

Subject:	Wasted Spaces – Response to Notice of Motion from Council 16 July 2009		
Date of Meeting:	17 September 2009		
Report of:	Acting Director of Strategy & Governance		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Warren	Tel: 29-0555
	E-mail:	martin.warren@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 This report responds to the Notice of Motion 'Making the Most of Wasted Spaces' moved by Councillors Randall and Kennedy as agreed at Council on 16 July 2009.
- 1.2 The Notice of Motion requested that 'the Cabinet ... examine the possibilities of helping these and other groups in their efforts to make the most of wasted spaces to help the city out of the recession.'
- 1.3 The local authority has for some time, been working with groups and individuals to make the most of 'wasted' or redundant spaces. This work has benefitted projects and organisations across the city. Some of the instances mentioned in the Notice are examples of the work which the council supports in this respect.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet continues to work proactively with partners in improving the environment by positive use of 'wasted spaces'.
- 2.2 That Cabinet endorses the work already being carried out by the local authority and its partners in making productive use of empty spaces within the community.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 3.1 The creative use and reclamation of 'wasted space' has developed alongside conventional changes to land use and law. Initiatives such as 'asset transfer' aim to empower communities and enable the transfer of publicly owned assets to community groups.
- 3.2 The coincidental and parallel development of these concerns, alongside the growing acceptance that a temporary use of redundant spaces is preferable to non-use, has resulted in a more liberal approach to the use of redundant land.

- 3.3 The Local Authority has been involved in approving temporary planning permission and provisions for some of the schemes mentioned in the Notice of Motion and has been broadly benign in respect of those direct action movements.
- 3.4 The summary below outlines the ways in which the council interacted with the instances of 'wasted space' as identified in the Notion Of Motion and some of the outcomes.
1. *Andrew Comben and the Brighton Festival for the inspirational use of the market building to house Anish Kapoor's The Dismemberment of Jeanne D'Arc.* – The councils Culture & Enterprise Directorate, Property & Design Team and Licensing Team worked in tandem with Brighton Festival to manage this project. It offered a precedent for the ways in which the council might approach similar schemes. The three installations across the city attracted 80,000 visitors.
 2. *The Guerilla Gardeners who have turned an eyesore into a community landmark with their rescue of the derelict garage site in the Lewes Road.*
 3. *The Brighton University art students who converted the Old Music Library into an art gallery for the Brighton Festival* – Initiated by students from Brighton University, the council, through the auspices of the Brighton & Hove Arts Commission supported the development of the project.
 4. *Slack Space Brighton, which is bringing empty shops and offices into use for small traders across the city.* Having met informally with representatives of 'Slackspace' officers are also considering ways in which empty spaces might be used to trial short-term business incubation. As these ideas cohere, information will be provided to members for consideration.
 5. *The Bristol Estate Artists' Studio project.* Instigated by local residents, the project was supported by numerous council departments (including, Housing Management, Property & Design, Culture & Enterprise). The council worked on a long-term development plan with the Arts Council and others. The project was funded entirely by external providers.
 6. *The conversion of disused buildings, such as bin stores, on some of the Council's housing estates.* – The council has long supported the innovative use of redundant spaces. Disused buildings have been bought back use and were part of the success of 'Red Herring', the Phoenix Galleries and 'Fabrica'.
 7. *The Cyberden I.T. training facility at St. James House.* – Tenant led and developed, this project was supported by Housing Management.
- 3.5 The council has worked flexibility and positively to make the best use of redundant spaces and its approach has been specific to the needs of the project.

- 3.6 Appendix 1 of the report details the work planned and already in place to improve the visual appearance of empty properties in the city. Officers are also talking with third parties about the use of 'pop-up' shops; temporary leases for un-occupied premises.
- 3.7 Unfortunately the council was not identified as one of the 57 recipients of the Government funding recently announced to help areas hit hardest by the recession. The funding announced by the Communities & Local Government Secretary in August was offered to help find creative ways to reduce the negative impact empty shops are having on high streets.
- 3.8 The creative use of redundant spaces across the city, particularly during recession is an attractive alternative to boarded shop fronts or neglected public spaces. In order for the city to positively benefit and to ensure the protection of landowners and landlords, Cabinet Members should have an overview of projects proposed or underway. It is recognised that, by their nature, some groups will not want to engage with the Local Authority or seek their direct support.
- 3.10 Should determination of a project be sought or required, responsibility should rest with the relevant Cabinet Member and brought to Cabinet for approval if the responsibilities and / or liabilities are considered to have corporate or cross-portfolio implications.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 In compiling this report consultation has been undertaken with Senior Managers and reference made to the work of Local Authorities on similar issues.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 In considering options for use of wasted space the costs of creative use or reclamation of the space would need to be considered and projects agreed on a case by case basis depending on the funding source. The shop front covers identified in Appendix 1 have been funded through the LABGI allocation.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley Date: 24/08/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no immediate legal implications. Any specific proposal submitted for Cabinet or Cabinet Member consideration would require evaluation with respect to the council's legal duties and powers.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon Date: 26/08/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no immediate legal implications. Instances considered for determination would be considered on their merits; given this an EIA is not required.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Positive management of under-used spaces in the city improves the street scene and the sustainability of local communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Positive management of under-used spaces in the city improves the street scene and has a proven value in deterring vandalism and graffiti.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are none.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 There are none.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 An alternative option would be to support the organisation of an umbrella group representing all persons interested in 'wasted spaces'. This is considered to be impractical and counter to the ideologies of some of the groups who are active in this arena.
- 6.2 A further alternative option would be that the council pay no heed to wasted spaces. This would also be counter intuitive and contrary to the good stewardship and economic buoyancy of the city.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Cabinet are recommended to endorse of the work already in place so as to demonstrate their support of the initiatives underway and to work proactively with partners in order to make the best use of opportunities identified.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Shop Front covers

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None