of a new employment service, Lewisham Works, to support local unemployed residents in to work.
- 2.3. To welcome the commitment to an annual headcount and survey of independent and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic owned businesses, and to encourage a focus on improving engagement and trust between these businesses and the Council.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1. At the Council's Annual General Meeting in May 2021, the Mayor outlined the Council's priorities to support the borough's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. "Future Lewisham: our borough's recovery" sets out four themes at the heart of the Council's response to the impact of the pandemic. This report relates to the theme of "An economically sound future".
- 3.2. Our Corporate Strategy priority "Building an inclusive local economy" includes the following commitments:
  - *More Living Wage employers*
  - *Support to access work and to progress*
  - *High quality work and reduced inequalities*
  - *A thriving local economy*
- 3.3. The Mayor of London, Greater London Authority (GLA), London boroughs and a range of other strategic partners have jointly agreed an Economic Recovery Framework for London. The framework contains five pillars of activity – Jobs, Business, Thriving Neighbourhoods, Connected City and Global London. Within each pillar are four key issues to focus collective efforts on, with building the green economy and narrowing social, economic and health inequalities as cross-cutting themes.
- 3.4. 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 also launched a "Plan for Jobs" to protect, support and create jobs. Any future Government funding and investment in the economy, training and jobs will be focused on these priorities.

## 4. Background

- 4.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused some significant economic impacts for Lewisham's residents and businesses. Unemployment more than doubled at the height of the pandemic, rising from around 8,000 in January 2020 to a peak of over 20,000 in early 2021. Over the last few months unemployment has thankfully reduced but is still over 14,000 now. Unemployment rose fastest amongst younger residents, with 18-24

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year olds seeing the biggest increase in claimants from 1,300 in January 2020 to a peak of over 3,500 in March 2021, almost a three-fold increase. The number has since decreased to 1,900 which represents 8.2% of the population, higher than the overall unemployment claimant rate of 6.6%.

- 4.2. The impact of Covid-19 on businesses is more difficult to assess due to timely statistics not being available at a borough level. One key indicator which shows that businesses in Lewisham may have been resilient is the total number of enterprises in the borough. This has remained relatively stable at just over 10,000 across 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- 4.3. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Lewisham had high economic activity and employment rates with a resident population better qualified than London as a whole. Almost two thirds of our resident workforce are employed in either managerial, professional or technical occupations. Median earnings of Lewisham residents are around the London average. Many of these higher skilled residents used to commute out to work in Central London. The shift to home-working during the pandemic and the expected move to “hybrid working” as restrictions ease, could mean that out-commuting is reduced in the long term and more people are working locally.
- 4.4. In the last decade the economy of London in general, and Central London in particular, grew rapidly. But the economy of Lewisham did not have the same level of growth. Whilst the number of new businesses being formed in Lewisham grew rapidly, increasing by more than 50% since 2011, much of this was due to structural changes on the nature of work with higher levels of self-employment and contract work and the growth of the gig economy.
- 4.5. Lewisham remains an economy made of very small firms with just a handful of major employers. Compared with neighbouring boroughs Lewisham has a small and declining stock of commercial floorspace. There are just 40 jobs in Lewisham for every 100 working age residents, the second lowest proportion of any London borough. Similarly Lewisham has the second lowest total number of jobs of any London borough. The majority of jobs in the borough are located in the Lewisham-Catford corridor (including the hospital) or in the north of the borough in Deptford and New Cross.
- 4.6. The economy of Lewisham is predominantly a local service sector economy, servicing the needs of its local resident population. Its largest sectors are health and education. It also has a large retail sector, although this has been affected by the decline seen nationally in high street retailing. A high proportion of jobs in Lewisham are part-time. This, combined with the overall sectoral make-up of employment in the borough, results in the output, or Gross Value Added (GVA), produced in Lewisham being comparatively low by London standards. GVA per head of population in Lewisham is just 38% of the London average.
- 4.7. Lewisham has a great number of economic assets that should enable it to thrive. We have a large number of highly skilled workers, we are located close to the huge Central London economy, and we are home to a leading UK university in Goldsmiths. Post-pandemic there is expected to be economic growth across London in sectors such as creative and digital; health and social care; hospitality; and the green economy. Lewisham is well placed to secure some of this growth providing there is a steady and growing supply of affordable commercial workspace being created across the borough.

## 5. Covid-19 Response

- 5.1. The Council moved quickly to respond to the economic impact of Covid-19. Over the last two years we have significantly increased our engagement with local businesses, built stronger relationships between teams within the Council and started to build new programmes and services to support residents who are out of work.

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- 5.2. One of the main routes to supporting businesses was through the provision of business grants. There have been many different business grant schemes over the last two years. In some cases the Government prescribed which businesses should receive support (generally linked to Business Rate classifications) and for others it was left to the discretion of the Council. Since March 2020 the Council has given out over £76m in over 14,000 grants to businesses.
- 5.3. Some business grant programmes are still available now. This includes grants for businesses affected by the impact of the Omicron variant (generally hospitality, leisure and their supply chains) as well as grants for businesses to engage with and contribute to the Borough of Culture programme.
- 5.4. A cross-council team was mobilised to support business during the pandemic. This included representatives from the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service along with Business Rates, Environmental Health, Licensing, Planning, Regeneration and Communications. One of the activities which this group directed were the visits to businesses. The Council was required to enforce restrictions on business trading which the Government introduced (e.g. closure of non-essential retail, social distancing) so officers from Environmental Health and Licensing team were visiting businesses across the borough. In total over 21,000 business visits were conducted during the pandemic. Rather than just providing enforcement messages, the team also provided proactive signposting to grants and other support which was available, and distributed thousands of packs containing information and resources to support safer re-opening.
- 5.5. Recognising that the Council had limited relationships with businesses at the start of the pandemic, new routes were established to engage and communicate with businesses. Two of the main changes were: firstly, the introduction of a fortnightly business newsletter email which is now received by over 4,000 subscribers; secondly, the Lewisham Backs Business Task Group. This group is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Business and Community Wealth Building and includes representatives from the South East London Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business (FSB), Goldsmiths University of London, Lewisham College and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The group provides a forum to discuss strategic issues relating to the economy and labour market and for the Council to receive feedback and insight from partners. The group was meeting monthly at the height of the pandemic and now meets every two months. The relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and FSB has been useful in helping provide the Council with an alternative channel to communicate with businesses.
- 5.6. Following a commitment made by the Mayor, in 2021 a headcount and survey was conducted on the 10 main high streets and town centres in the borough. The aim was to identify the number of independent and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic owned businesses in the borough, as well as to get feedback on business resilience and concerns coming out of the pandemic. The fieldwork and analysis was conducted by London South Bank University in summer 2021 and the findings were published in October. Lewisham was the first local authority in the country to conduct such a headcount and survey.
- 5.7. The results showed that 70% of the business on our high streets are independent. Two thirds of the independent businesses are owned by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic entrepreneurs. Our high streets benefit from the richness of our ethnically diverse independent businesses. Many businesses were concerned about levels of footfall and were keen to trade their way through any financial challenges. The survey also showed that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic business owners were less aware of Council-led business support initiatives and had more limited contact with the Council. We are taking immediate steps to address this including conducting more in-person visits to businesses to promote any grants or support available, and to hear what further support those businesses would like. We are also providing subsidised membership of

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the FSB and Chamber of Commerce to encourage more businesses to get involved in these peer networks and the support available. Further detail on the current business support programmes are outlined in section 6.

## 6. Recovery

- 6.1. As lockdowns and restrictions eased, the Council provided support to individual businesses and our town centres and high streets to enable them to re-open safely and successfully.
- 6.2. Using the Welcome Back Fund (European Regional Development Fund provided by the Government) the Council ran a “Shop Safe, Shop Local” campaign aimed at residents, visitors and businesses. The campaign included advertisements promoting local shopping in publications such as Lewisham Life and Lewisham Ledger; adverts at bus stops; and lamp post banners. Businesses also received packs which included the latest advice on social distancing, floor stickers and posters; plus tote bags which could be used to give out to customers. Alongside these, messages about shopping local were also included in business newsletters, resident newsletters and through social media channels.
- 6.3. Recognising that community organisations and business groups were well placed to deliver projects to help promote and animate high streets, a Town Centre Small Grants Fund was launched using the Welcome Back Fund. This provided up to £2,500 to projects that would help attract people to town centres and high streets. In total 22 projects were awarded funding, with good geographic spread across the borough. Details of all the funded projects were announced through a news article on the Council website.
- 6.4. Alongside this, a further 17 projects have been funded through a similar grant programme “Creative Happenings”. This grants scheme was funded through the Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ), a Mayor of London initiative which is focussed on supporting local digital and creative sectors. Creative Happenings supports local creatives, including freelancers, who have been impacted by national and local COVID-19 restrictions, with projects commissioned in the current New Cross and Deptford CEZ as well as in emerging creative clusters in other parts of the borough including Catford, Lewisham Central, Brockley and Forest Hill.
- 6.5. Based on the feedback from the High Street Study and from the experience of administering the business grants, it was evident that targeted support is needed for some local businesses to ensure they are resilient and able to take advantage of local opportunities. The Council has therefore put in place a broad programme of business support provided by a number of providers.

Grant/Business Support title	Grant/Business Support Description	Eligibility
<b>We are Lewisham Borough of Culture Grants and Advisory Service</b>	A range of support, including grants of up to £2,500, to help high street businesses embrace We Are Lewisham, the 2022 Borough of Culture programme, and maximise all the opportunities for increased trade it will bring. Provided by Goldsmiths University of London.	High street, independent small and medium-sized businesses; available to September 2022

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<b>Business Resilience Grants and Support</b>	A range of support, including grants of up to £2,500, for small and medium-sized businesses with growth potential and looking to become more resilient. Includes help with financial planning, marketing and digital opportunities. Provided by Goldsmiths University of London.	Small and medium-sized businesses; available to September 2022
<b>Ready to Supply</b>	Support for local suppliers to bid for public sector and construction projects including, guidance from a dedicated business advisory team, capacity-building workshops, webinars and events. Provided by East London Business Partnership.	Small and medium sized businesses; available to September 2022
<b>Free membership of the Federation of Small Business</b>	Free membership to businesses which provide access to a wide range of benefits – from products, services, advice and to resources and tools to help businesses grow and save money.	Small and medium-sized businesses focussing on those from an ethnically diverse background and based on the high street; available to June 2022
<b>Free membership of the South East London Chamber of Commerce</b>	Free membership to businesses which provide access to a wide range of benefits – from products, services, advice and to resources and tools to help businesses grow and save money.	Small and medium-sized businesses focussing on those from an ethnically diverse background and based on the high street; available to June 2022
<b>Engagement and business advice for Black-owned businesses</b>	Engagement with Black-owned businesses to share information about the support which is currently available; provide qualitative insight to the Council about further support which might be required; and to provide 1-1 advice and peer support to Black-owned businesses. Provider being finalised, subject to contract.	Independent Black-owned businesses, focusing on small businesses; available to September 2022
<b>Creative Enterprise Zone projects</b>	Business advice and workshops for freelance dancers; subsidised desk and studio space.	Local creative businesses including the self-employed and freelancers; available to July 2022.

## Lewisham Deal

- 6.6. The Lewisham Deal is a common commitment by local public sector institutions to promoting inclusive growth in the borough. Based on the principles of community

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wealth building, the Lewisham Deal seeks to ensure we build an economy that works for everyone in the borough.

6.7. The anchor institutions involved in the Lewisham Deal are:

- *Lewisham Council*
- *Goldsmiths, University of London*
- *Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust*
- *Lewisham College*
- *Lewisham Homes*
- *Phoenix Community Housing*

6.8. Lewisham Deal partners have made shared commitments on six priorities:

- *Apprenticeships*
- *Local procurement*
- *Information, advice and guidance*
- *London Living Wage*
- *Progression of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff*
- *Climate Emergency*

6.9. A number of these are particularly relevant to this report. Through the Local Procurement workstream the partners are committed to making more contract opportunities available to local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). To enable this an annual Meet The Buyer event is held in the autumn where all of the Lewisham Deal partners promote upcoming contract opportunities and explain how local businesses can access contract opportunities. The most recent Meet The Buyer event took place in November 2021 and was attended by over 100 businesses. The Ready to Supply support mentioned in 6.5 is also connected to this workstream.

6.10. The Council takes a leading role in promoting the London Living Wage to local employers. This includes ongoing communications activity, particularly during Living Wage Week in November; targeted engagement with specific employers; ensuring LLW is embedded in all council contracts; and providing a Business Rate discount to employers who become newly accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. The number of accredited employers in Lewisham is now 85, compared to 47 in 2018.

## Jobs, apprenticeships and training

6.11. Prior to Covid there was a focus on seeking to secure jobs, apprenticeships and contracts for local businesses arising from new major developments in the borough through the Local Labour and Business Scheme (LLBS). In 2020/21 the LLBS achieved 23 job or apprenticeship starts and secured £1.9m in contracts for local businesses.

6.12. The Council has had a strong track record in delivering apprenticeships for local residents. The Corporate Strategy includes a commitment to achieve 250 apprenticeship starts through the Mayor's Apprenticeship Programme 2018-2022. In the last two years 142 apprenticeship starts have been achieved, taking the cumulative total to 237 out of the 250 target. The target is on track to be achieved by the end of March 2022.

6.13. To respond to the significant increase in youth unemployment, the Council worked with local partners at Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to create a new youth employment hub. This

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operated from a space in Catford Town Hall as well as at community outreach locations around the borough. The Council has directly employed two youth employment and training advisers and an employer engagement officer. So far they have supported over 120 young people, mainly those with more barriers to getting in to work, and over 40 have already been supported to get a job. Our youth employment hub is now co-located with the Bank of Things and Young Mayor's team in Unit 19 at Lewisham Shopping Centre.

- 6.14. Also reflecting the increase in youth unemployment, the Government launched the Kickstart scheme. This aimed to provide six month paid work placements for unemployed 16-24 year olds. For each placement the Government provided funding equivalent to 25 hours per week at National Minimum Wage plus a payment to support employability and management. We encouraged local employers to create placements and they were able to either directly bid to the DWP or approach the Council to be part of a wider bid (administered by Lambeth Council on behalf of Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark Councils). We also created Kickstart placements within the Council, creating 40 placements. As the Council is an accredited Living Wage employer, additional council funding was put towards the scheme to ensure that the young people received the London Living Wage.

## 7. Renewal

- 7.1. We have produced a framework which will guide the work of the Economy, Jobs and Partnership service over the coming months and provides shape to achieving the ambition for An Economically Sound Future. This has been discussed with Cabinet Members but has not yet been formally adopted as Council policy. The start of the new Mayoral term could provide a good opportunity to agree the detail of local economic priorities through a new plan or strategy. The current framework has four objectives, each of which has three priorities:

- *More local jobs*
  - *Growth from existing employers*
  - *Attracting new employers*
  - *Start-ups and scale-ups*
- *Increased local spending*
  - *Footfall and spend in town centres*
  - *Visitor economy*
  - *Local supply chains*
- *Strong partnerships and infrastructure*
  - *Transport and digital connectivity*
  - *Community involvement*
  - *Available and affordable workspace*
- *Tackle unemployment and inequalities*
  - *Youth employment and training*
  - *All-age training and job brokerage*
  - *Living Wage and in-work progression*

- 7.2. Much of the work outlined in section 6 will continue and already contributes to our local framework for An Economically Sound Future. This includes programmes on

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apprenticeships; youth employment and the hub in Unit 19; the Local Labour and Business Scheme; Lewisham Deal including work to support the London Living Wage and increased local procurement; business advice and engagement; and the annual headcount and survey of independent and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic owned businesses. However, it is recognised that we will need to do more to achieve the priorities outlined above.

## More local jobs

7.3. The borough is well placed to see growth in the creative industries, building on the significant cluster of businesses, institutions and freelancers who already present here. In 2018 the Mayor of London designated Deptford and New Cross as one of six Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ), out of applications from 25 boroughs. Sadly two years of the CEZ programme have coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic which has restricted some of the connections and networks which would have sought to be built. Nonetheless, a number of positive outcomes have been achieved:

- *Created 86 new affordable artists' studios at Second Floor Studios in Deptford, development facilitated through the Council's S106 planning requirement and funded by the GLA's Good Growth Fund.*
- *Securing £500,000 to support 125 young Lewisham residents into employment, training and mentoring opportunities in the creative and digital industries through the Inspire Lewisham programme, led by Goldsmiths University. This aims to improve diversity in the creative industries, focussing on providing placements for women, disabled people and residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. Training is available to develop skills in media, 3D-scanning and virtual reality. The programme will also work with local employers to support them in delivering training placements for residents, particularly those from under-represented groups which have been disproportionately affected by the economic impact of COVID-19.*
- *Delivering the Creative Happenings programme, outlined in 6.4, as well as other events including Creative Crawl (part of London Design Festival, tour by 70 delegates around venues in Deptford showcasing local artists), Creative Talks and Brown Jewels exhibition.*
- *Set up the Shapes Lewisham website, a platform for creative businesses and freelancers to interact, collaborate and advertise jobs and contract opportunities. Currently around 265 creatives profiles with over 4,500 social media followers.*
- *Seeking designation of the CEZ in the draft Local Plan, plus an affordable workspace policy to create additional spaces in new developments.*
- *Affordable Workspace Accreditation Scheme Pilot saw one workspace become accredited but Covid paused further rollout.*

7.4. The initial accreditation of the CEZ and the associated work programme finished in December 2021. Re-accreditation has been sought for a further three years. The GLA have approved this and a new agreements is being finalised. There are significant links between the CEZ programme and Borough of Culture (BoC), and this work will play an important part in the legacy of BoC. The commitments made for the re-accreditation of our CEZ include:

- *Capital development at Cockpit Arts, funded by the GLA Good Growth Fund and Stride London programme (total £2.3m), creating new artist studios plus a café and training space, with over 1,400m<sup>2</sup> of new space.*
- *Delivery of Climate Home by The Albany, a temporary, sustainable space, co-designed, built and led by young people. It will provide a range of professional experience, employment, training and leadership skills focusing on involving everyone*

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*in the climate justice movement.*

- *Identifying vacant spaces and properties in the CEZ and working with partners, landlords and creatives to bring them back in to active use.*
- *Creating an Affordable Workspace Action Plan to protect and create affordable workspaces in the CEZ.*
- *Consider the use of Article 4 Directions to limit permitted development rights from commercial to residential use in order to limit the loss of commercial workspace.*
- *Activities to inspire and upskill local residents, including targeted work in schools and with young people, to be able to pursue careers in the creative industries.*
- *Continued delivery of the Shapes Lewisham platform, alongside new events and activities to provide opportunities for businesses and freelancers to network, provide peer support and amplify their collective impact.*
- *Creation of a Community Representative Board to guide and shape existing and future plans for the CEZ, ensuring a range of voices are heard.*

7.5. Alongside the creative sector, the green economy is expected to see growth in the coming years. The total number of green jobs in Central London is projected to rise from 147,000 in 2020 to 335,000 in 2030 and 732,000 in 2050. The four sub-sectors which are forecast to account for over 90% of Central London's total number of green jobs by 2050 are:

- *Green Finance (382,500), representing 52.3% of total green jobs.*
- *Power (119,800), representing 16.4% of total green jobs.*
- *Low Carbon Transport (85,900), representing 11.7% of total green jobs.*
- *Homes and Buildings (80,000), representing 10.9% of total green jobs.*

7.6. In addition to the jobs that will be created by the transition to Net Zero, there will be many jobs lost in carbon-intensive industries. However, it is estimated there will still be a positive impact on overall employment in Central London due to the shift to net zero, with an increase of around 25,000 jobs in 2030.

7.7. Employers will need to work effectively with education and training providers to help shape skills provision so that a pipeline of skilled individuals is available to support delivery plans for net zero and other environmental goals, including reskilling opportunities for existing workers. This needs to be supported by careers information, advice and guidance to promote opportunities in green sectors to learners and increase progression rates to employment within green sectors.

7.8. The Council is working closely with Lambeth and Southwark Councils through the Better Placed Partnership to plan for opportunities arising from the green economy. One immediate example is that it has recently been announced that London South Bank University (LSBU) has been successful in securing funding and accreditation from the GLA for a Mayor's Academy Hub for green skills. The hub will bring together employers, training providers (including Lewisham College) and Councils across Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark. Together we will create new qualifications and routes between training providers; offer apprenticeships and work placements; and support residents to secure long-term jobs.

7.9. Whilst work is already underway to secure jobs during the construction of major developments (6.11), a greater focus will also be placed on ensuring the jobs created in the commercial space of new developments are secured by local people. The services outlined in 7.23 will provide a mechanism for this. Major developments provide an opportunity to ensure the borough has a more diverse commercial offer which reflect the demands of our residents.

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## Increased local spending

- 7.10. To attract footfall and spending to our town centres and high streets, both from local residents and from visitors to the borough, it is vital that places feel vibrant and attractive. Some of that will be delivered through programmes to improve the public environment, curate cultural activities or administer existing street markets. As these are not delivered by the Economy, Jobs and Partnerships service they are not covered by this report.
- 7.11. A number of activities are outlined in 6.2 and 6.3 of this report. There are several longer-term plans which will build on this work to provide greater support to our town centres.
- 7.12. Lewisham town centre is recognised in our Local Plan as a major town centre with aspirations to become a metropolitan town centre. Whilst there is a good retail offer and thriving street market in Lewisham town centre, the leisure and cultural offer is less abundant, and the evening and night time economy offer is limited. Currently there isn't a Business Improvement District (BID) in Lewisham town centre, nor does there appear to currently be appetite for such.
- 7.13. However, we recognise the need to bring partners together to coordinate existing activities and to agree a collective vision for the future of the town centre. The Council was successful in securing £20,000 in funding from the GLA to set up a new partnership for the town centre. The partnership brings together the Council; other public services like the Police and TfL; Landsec, owner of Lewisham Shopping Centre; community organisations including Circle Collective and Lewisham Pensioners' Forum; educational institutions Lewisham College and Goldsmiths University; Migration Museum; and Lewisham Local. This partnership will not be through a single board or hierarchical governance structure which is created. Instead we are forming a more dynamic and agile partnership which establishes strong connections between different stakeholders, focused on specific place-based projects and interventions.
- 7.14. The new partnership met for the first time in November 2021. The meeting heard feedback from young people about the town centre which had been facilitated by Circle Collective. Together the partnership looked at some of the strengths and challenges for the town centre. Strengths included diversity, culture, transport links, housing growth and the street market. Challenges included the lack of a clear identity and marketing for the town centre, a need for safe spaces, and the potential of the evening economy.
- 7.15. In the coming months we will work with the partnership and the wider community (both residents and businesses) to develop a joint vision and plan for the future, outlining our collective ambition for the town centre and the activities needed to deliver this.
- 7.16. In 2019 the Council adopted an Evening and Night Time Vision. This provides an overarching framework to support the development of a safe and thriving evening and night time economy (ENTE) in the borough. Recognising that each of the town centres in the borough has its own unique characteristics and strengths, ENTE action plans for each of the main town centres and high streets will be produced in the coming year. These will need to include engagement with local residents, businesses and Councillors to ensure they reflect local objectives within the context of the borough-wide vision.
- 7.17. Being London Borough of Culture 2022 presents many opportunities for town centres to benefit from an increase in visitors coming to see different events. But beyond this year we are keen to ensure that residents and visitors are more aware of the cultural attractions and opportunities available in the borough. As such a new cultural map of the borough is in development which will showcase events and facilities. The map will be publicly accessible through the council, Shapes Lewisham and Borough of Culture websites.

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## Strong partnerships and infrastructure

- 7.18. Infrastructure is a key enabler of inclusive economic growth opportunities. The priorities for Lewisham are well established: Lewisham Station interchange, the A205 alignment in Catford and the opportunity presented by the Bakerloo Line extension. The accessibility of our cycling and walking infrastructure and the quality and resilience of our green infrastructure are also significant local infrastructure priorities. These are all key influences that attract investment to the borough.
- 7.19. Responsibility for many of the programmes and activities in this priority sits with other services within the Council such as the Transport team. However, officers from Economy, Jobs and Partnerships will seek to engage with colleagues and external partners wherever possible to ensure close alignment with our economic priorities and so that any economic opportunities can be made available locally.
- 7.20. Community involvement in economic development is essential to ensure that projects are responsive to local need and aspirations. Wherever possible the default is to work in partnership with communities and local organisations to design and deliver projects. Commitment to this principle was evident in the motion passed by Council in July 2021 on Unlocking the Potential of Local High Streets. Examples include the Creative Enterprise Zone and Lewisham town centre partnership.
- 7.21. Many of the workspace activities are outlined in 7.2 and 7.3. Alongside this the Council has commissioned a study to look specifically at Catford town centre and the types of workspace which might be required in the future. To do so the study will look at the sectors and sub-sectors which could grow in the town centre; identify existing properties which may be suitable; and make recommendations about future workspace requirements which may be sought from new developments.
- 7.22. One of the issues businesses contact the Council about most frequently is in searching for workspaces and premises, including enquiries about availability of council-owned properties. Whilst links are provided to relevant adverts or letting agents, there may be a need for the Council to become more actively involved in helping to promote local premises and workspaces. This will be explored in the coming months to ensure that any involvement by the Council does not duplicate existing commercial activities or websites, but helps to ensure that vacant properties are actively occupied. This may include looking at spaces which are under-used, as well as those which are vacant. Looking at opportunities for commercial letting is one of the options considered in the Council's strategic review of assets, responding to the need for access to space at various affordability thresholds..

## Tackle unemployment and inequalities

- 7.23. On 9 March Mayor and Cabinet are being asked to consider a proposal to establish a new service, Lewisham Works. This will provide an all-age employment support offer to Lewisham residents. The Council will provide a 'single front door' where residents seeking employment support will be directed to the most appropriate support or be supported directly by an in-house team of advisers. At present, there are gaps in the support available to residents – particularly for those who are unemployed but unable to claim unemployment support (such as Universal Credit).
- 7.24. There are also deep, historic inequalities facing residents in the labour market regardless of Covid-19 impact. The ethnicity employment gap remains around 11% (the gap in employment rate between white residents and residents from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background). The disability employment gap in London is 46.5%. In 2019, Lewisham had the highest rate of 18-24 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate for any London borough at 20%, rising to 34% for those with few/no qualifications.

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- 7.25. Lewisham Works will support residents to overcome these challenges through holistic 1:1 coaching; training and skills support; support to find work and sustain employment. This is commonly known as a 'job brokerage' service. Lewisham Works will also support local employers with a recruitment service, improving the link between residents and local jobs. The proposed delivery model would see Lewisham Council establish a resident-facing service in the Old Town Hall in Catford, complemented by hubs such as Lewisham Shopping Centre (Youth Hub provision) and 'job clubs' in libraries and other locations in the borough.
- 7.26. The introduction of Lewisham Works will see the Council play a far more active role in tackling local employment inequalities and challenges. The service will work at the centre of the local employment and skill support system, improving resident access and maximising support available to residents. Pockets of support are delivered by dozens of providers and charities in the borough, as well as main partners like Lewisham College and Adult Learning Lewisham. There are also large programmes funded by the DWP including Central London Works (Work and Health Programme) and Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS). This active role in the local system will allow the Council to better address weakness and gaps in the support available to residents.
- 7.27. The new service will initially be funded by a grant of just over £750,000 of European Social Fund (ESF). The funding has been secured through Central London Forward (CLF), and this programme will be delivered in a joined up way across the 12 Central London Boroughs and the City of London. The programme will commence in early 2022 and run until June 2023. This will fund a team of advisers who will provide up to six months of pre-employment support to residents followed by up to six months of in-work progression support once a resident has started employment. The grant also provides flexible funding to support individual needs. For example, the Council will be able to pre-pay childcare for parents, before their first paycheck, to remove the childcare cost barriers facing low-income residents. Since the programme is delivered across CLF, the Council will be able to access jobs secured by the City of London and elsewhere, beneficial to Lewisham where local job availability is far lower than in Central London.
- 7.28. The programme is incredibly broad, supporting unemployed residents regardless of their benefit status or how ready they are to work. The Council can support up to 750 residents through this programme – providing significant capacity. The programme also has individual targets to support lone parents, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, over-50s, individuals with disabilities and those without essential English and maths skills.
- 7.29. The ESF funding is well timed. This will allow us to kickstart Lewisham Works with more capacity than would otherwise be possible without the grant. It also provides individual resident support otherwise unfunded in the local system. Connecting Communities also allows us to develop an effective delivery model for Lewisham Works which, if successful, we will seek to continue in the longer term. To do so the Council will need to secure further external funding (such as the upcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund) or use resources such as Section 106 obligations.

## **8. Financial implications**

The service has secured various types of external grant funding to cover the costs of the programmes outlined in this report. Any additional costs have been and are being funded from the service's allocated revenue budget. There are no additional funding pressures arising from this report.

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## 9. Legal implications

- 9.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the report. (A separate report has been prepared to go to Mayor and Cabinet on 9 March 2022 asking that Mayor and Cabinet agree to establishing the Council-delivered 'Lewisham Works' all age employment service).
- 9.2. Under S1 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a general power of competence to do anything which an individual may do unless it is expressly prohibited.
- 9.3. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.4. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- *eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
  - *advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
  - *foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*
- 9.5. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed above.
- 9.6. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

## 10. Equalities implications

- 10.1. Equalities implications have been included when outlining specific programmes. For example, the proposed Lewisham Works service will support the tackling of ethnicity and disability employment gaps by providing focused support for a number of different groups including lone parents, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents, over-50s, individuals with disabilities and those without essential English and maths skills.
- 10.2. The Council is also committed to continuing on an annual basis the headcount and survey of independent and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic owned businesses which began in 2021. As well as understanding local business demographics, this will also be vital in tracking whether the issues raised in the 2021 survey are being addressed.

## 11. Climate change and environmental implications

- 11.1. Achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 cannot be achieved without the skilled workforce to decarbonise the economy. The initial focus will be on skills for construction and retrofit. The activities outlined in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.8 outline the context for these implications. The new Lewisham Works employment service will provide a direct opportunity for the Council to work with local residents and support them to move in to jobs in the green economy.

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## 12. Crime and disorder implications

- 12.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report. Well paid and secure employment has been demonstrated to be a positive factor in preventing offending.

## 13. Health and wellbeing implications

- 13.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report. As above, well paid and secure employment has been demonstrated to be a factor in contributing to positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

## 14. Background papers

- 14.1. [Cockpit Arts Deptford Redevelopment](#), Mayor and Cabinet, 14/09/2021
- 14.2. [Unlocking the potential of local high streets](#), motion at Council, 21/07/2021
- 14.3. [Economy and Partnerships](#), Sustainable Development Select Committee, 11/09/2019

## 15. Glossary

Term	Definition
CEZ (Creative Enterprise Zone)	An initiative from the Mayor of London to designate areas where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work; are supported to start-up and grow; and where local people are helped to learn creative sector skills and access pathways to employment.
ESF (European Social Fund)	This is a grant Councils and other agencies can apply to for money to run employment and skills projects. It is administrated by the Greater London Authority (Mayor of London)
GLA (Greater London Authority)	The regional governance body for London led by the Mayor of London. Also known as "City Hall", it has responsibility for some essential public services including Transport for London, the Police and economic planning.

## 16. Report author(s) and contact

- 16.1. John Bennett, Head of Economy, Jobs and Partnerships, 020 8314 7791, [john.bennett1@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:john.bennett1@lewisham.gov.uk)
- 16.2. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources:
- 16.3. Shola Ojo, Strategic Finance Business Partner HRPR, [shola.ojo@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:shola.ojo@lewisham.gov.uk)
- 16.4. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR
- 16.5. Mia Agnew (Senior Lawyer) (Ref JW) [Mia.agenw@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:Mia.agenw@lewisham.gov.uk)

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