

CEO DECISION – CD159

Title: New Office Accommodation for OPDC at Brent Civic Centre, Wembley

Executive summary

This decision seeks approval for OPDC to secure alternative office accommodation within Brent Civic Centre, Wembley. The need to relocate, away from OPDC's current base at 169 Union Street, has arisen as a result of the GLA's relocation from City Hall to the Crystal, Royal Docks; no fixed office or 'anchor' provision will be available to OPDC beyond July 2021. Officers have therefore been engaged in an exercise to identify and assess potential options for a new base. This exercise has now concluded, and the preferred option is a relocation to Brent Civic Centre, Wembley.

This decision follows on from the Chief Executive Officer's report to Board in March 2021. Section 10 of that report set out the broad requirements for any new space and the emerging options. It also provided for a delegation to the CEO, to be exercised in consultation with the Chair, to secure new office space.

Decision

That the Chief Executive, having consulted with OPDC's Chair:

- i. approves Brent Civic Centre as OPDC's preferred relocation option and authorises Officers to enter into a 24-month licence agreement (with a break option at month 12) along with any other commitments necessary to secure the accommodation
- ii. approves expenditure of up to £125,000 p.a. for rent, service charge and Business Rates, noting that future annual approvals will be granted through the Corporation's budget setting process
- iii. approves one-off expenditure of up to £30,000 for anticipated IT infrastructure and/or office set up costs
- iv. approves annual expenditure of up to £20,000 for ancillary costs including meeting room bookings, refreshments, office consumables, PPE/sanitation and broadband usage costs
- v. delegates authority to the Head of Governance to approve expenditure of up to £40,000 on the associated insurance arrangements
- vi. Approves an exemption from the OPDC Contracts and Funding Code to appoint Inside Office Consultancy without undertaking a competitive exercise

Chief Executive Officer

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

Signature:



Date: 23 June 2021

PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The GLA is relocating City Hall from its existing building by Tower Bridge to The Crystal at the Royal Docks. It is also, as part of the move, taking up additional space for its staff at 169 Union Street. This will result in a significant reduction in overall office space for GLA staff. OPDC will therefore be both giving up its base at Union Street, where it has been located since 2015, and not taking up space at The Crystal.
- 1.2 In this context, OPDC has, since the end of 2020, been engaged in a search for a new base with the aim of securing accommodation in Q2 2021; when OPDC must exit Union Street.
- 1.3 The search has been guided by the criteria set out at 3.1, covering cost, quality and location considerations, as well as flexibility of tenure. A guiding principle has been that the new space must support both modern, hybrid working and staff preferences to combine home and office-based working/collaboration. The criteria were also informed by a staff survey.

2 The proposal and how it will be delivered

- 2.1 Officers began the accommodation search with wide parameters, not least to get a good feel for the market. Having been distilled, a shortlist of emerging options was included in an update to OPDC's Board at its January meeting. Since then, a more detailed options appraisal has taken place, including site visits of four offices. One of these options – Brent Civic Centre – emerged only after the report to Board:
 - Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square (TFL) – acceptable value for money
 - Palestra, Southwark (TfL) – poor value for money
 - Shortlands, Hammersmith (LBH&F) – good value for money
 - Brent Civic Centre, Wembley (LB Brent) – good value for money
- 2.2 A summary of the options appraisal is included below:

Cranbourn Street, Leicester Square
- 2.3 Sole occupancy of the 4th floor, c.2,967 sq. ft
- 2.4 Officers discounted Cranbourn Street because it would not support OPDC's commitment to being an inclusive employer; disabled access to the building is reliant on a manual ramp and the 4th floor would be inaccessible to those using a wheelchair.

TfL Palestra, Southwark
- 2.5 24 desks on the 7th floor.
- 2.6 Palestra was discounted primarily on cost grounds and because Shortlands and Brent Civic Centre provide better support for collaborative working. The results of the staff survey showed that collaboration space was among the most important criteria for team members in any new office. Furthermore, Palestra does not move OPDC any closer to site.

Shortlands, Hammersmith
- 2.7 25 desks on the 6th floor (part of a 'wing') with the option to extend this to 30 desks.

- 2.8 Shortlands offers fully serviced, high-quality accommodation, available immediately, with little or no space planning required to meet OPDC's needs. The space would, however, be sublet to OPDC by LB Hammersmith & Fulham under a lease running to 2024, with a break clause early in 2022. LB Hammersmith & Fulham intend to exercise the break and relocate to a new office campus nearby. This provides for uncertainty. OPDC would, at that time, need to renegotiate its terms of occupancy; and the benefit of co-location with borough colleagues would be lost. For these reasons Shortlands has also been discounted.

Brent Civic Centre, Wembley

- 2.9 25 desks on the 1st floor (part of a 'wing'), c.2,100 sq. ft
- 2.10 Brent Civic Centre is the recommended option. It is the least costly of the four options and offers security and flexibility of tenure. Brent Council is the freeholder and OPDC would be able to benefit from 'in-and-out' terms, keeping open the option of a move onto or closer to site; OPDC's medium term aspiration. Furthermore, the space is of exceptionally high-quality, fully serviced and with first-class amenities, meeting rooms and collaboration space.
- 2.11 The Civic Centre it is the closest option to OPDC's site (two Bakerloo Line stops from Wembley Central) and although some distance from GLA colleagues at Union Street and the Crystal, Wembley Park is on the Jubilee Line so has a direct link to Southwark and Canning Town. It would also put us side-by-side with Brent colleagues, supporting joint-working, and close to Brent's own major regeneration site at Wembley Park, thereby providing opportunities to share best practice.

Exiting Union Street and relocating to Brent Civic Centre

- 2.12 OPDC occupies Union Street under the umbrella of a licence agreement between the GLA and the London Fire Commissioner. It is therefore free to exit without the need to serve notice and there are otherwise no contractual obligations to honour.
- 2.13 A programme of work has been undertaken, closely linked to the GLA's own relocation programme, to clear out the existing Union Street space. In addition to the removal of personal possessions, paper records are being rationalised in line with the GLA 'records management for relocation' guidance. Most paper records have been recycled or destroyed and will not be retained by OPDC.
- 2.14 OPDC's move to the Civic Centre will form part of the GLA's overall relocation project; which means that any documentation and/or office equipment that needs to be moved to the Civic Centre will be included in the relocation programme.
- 2.15 It is important to note that OPDC remains committed, in the medium term, to finding a base within the OPDC area. The licence arrangement with the London Borough of Brent will provide for flexibility to pursue this ambition at the most appropriate time.

3 Objectives and expected outcomes

- 3.1 OPDC's office search has been guided by the following criteria:
- ideally to take space in a building owned by Transport for London, to keep any rental income within the GLA Group – or failing that, to keep rental costs within the public sector;
 - to be sited within easy reach of the OPDC area and our local partners;
 - accessible, flexible and modern office space that supports hybrid (home and office) working and collaboration;

- a place staff will enjoy working – bright, safe and secure, in good condition and well maintained, and with amenities on site and nearby;
- value for money, including by reducing the ratio of workstations to staff as part of the shift to hybrid working; and
- flexible terms to avoid long lease obligations, given OPDC's medium term ambition to locate within the Mayoral Development Corporation boundary (or within proximity).

3.2 The move is seen as an opportunity to support new ways of working and ultimately to deliver better regeneration outcomes for the OPDC area and its residents.

4 Strategic fit

Hybrid, collaborative working

- 4.1 OPDC has 50 establishment posts. In line with the GLA's approach, and given extensive and successful home-working over the course of the Coronavirus pandemic, OPDC will reduce to a ratio of 0.5 workstations to staff. This is a more modest reduction than that for the GLA, reflecting that a smaller staffing complement carries a need for a somewhat higher ratio.
- 4.2 The Senior Management Team views the move to Brent Civic Centre as an opportunity to support smarter and more collaborative working practices; and the project is being taken forward on that basis, rather than a relatively narrow office move.

GLA Group estates strategy

- 4.3 In line with the GLA Group's estates strategy, officers first considered options within the TfL estate: at Cranbourn Street and Palestra. Ultimately, however, neither satisfactorily met OPDC's requirements. This was despite TfL being supportive and flexible in seeking to accommodate OPDC's needs.

5 Project governance and assurance

- 5.1 The Senior Management Team is acting as the sponsoring group for the relocation and wider work to encourage smart and flexible working practices. The Chief Executive is the senior responsible officer. The Director of Land and Property is project lead for the relocation and, linked to this, the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager is leading on ways of working.
- 5.2 The GLA Technology Group and Facilities Management Team have been closely involved with OPDC's move to the Civic Centre; in particular, providing technical support, guidance and assurance for OPDC's preferred IT solution.
- 5.3 Beyond the move, the extent of ongoing GLA IT and FM support is yet to be determined. However, it is anticipated that any necessary costs would fall within the current shared service arrangement and accommodated within OPDC's FY 2021/22 budget.
- 5.4 To secure the accommodation, OPDC will enter into a 24-month licence with the London Borough of Brent; assumed to commence in Q2 2021. The licence will include a tenant break option at month 12; which will provide flexibility if an opportunity arises to relocate within the OPDC area at that time. Under the terms of the agreement, OPDC will be provided with 25 workstations in a fully serviced office environment with access to meeting rooms, event spaces, break-out spaces and on-site amenities throughout the building.

- 5.5 Overall responsibility for the relationship with the London Borough of Brent will be held by the Chief Executive Officer. On an interim basis, day to day office management responsibility will be held by OPDC's Executive PA.

Risks and issues

- 5.6 The main risks associated with the move are:

Risk description	Inherent score	Mitigations	Target score
Staff morale or retention is negatively impacted for those where there is a significant increase in journey time	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 4 Total: 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased opportunity for staff to work flexibly, including from home Seeking access to touch-down space at other GLA Group locations Excellent facilities and amenities within Brent Civic Centre, making it an attractive place to work Programme of engagement with staff in the run up to the move 	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 3 Total: 6
The space does not work for OPDC, or OPDC does not get the most out of it	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 4 Total: 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways of working strategy to be implemented to support flexible, smart and collaborative working Engaging with LB Brent to ensure the space is configured for OPDC's needs Good access to meeting rooms and break-out spaces Excellent facilities and amenities within Brent Civic Centre, making it an attractive place to work Programme of engagement with staff in the run up to the move 	Likelihood: 1 Impact: 2 Total: 2
Future budget reductions mean accommodation costs can only be met from programme savings	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 3 Total: 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address through annual budget planning exercise, in liaison with the GLA 	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 3 Total: 9
IT provision may not be configured in time for OPDC occupation	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 5 Total: 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued communication with TG to ensure timely configuration Programmed work to manage timescales 	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 3 Total: 6

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External resource on standby should extra be needed 	
Difficulty booking and accessing meeting rooms due to using a separate network to Brent	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 4 Total: 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent FM have confirmed that staff can book rooms using devices located outside of the rooms Staff will also be able to contact Brent FM to book desks for people who are working from home Book meeting rooms in 'The Drum' in advance for Board and Committee meetings 	Likelihood: 2 Impact: 3 Total: 6
The use of meeting rooms at the Civic Centre not being used efficiently	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 3 Total: 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a 'ways of working' strategy to instil ground rules within the team Programme of engagement with staff in the run up to the move to gauge ideas 	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 2 Total: 6

6 Equality comments

- 6.1 OPDC must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.¹
- 6.2 Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under the Equality Act.
- 6.3 OPDC has undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) of the decision to relocate to Brent Civic Centre (Appendix A). The assessment covers the likely positive and negative impacts for staff with protected characteristics. The assessment covers the following groups: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race, Religion or Belief, Sex; Sexual Orientation. The overarching conclusion is that there will be no adverse impacts on those from these groups. The assessment has been developed in consultation with OPDC Staff Networks.

¹ The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC's functions.

6.4 We have taken account of the following additional important considerations:

- accessibility of the building
- safety of the building
- sustainability of the building – BREEAM rated outstanding
- accessibility of the location/travel for staff – noting likely longer commute costs are paired with greater flexibility for home working
- ability to engage with the community and people from different backgrounds.

7 Other considerations

Engagement and consultation

7.1 OPDC has engaged with staff to inform its search for and review of new office accommodation. The key messages from a survey of staff, undertaken in March 2021, were:

- The majority of staff who responded to the survey would like to return to the office 1-2 days a week.
- The team mainly want to use office space for collaboration so it's important to have formal and informal meeting space available.
- It is essential that the IT is set up so that colleagues can join meetings from home and that we think about how online meetings can be held without disrupting other colleagues working in the office.

7.2 In the run up to and following the move, there will be further engagement across the OPDC team, consisting of:

- Staff meetings and opportunities for Q&As;
- Site visits – including a tour of the Wembley Regeneration Area; and
- Post occupation surveys – to gauge initial reaction to the move and significant issues with the building and/or hybrid working environment/arrangements.

7.3 The GLA's Chief of Staff has been consulted on this proposal and is content with it.

Visitor, public access and formal meetings

7.4 OPDC's designated area is at first floor level, very close to the atrium staircase, and provides a 'front door' to the office space. Visitor access to the building will follow current Brent security protocol.

7.5 OPDC will have access to meeting rooms of all sizes and configurations including 'The Drum' conference facilities in the Grand Hall, Winter Garden and Olympic View area (first floor) and the Council Chamber and committee/board rooms (third floor).

7.6 The committee rooms would provide a suitable venue for OPDC Board and Committee meetings. They are set up for public access, ensuring OPDC can meet its legal requirements for such meetings. Further work is required to investigate the potential to video and web-stream the meetings.

Sustainability

7.7 Brent Civic Centre is recognised as the greenest public building in the UK, holding a BREEAM Outstanding accreditation.

8 Conflicts of interest

- 8.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

9 Financial comments

- 9.1 The expenditure proposed in this Decision will be contained within the annual Corporate Operations budget.
- 9.2 OPDC will be seeking approval for the appointment of a consultant to support the refurbishment of the office via a Single Source Request (SSR). This will be in place prior to expenditure being committed.
- 9.3 At the end of the 24-month period, the Corporation may be liable for further costs arising by returning the office space to its original state. Approval for any further expenditure associated with this will be required through the Decision-making process, along with any extensions and/or variations to the agreement
- 9.4 Appropriate insurance will be in place at the point OPDC occupy the space, for which budget exists Corporately.

10 Legal comments

- 10.1 OPDC has powers under Chapter 2, Part 8 of the Localism Act 2011 to hold property which would include the ability to relocate to the Brent Civic Centre, Wembley. It is recommended that TfL Legal or external lawyers appointed by TfL Legal review the documentation prior to completion to ensure that the terms are acceptable, including whether occupation is to be taken by licence or short-term lease.

11 Summary timeline

Activity	Date
Clear personal possessions and archive/store/destroy paper records at Union Street	Completed
Completion of licence agreement	By June 2021
IT implementation and associated on site works	During June - July 2021
Office fit out and roll out of security and Covid 19 protocols for staff	During June - July 2021
Relocation of paper records etc. from Union Street	By July 2021
Take occupation	Q2 2021

Appendices

- Appendix A: Equality Impact Assessment

Other supporting papers

- [Chief Executive Officer's report to OPDC Board, January 2021](#)

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 – Deferral

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **No**

The deferral is until: N/A

This is because: N/A

Part 2 – Confidential information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**

DECLARATIONS

Drafting officer: Davena Wilson has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirm that: ☐

Advice: The Finance and Legal teams have commented on the proposal. ☒

CONFIRMATIONS

Section 106 funding: N/A

SMT review: This Decision was circulated to the **Senior Management Team** for review on Friday 18 June 2021.

Chief Finance Officer

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

Signature: 

Date: 23 June 2021

Director Land and Property

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and can be referred to the CEO for final approval.

Signature: 

Date: 23 June 2021