

## City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b> Resource Allocation Sub (Policy and Resources) Committee – For Information	<b>Dated:</b> 25 June 2025
<b>Subject:</b> Guildhall North and West Wing - Office Utilisation Report	<b>Public report:</b> For Information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></li><li>• <b>provides statutory duties</b></li><li>• <b>provides business enabling functions</b></li></ul>	Leading Sustainable Environment Vibrant Thriving Destination Providing Excellent Services
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	Yes
<b>If so, how much?</b>	£270k
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	2025/26 capital contingencies
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	Yes
<b>Report of:</b> The City Surveyor and Executive Director of Property	Paul Wilkinson
<b>Report author:</b>	Dorian Price, Guildhall Manager, City Surveyors

### Summary

Following the deferral of the Guildhall Refurbishment Major Project (west and north wings), the City Surveyor has taken a proactive approach to review and propose improvements to current office utilisation across the North and West Wings. A data-led utilisation assessment has supported the development of departmental business plans for 2025/26 and informed a programme of improvements to ensure that Guildhall remains a functional, flexible, and future-proofed workplace.

Recent initiatives demonstrate this strategic shift:

- The successful relocation of GSMD administrative staff to the North Wing in 2024.
- Innovation & Growth leading the proposed establishment of the Government's Financial Services Concierge Service / Investment Hub at Guildhall.

- Ongoing work by the City Surveyor to improve utilisation and enhance working environments, including the introduction of shared collaboration spaces, subject to approval of funds??
- CSD is currently reviewing new office accommodation for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Housing Services team, in anticipation of staff growth over the next 12 months. The current space at the Barbican Estate Office will not be adequate for the team's future needs.

The evidence shows that due to specific requirements of each occupier, not all departments operate from the same spatial baseline—desk ratios, working patterns, and usage density vary significantly. As hybrid working becomes embedded, the Corporation must adapt its workplace model. There is a clear opportunity to reconfigure some underutilised areas to deliver shared, neutral collaboration zones—spaces that support flexible attendance, reduce pressure on mid-week peak days and foster greater cross-departmental working.

## **Recommendations**

### **Members are asked:**

1. Note the findings of the Guildhall office utilisation review and the proactive measures already undertaken and actively being reviewed.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. In the absence of a major capital redevelopment, the Guildhall Complex continues to be actively reviewed to align with operational priorities and space optimisation goals. This includes opportunities to:
  - 1.1. **Absorb external space requirements** back into Guildhall (as was successfully done for GSMD in 2024);
  - 1.2. **Support corporate services growth**, such as the proposed FS Concierge Service led by Innovation & Growth.
  - 1.3. Introduce **shared-use models** where appropriate to better match capacity with user demand.
2. Notably, some departments are working in dense environments, while others retain lower utilisation. A single standard is not applicable across the Complex due to the specific requirements of each occupying department, but targeted interventions can improve the overall efficiency and user experience.

### **Current Position**

3. The key findings from the Guildhall desk utilisation across all departments in North and West wings is as follows –
  - 3.1. **Total allocated Office Space:** 10,825 m<sup>2</sup> across all departments in West and North wings.
  - 3.2. **Total allocated Desks:** 962 desks for 1,389 Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) as supplied by each Departmental Workplace Representative.

- 3.3. **Overall Office Utilisation** - The average office space utilisation rate across both wings is **61%**, reflecting the minimum 3 days policy and different usage by occupying departments.
- 3.4. **Friday Decline**: Utilisation drops significantly to 35%, reflecting flexible work patterns and indicating a strong preference for remote work at the end of the week.
- 3.5. **Total FTE per Desk**: Average 1.44 FTE per desk.
- 3.5.1. Ranges from **1.02 FTE** per desk to **2.3 FTE** per desk. Indicating shared desk arrangements in some areas.
- 3.6. **Total FTE per Square Metre**: Average 7.8 m<sup>2</sup> per FTE.
- 3.6.1. British Council for Office – BCO – recommends density as a single occupancy criterion of 10 m<sup>2</sup> per person.
4. The key findings highlight different space usage according to individual department's requirements, employee-to-desk ratios, and peak occupancy patterns and further supports the recommendations for the introduction of shared collaboration zones.

## Proposals

### 5. Optimise Space Utilisation

- 5.1. At May Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting, Chief Officers approved the recommended option to reconfigure specific underutilised areas of the North Wing to create neutral and shared collaboration zones—open to all departments and aligned with modern hybrid working practices. This includes:
- Quiet touchdown areas.
  - Informal meeting spaces.
  - Technology-enabled collaboration zones.
- 5.2. The proposed investment of £270,000 from 2025/26 capital contingencies and will support:
- Space planning and layout reconfiguration.
  - Furniture and environment upgrades, where required.
  - IT and signage.
- 5.3. This option delivers:
- Smarter use of floorspace.
  - A better experience for staff and teams on site.
  - Alignment with workplace trends and staff expectations.

## Corporate & Strategic Implications –

6. **Strategic implications –Workplace Attendance Policy**: This report assumes that all departments are adhering to the minimum three-days-a-week office attendance policy. This is not monitored by CSD, but by the occupying departments themselves.
7. **Financial implications** – A capital investment of £270k was approved by Priorities Board in May, and is subject to approval by RASC (via Chamberlain funding update report), to reconfigure identified spaces (e.g. furnishings, IT, layout changes).

8. **Resource implications** - Implementation will require project support from the City Surveyor's Department (CSD), current occupiers, IT, and Facilities teams working together to deliver these new shared collaboration spaces.
9. **Legal implications** - No direct legal implications identified at this stage. The proposal to accommodate the Financial Services Concierge Service / Investment Hub may require future legal documentation.
10. **Risk implications** –
  - Low operational risk: primary risk relates to delays in funding approval or implementation.
  - Risk of underuse if space is not properly signposted or supported.
  - Mitigated through staff engagement, clear communication, and user-friendly design.
  - Working within the building control constraints for fire management and evacuation procedures.
11. **Equalities implications** – Shared collaboration spaces will be designed to be inclusive and accessible to all, in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The proposal reflects feedback from the DAWN (Disability and Wellbeing Network), which emphasised the importance of neurodiversity-friendly design features—such as quiet areas, visual clarity, and varied working environments—to better support staff with diverse cognitive and sensory needs.
12. **Climate implications** - Consolidating workspace and repurposing existing areas supports the Corporation's Net Zero targets by reducing energy consumption per user.

## **Conclusion**

13. This report demonstrates that, since the deferral of the Guildhall Refurbishment Major Project, the City Surveyor is managing space planning across the complex and is actively managing its estate to reflect operational and workforce realities.
14. The findings confirm that while no additional internal accommodation is being sought for 2025/26, there is still some minor opportunity to optimise existing office space through targeted interventions. In particular, some underutilised areas could be better reconfigured into neutral, shared collaboration spaces, enhancing flexibility, supporting hybrid working, and relieving pressure points on desks and meeting rooms during peak days.
15. The proposed approach aligns with the City Corporation's strategic priorities and offers long-term value by improving space efficiency, fostering cross-departmental collaboration, and ensuring the estate remains fit for purpose.

## **Appendices**

- None

**Dorian Price**, Guildhall Manager

T: 07827 256959 E: [dorian.price@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:dorian.price@cityoflondon.gov.uk)