

# Visionary Big Issue Sessions

## A problem shared – a problem halved ...

### Session 6: Third sector property: an asset or a liability?

**25 October 2021, 14:00 – 16:00**

Thank you for registering for the October Big Issues session. We have a specific way of running these sessions which hopefully allow for learning, reflection and listening. Please take time to read this document over and make sure you understand and are comfortable with how the session will work.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me – [fiona.sandford@visionary.org.uk](mailto:fiona.sandford@visionary.org.uk).

Best wishes

Fiona

**Presenter:** Lesley Carcary, CEO, Seescape

#### Context

In the ongoing aftermath of a global pandemic, we’ve all witnessed significant shifts in the way people behave, work and access services and support. While pre-lockdown many sight loss charities may have been seen to be in an enviable position if they owned a property, having a guaranteed space to operate and a significant asset to bolster their financial position, is this still the case?

With moves towards a blended model of working, and many staff likely to remain working at home full-time, the need for a large office space is perhaps less important. Many of us (including clients) have also adapted well to a virtual world in relation to service delivery, and will continue with some of these processes in the longer-term. We also need to consider the financial implications of holding on to property as an asset, versus the benefits of accessing cash to support service delivery and operations.

This session will be relevant for both those charities who own a property, as well as those who lease property and are reassessing their space requirements in a post-lockdown world. The session will allow you to share your experiences, discuss common issues and learn from others who have gone through a similar process.

#### 1 The issue – please read in advance of the session!

Lesley has given us the information below to think about – please take time to read it before you attend:

**Q1 Why is this important to you?**

* We need a fit-for-purpose space which meets the long-term needs of our staff, volunteers and service users.
* One large building may not be the best way to reach clients across the entire region we cover; consideration to a smaller central hub and various outreach locations.
* A clear idea of our long-term property requirements will support us to forward plan and shape our overall strategy.

**Q2 Why is this important to your organisation?**

* Making best use of charity resources and utilising cash and assets effectively.
* Understanding whether it is more financially savvy to retain the property as an asset or liquidate to cash for other purposes.
* Meeting the needs of our clients, staff and volunteers in a post-pandemic world.

**Q3 How will you recognise progress on this problem?**

Progress will look different for each organisation, but for Seescape the outcomes of a comprehensive organisational and property review will enable us to make a well-informed decision regarding our long-term property requirements.

**We will recognise future progress on the problem if:**

* Our chosen property solution supports us to meet our strategic aims and objectives.
* Our clients, staff and volunteers are satisfied with the building and feel that we are able to operate effectively within it.
* Our chosen property solution is a sound financial way forward.

**Q4 Who else would like to see progress on this problem?**

* Our Board: assurance that they are fulfilling their responsibilities to protect the charity’s assets.
* Our stakeholders: to provide assurance on the way forward in terms of our service delivery model, strategy and remit.
* Other sight loss charities: if successful, our decision may support other charities in their thinking regarding long-term property requirements.

**Q5 What are the benefits if this problem is reduced or resolved (to you and your organisation)?**

* A stronger financial strategy and a viable financial model.
* A well-informed strategy based on our physical capacity to deliver services and operate effectively.
* A property solution which allows us to reach clients across the entire area we serve, and to offer services which meet their needs effectively.
* A motivated and empowered staff team who have the tools and resources to perform their roles.

**Q6 What is the timescale in which the problem/issue needs to be addressed?**

By summer 2021.

#### 2 The session

**Introductions: (10 mins max)**

Name/why

**Stage 1: Introducing the Issue (10 minutes)**

Lesley presents the issue and talks about why it is important.

**Stage 2: Questioning (20 minutes)**

Facilitated by Fiona, the group asks open ended questions – they do not give advice or ask leading questions! Questions should hopefully develop insight into the issue and help identify potential courses of action.

**Stage 3: Insight (10 minutes)**

The group carry on the conversation without Lesley, offer brief, constructive advice. During this stage Lesley listens and observes the conversation.

**Break – 15 minutes**

**Stage 4: Group Feedback (10 minutes)**

Lesley has 5 minutes to reply to what has been said and to give the group feedback on what they think.

**Stage 5: Solutions (10 minutes)**

Lesley, with the support of the group starts to develop 1-3 actions for the issue.

**Stage 6: How was it for you – facilitated by Fiona (10 minutes)**

* How did this feel?
* What worked well?
* What could we do differently?
* What could we drop?
* Everyone ok?

**Conclusion and discussion – whatever time is left!**

#### 3 Aim

In these sessions we will generate ideas, share experiences, challenge assumptions and rethink established processes. By doing that we hope to cultivate new ideas, develop insight, create positive change and have lightbulb moments!

The environment is supportive and safe with the aim of helping each other, building confidence and sharing skills and knowledge.

#### 4 Visionary’s role

Fiona facilitates the meeting and takes notes, ensures the meeting keeps to time and questions asked are open rather than closed.