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**Report to:** Place Panel

**Date:** 8 July 2020

**Subject:** **Temporary Space Feasibility – One Public Estate project**

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## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To present to panel a final draft of the One Public Estate ‘Public Assets, Temporary Use’ project.
- 1.2 To seek support to take some of the recommendations in the report forward and, where practicable, action the report’s recommendations on transitional use of vacant property in a post-COVID 19 environment utilising One Public Estate programme management funding.

## **2. Information**

### Background

- 2.1 Vacant land and property can lead to a spiral of decline, acting as a magnet for antisocial behaviour and impacting on the costs to councils managing such space. As part of a wider approach to repurposing town centres and high streets, there is a case for re-purposing vacant space for temporary/transitional purposes for new business start-ups including creative and media use, local communities and voluntary groups.
- 2.2 In March 2019 the West Yorkshire One Public Estate partnership was awarded £45,000 to explore and consider the use of public sector vacant space on a temporary basis and in particular understanding the issues to be considered when repurposing vacant land and buildings whilst awaiting longer term development.
- 2.3 Leeds based consultants Creative Space working in collaboration with East Street Arts (an arts charity also based in Leeds) were awarded the tender at the end of November 2019. Desk-based research was carried out to produce evidence of successful temporary use and to build a rationale for authorities to

look for opportunities to expand local opportunities. For local perspectives, local authority officers working in assets and culture were interviewed and a workshop was held in February 2020 to identify the local issues and priorities and to establish common needs and approaches on the use of vacant property for temporary use.

- 2.4 With the announcements on Future High Streets, Towns Fund and Historic Action Zones the project proved timely as part of a wider approach to re-vitalising town centres. As the contraction of retail has accelerated, transitional use has now become significantly more relevant following COVID-19 and the impact that will have on vacant public and private sector property in our towns and cities. A more pro-active innovative approach will be needed to revitalise failing locations and the 'blank canvasses' that will appear on our high streets. Transitional use of vacant space post-Covid could be an agile method of supporting economic recovery and included in West Yorkshire's Economic Recovery Plan as part of an ask to Government to support towns' recovery.

### Next steps

- 2.5 The report (executive summary and final draft attached in **Appendix 1 and 2**) raises three key questions for authorities to consider:

- What are the issues that need to be addressed before considering temporary use as a response in our places?
- How can an approach to temporary use projects be best delivered?
- How can we aggregate resources to maximise support, benefit and impact in our towns and cities?

And then as a response to the current situation to:

- Be clear about the desired outcomes
- Encourage experimentation and ask questions
- Align activity with economic recovery and strategic planning
- Collaborate with stakeholders and identify the right partners
- Learn from what other places have achieved elsewhere and the benefits produced through taking risks and experimenting with new ideas

- 2.6 The next steps will be to explore the report's recommendations from the perspective of economic, social and cultural recovery post-COVID-19. This could include:

- Identify and promote specific opportunities for example use of vacant space as part of wider support packages for early stage businesses, identifying demand for additional start-up space in towns as part of the Economic Recovery Plan especially where staying local is the new norm
- engaging with lead officers on the Future High Streets, Towns Funds and Historic Action Zones to explore use of vacant space to support the arts and cultural sectors

- developing a pipeline of potential projects to attract both revenue and capital investment support- Arts Council, DCMS, MHCLG, BEIS.

2.7 The consultants Creative Space presented the report to Directors of Development on the 3 July. The key findings and recommendations of the report were well received and the need for further work recognised. It was agreed a further work stage be scoped and a brief developed in discussion with One Public Estate regional programme representatives

2.8 The Combined Authority recently attended a regional One Public Estate network event with other OPE Partnerships. Post meeting a number of partnerships have asked for a copy of the report to assist Towns Fund bid development. OPE are to use the project and resulting report as an exemplar which promotes transitional use of the public estate in towns and cities. By bringing forward ideas in public space there is the aim of spin off activity and a wider discussion about how to deal with vacant space with private sector owners.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 Further work will be funded from the One Public Estate Programme Management budget of £80,000. There are no further financial implications as a result of this report.

### **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

### **5. Staffing Implications**

5.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

### **6. External Consultees**

6.1 To date Leeds City Region local authorities have been consulted in detail on the findings of the study and have provided comments and feedback.

6.2 The Land & Assets Working Group, the OPE Leadership Group and Directors of Development have reviewed the recommendations of the report and have provided comments and feedback. Revenue and resource have been identified as barriers taking forward the recommendations but support suggested next steps with regards developing a potential pipeline as a focus to attract resource and capital to support a more scaled up approach.

### **7. Recommendations**

7.1 That the Panel notes the contents of the report and endorses the recommendations contained in the report.

7.2 That the Panel support the development of a stage 2 project.

## **8. Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – Public Assets ; Temporary Use DRAFT FINAL REPORT

**Appendix 2** - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY From Temporary to Transitional,  
Public Assets : Temporary Use