1. SUMMARY

1.1 The Council has commissioned on street and postal research to seek local people’s views on Beckenham and Orpington Town Centres. Following this survey a local stakeholder workshop was held in Beckenham to which Ward Members, Portfolio Holders, representatives of local business and residents’ associations and other local interest groups were invited together with officers from every Council department with a remit in the town centre. An executive summary of the survey and notes of the discussion at the workshop are attached as appendices to this report.

1.2 The report also gives details of action taken in response to the consultation exercise and sets out a number of proposed improvements for consideration and further consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Portfolio Holder is asked to note the results of the public surveys and the local stakeholder workshop and the work which either has been or will be undertaken to improve the street scene and environment in Beckenham Town Centre.

2.2 The Portfolio Holder is asked to approve in principle the schedule of improvements contained in appendix 3 and release the schedule for further consultation with local stakeholders and appropriate PDS Committees and Portfolio Holders.

2.3 Following consultation, the Town Centre Project Director is asked to submit a further report seeking authority to the expenditure necessary to carry out the works.
3. **COMMENTARY**

3.1 On 14th November 2005, the Executive was informed that a consultation exercise would be undertaken in Beckenham and Orpington as a step towards producing improvement plans for both town centres. The Portfolio Holder for Local Economy, in consultation with other appropriate Portfolio Holders and Ward Members, was asked to bring forward for approval improvement plans for both town centres and to authorise expenditure on items contained within the approved improvement plans.

3.2 A capital fund was established to hold section 106 contributions made by the developer of the Nugent Estate Orpington together with any other such contributions which directly refer to town centre environment or local economy matters and any proportion of the Station Road capital receipt that Members may determine shall be re-invested in town centre improvements.

3.3 Faber Maunsell were commissioned to carry out the town centre surveys and the Executive Summary from their report on Beckenham is attached as appendix 1. The results which were largely positive were shared with local stakeholders who attended a workshop on 13th July 2006. The workshop focussed on the four main issues that had come out of the research:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Environment
- Traffic / Car parking
- Commercial Use of Premises

The notes of the discussion at the stakeholders workshop is attached as appendix 2 and a brief summary is set out below.

**Anti-Social Behaviour**

3.4 The general view of stakeholders was that although anti-social behaviour remains an issue, the position is improving with the various agencies such as the Council / Police / Safer Neighbourhood Panel / Pub Watch working well together to improve the situation. In particular, stakeholders felt that the perception of the level of ASB in Beckenham is worse than the real position and that is confirmed in the survey results. They felt there had to be a continuing firm line on licensing and more facilities for young people.

**Environment**

3.5 Beckenham is considered to be an attractive, traditional town with the benefit of a visually interesting high street. The floral displays are appreciated as were the markets and events held in the town although people would like to see them held on a more regular basis.

3.6 The main concerns were about Beckenham Green which stakeholders felt should be enhanced and better lit. Specific reference was made to litter and dog fouling on the green and the vandalised state of the fence around the children’s area. A town sign has long been an aspiration and there was some support for public art in the town.

3.7 It was felt that a street furniture audit should be carried out and used as a baseline for improvement and that the environment in and around the Village Way (Sainsbury) car park should be improved.
Traffic / Parking

3.8 There is no support for additional car parks, one way systems or pedestrianisation. Some people thought the tariffs were too expensive in the car parks. The general view was that on street parking is essential although it was recognised that this sometimes causes congestion. There was concern about the level of lorry traffic especially heavy vehicles that are passing through the town.

3.9 Wider pavements would be welcomed but it was appreciated that there had to be a balance with the need to maintain short stay parking and traffic circulation. There was support for improvement to the station forecourt.

Commercial Use of Premises

3.10 The survey highlighted residents and users wish for a greater variety of shops but at the workshop, stakeholders held the view that there was a good balance between the small specialist independent trader and smaller branches of some of the national chains. There was a feeling that this added character to the town although high rental values was seen to be a deterrent to some start up independent retailers.

3.11 The number of voids is low and the variety of restaurants was seen by many to be an attraction.

4. RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

4.1 Following the stakeholder workshop officers have concentrated on the environmental improvements, in particular in the street environment and Beckenham Green. Work has already been put in hand to provide new lamp post bins and paint the lamp posts, sign posts and railings. Any unnecessary attachments to the posts will also be removed. This work will be carried out over the next few months and funded from existing street services budgets. An order is also being placed to prune the trees which overhang the path outside the police station.

4.2 The improvement plan proposes repainting the zebra crossing at the Odeon, replacing or repainting parking meters and reviewing on street parking and the numbers of bays for pay & display, the disabled and loading. Officers are also obtaining estimates for some pavement repairs and replacement and a jet wash superclean of the pavements and chewing gum removal.

4.3 Some improvements have already been made to the lighting on the upper deck of the Village Way (Sainsbury) car park funded from the section 106 agreement in respect of the development of the Beckenham Hospital site. There is sufficient funding from that source to improve the lighting on the lower deck and in the stairwells, however it is necessary to obtain the agreement of the applicant, Bromley NHS Trust.

4.4 A preliminary landscape scheme has been designed for Beckenham Green to incorporate lighting, some new pathways, planting and seating. It is recommended that a new metal fence is erected around the children’s area and there could be some play equipment installed. A village sign could be erected on the green at the junction of Albemarle Road and the High Street and a piece of public art could be a central feature in the design of the open space. Provision could be made for a reinforced grass surface alongside the paths capable of accommodating an increased number of market stalls and events on the green.

4.5 A full list of the works currently being proposed is set out in the draft Improvement Plan attached as appendix 3. Copies of the landscape proposal for Beckenham Green will be placed in the members room and circulated at the meeting. A full copy of the Faber
Maunsell survey report will be placed in the members room. If the Portfolio Holder approves the Improvement Plan in principle it is recommended that the plan should be the subject of further consultation with stakeholders and with Ward members, the Environment and Leisure Portfolio Holder and PDS Committee and the Local Economy PDS Committee. A further report will then be submitted with revised proposals that reflect the views of those consulted and with a firm estimate of cost.

4.6 Officers will give further consideration to the possible benefits of larger infrastructure projects such as pavement widening and work to the station forecourt and a further report will be submitted to a future meeting. In this way the improvement plan can become a living document that can be added to as issues either emerge or are explored in more depth and implemented when sufficient funding is available or can be sourced externally from agencies such as Transport for London.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The sustainability of its town centres is one of the Council’s key priorities. The improvements proposed in this report will ensure that Beckenham remains an attractive town centre and encourage people to visit it to shop or for leisure purposes.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Town Centre Improvement Fund currently stands at £625,000 and further section 106 contributions amounting to £100,000 are anticipated early in 2007 with a further £600,000 being due if and when development starts on the second phase of the Nugent Estate. £186,000 has been allocated to the provision of the temporary Christmas ice rink in Bromley but it is anticipated that will be re-imbursted by the revenue from ticket sales. £110,000 has been allocated to the cost of consultancy work on traffic modelling in respect of the opportunity sites in Bromley.

6.2 The receipt from the sale of Station Road to Tesco is likely to be received in November 2006. The likely receipt has already been built in the Council’s capital financing assumptions

6.3 The indicative cost of the full landscape scheme for Beckenham Green is between £175,000 and £200,000 and the cost of a piece of public art could be in the region of £27,000 although it may be possible to attract funding from the Arts Council. The cost of the town sign is in the region of £5,000. The cost of environmental maintenance can be met from existing street services budgets but any significant renewals to surfaces or equipment may need to be funded from the Improvement Fund. Any potential additional costs not in the draft plan will be reported when the final plan is considered after the consultation process is complete.