

### **Q: What's the background to this?**

A: The council agreed its [Office Accommodation Strategy](#) in 2012 to get rid of buildings we no longer need, saving money every year and using assets like buildings and land for housing. So, Lambeth Council is cutting its offices from 14 to two, to save around £4.5m a year in running costs and invest in new homes and a new Civic Centre in Brixton. The Your New Town Hall project is part of a range of improvements in Brixton that include Windrush Square, the award winning Black Cultural Archives, Brixton Village indoor market, Electric Avenue, POP Brixton and the Somerleyton Rd project

### **Q: Who is the developer?**

A: Muse were chosen as the council's development partner in November 2013 and they put in the planning applications covering the 'Triangle' of the Town Hall, Hambrook House and Ivor House as well as the building known as The Press and Olive Morris House. The [planning applications](#) were subject to the same scrutiny by the council's Planning Applications Committee as any other application and were approved in October 2015.

### **Q: Are you selling the Town Hall to Muse?**

A: No, the Town Hall is a Grade 2 listed building that belongs to Lambeth. Its features will be protected but it will be open up for more public and community events use, alongside council meetings, citizenship ceremonies, weddings, parties and conferences. There'll be space for new businesses and the building will be more energy efficient so it'll be cheaper to run.

### **Q: Are you selling any land and / or any offices to developers?**

A: Yes, the deal with Muse means they will be developing Ivor House, Hambrook House and Olive Morris House that will fund the refurbishment of the Town Hall as well as the new civic centre and affordable housing.

**Q: Why are you spending money on refurbishing council offices when you are cutting services?**

A: This is about saving not spending. We're selling off or not renting old and expensive office buildings that we no longer need so instead of 14 core council offices, there'll be just two, owned by the council, saving £4.5m a year. The money raised and saved by no longer renting and selling the buildings will be used to pay for new homes and the new civic centre so there is no additional cost to the council or taxpayers. The council still needs offices for staff but the new civic centre and the refurbished town hall will be more energy efficient and sustainable so the scheme makes sense financially and environmentally.

**Q: Please explain in simple terms how this is self-financing?**

A: There are two aspects to the whole scheme – the building of 194 new homes, the cost of which is completely covered by the development and the refurbishment and development of the town hall and new civic centre.

By moving out of and disposing of offices we no longer need, we're saving on running costs and getting a capital receipt. This delivers in excess of the budgeted £4.5m a year saving, which allows the council to pay for the [borrowing](#) to fund for refurbishment of the town hall and build the new civic centre.

In short, the deal with Muse means they cover the costs and profits from private homes, Lambeth gets affordable homes, a new Civic Centre and a refurbished Town Hall

**Q: But haven't construction costs gone up hugely?**

A: Yes, but we were well aware that construction costs were likely to rise and the increased value of property and land in London means we stand to do better out of the deal overall. The contract with Muse locks in the prices at today's values.

**Q: Are you loaning Muse funds?**

A: As a local authority we can get more favourable rates on loans so it is better value for money to do that and Muse pay us back at more commercial rates. The loan will be payable in instalments and is dependent on the progress of work on the scheme.

**Q: There's been a figure of £50m mentioned for the scheme, what's that?**

A: There are strict EU limits governing the tender and procurement processes according to various scales of estimated value. So that we could go out to tender for a development partner in 2011, we stated the financial scale it would fall in and that was £50m.

**Q: How much have you raised so far from the sale of offices?**

A: Acre House in Acre Lane was sold for £2.1m. Wynne Road office was sold to Pocket Housing for £1.3m to build affordable homes. Hambrook House, Town Hall Parade and Ivor House will be sold and these office buildings will be redeveloped for housing as the sites become available.

**Q: How much did the council pay for Olive Morris House?**

A: £8.8m.

**Q: How much did the council have to pay to get vacant possession of the Fridge Bar?**

A: The council purchased the two properties on the site for £1.7m

**Q: What about Wanless Road?**

A: Although this was originally included, we have continued to use it as an operational building so the site is not for sale. There is no expected financial shortfall despite the loss of the capital receipt on this site because of improvements in land values since the scheme first started. Also, because we do not need to transfer staff to an alternative building in the interim, we've saved on lease costs that were originally part of the cost calculations so we're still saving £4.5m. There are still 14 council office properties though because Chartwell is now included since Lambeth Living came back into the council.

**Q: Will the financial information be made public?**

A: Yes, anything that's not excluded because it's commercially sensitive.

**Q: What's the timescale?**

A: Work has already started on removing asbestos from the Town Hall, and getting other buildings ready for demolition. The contract with Muse means the Town Hall will be open towards the end of 2017.

**Q: How many homes and jobs will Your New Town Hall provide?**

A: The Your New Town Hall project will provide 194 new homes of which 78 will be affordable and 55 of those will be at the lower social rent. That means the planning application meets the Council's own 40% affordable housing target. The council's previous agreement with Pocket Housing (a registered social landlord or RSL) to develop the Wynne Road site means overall, the proportion of new, affordable homes in central Brixton from the wider Your New Town Hall scheme will actually be 47%. The development will create over 700 jobs, 35 apprenticeships as well as work placements. There'll also be office space for businesses and the community.

**Q: Will Olive Morris still be commemorated in the new buildings?**

A: Yes and we have been discussing with Olive's family about how best to do that.

**Q: Have local people been involved or consulted?**

A: Yes, there have been dozens of events and community meetings and hundreds of residents have been involved since the idea was first proposed in late 2012, and of course through the formal Planning Application process.