



THE LONDON BOROUGH
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**RENEWAL AND RECREATION
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP

Meeting to be held at **7.30 pm** on **Thursday 9 March 2017** at
Beckenham Library, Beckenham, BR3 4PE*

***PLEASE NOTE STARTING TIME**

AGENDA

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JANUARY 2017 (Pages 1 - 8)**
- 3 MATTERS ARISING (Pages 9 - 12)**
- 4 TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND POLLUTION ON RECTORY ROAD (Pages 13 - 14)**
- 5 BUS DIVERSIONS DURING BECKENHAM HIGH STREET WORKS (Pages 15 - 16)**
- 6 MAJOR SCHEME UPDATE**
- 7 UPDATE ON EMPTY SHOPS IN BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE (Pages 17 - 20)**
- 8 BECKENHAM GREEN CANOPY**
- 9 TOWN TEAM UPDATE**
- 10 BID DEVELOPMENT**
- 11 PURPLE FLAG UPDATE**
- 12 PLAQUES**
- 13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS--PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED**
- 14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

Contact Officer:

Stephen Wood
LBB Democratic Services Manager
1st March 2017
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RENEWAL AND RECREATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 7.30 pm on 12 January 2017

Present:

Councillor Michael Tickner (Chairman)
Councillor Alan Collins
Councillor Ian Dunn
Councillor Sarah Phillips
Councillor Stephen Wells

Marsha Berg, (Beckenham Business Association)
Jackie Groundsell, (Beckenham Business Association)
Alan Old, (Copers Cope Residents Association)
Dr John Parker, (Beckenham Society)
Chloe-Jane Ross, (Copers Cope Area Residents Association)
David Wood, (Beckenham Civic Society)
Kevin Munnely, (LBB Regeneration & Transformation Service)
Stephen Oliver, (Regeneration & Transformation Service)
Garry Warner, (Environment & Community Services)
Stephen Wood, Chief Executive's Department(Committee Secretary)

Also present:

Nick Goy, (Beckenham Resident)
Terry Stanley, (Beckenham Resident)
Sue Woodward, (Beckenham Resident)
Nick Goy (Beckenham Resident)
Alice Marsh (Beckenham Forum Website)

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| 96 | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE |
| | Apologies were received from Cllrs Russell Mellor, Diane Smith and Vanessa Allen. Apologies were also received from Stephen Parkin, Gail Low, Janice Pilgrim, Martin Pinnell, Angus Culverwell, Marie Pender, and Tina Slater. |
| 97 | MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING |
| | It was noted that a late submission of suggested amendments had been submitted by Mr Nick Goy. These would be attended to in due course. Subject to these, the minutes were agreed as a correct record. |

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| | <p><i>Post meeting note:</i></p> <p><i>The amendments referred to above have been incorporated into this version of the minutes.</i></p> |
| 98 | MATTERS ARISING |
| | The Matters Arising report was noted. |
| 99 | MAJOR SCHEME UPDATE |
| | <p>Mr Munnelly stated that the Major Scheme (MS) was now entering the implementation phase.</p> <p>Mr Warner tabled a colour copy of the Beckenham High Street Phasing Plan. The Plan would be disseminated in due course. The Plan outlined the phase durations, with a corresponding colour key. The initial phase was marked as Phase A, which was due to commence on 13th February 2017. The other Phases were marked as Phases 1-7, and each Phase was roughly of three month's duration. The final Phase was due for completion on 3rd August 2018.</p> <p>Plant machinery would arrive at the site on 5th February, ready to commence work when materials arrived from China. The work being undertaken would include the replacement of all temporary materials, and resurfacing work. Phases 1-6 outlined how the project work would move through the various parts of the High Street, with Phase 7 being works undertaken at the War Memorial Roundabout. More details of the planned works would be made available in due course, and regular updates would be provided by Helen McConnell (FM Conway, Liaison Manager). A one way traffic system would be in place whilst the works were being implemented, and buses would be on diversion. Bus diversion plans were tabled by Mr Warner.</p> <p>Mr Warner mentioned various works that would be undertaken, and these were widening footways, new street lighting, and the re-paving of footways. Old kerbs would be removed and re-used elsewhere. It was not the case that a new road was being constructed, but rather that the existing road was being re-surfaced. Twenty advance warning signs had been set up. It was also planned that two large electronic signs would be used to provide information and updates.</p> <p>Marsha Berg expressed concern about traffic issues being caused by FM Conway plant and machinery. Mr Munnelly stated that a compound for FM Conway machinery was going to be set up in St George's Car Park, but it had to be borne in mind that some large plant would not be able to be situated in the compound.</p> |

The Group was informed that a 2 day exhibition was planned at 11 Village Way, near St Edmund's Hall. The dates for this were 20th January and 21st January, from 10.00am to 4.00pm. Posters advertising this had already been displayed and leaflets were being distributed to local residents and businesses the day after the Group meeting. A meeting was planned with local businesses at a different location on January 25th. Letters were also being posted to residents of Rectory Road. Regular updates and liaison would be undertaken by FM Conway over the duration of the project.

Mr Old enquired when the Penge project work would commence, and was informed that the work had already started.

Mr Goy referred to problems with parking on pavements, and asked how this would impact on the use of tactile paving. Mr Warner explained that tactile paving was not going to be used on pavements. Instead, there would be areas where the paving would vary in colour and texture. Tactile Paving would only be used at crossings.

Mr Goy referred to cycle racks as being akin to 'bollards on corners'. Mr Oliver responded that this was not the case, and that the location of the cycle racks had been chosen by cycle officers, and had passed the safety audit. The Chairman commented that cycle racks should be dispersed and be well distributed.

Marsha Berg referred to the Halifax by the Drive, which had been the subject of several incidents of crime. She asked if consideration could be made to the placing of cement flower troughs or similar to act as a deterrent to future acts of criminality. It was also mentioned that perhaps the Halifax should consider how the front of its premises could be made more secure and robust.

Susan Ryall asked what would be done to monitor traffic volume and pollution on Rectory Road during the period of the project. She raised concerns about both of these issues, and about the problems that residents may experience in getting out of their driveways.

RESOLVED that

1) A report is presented to the next Group meeting, explaining the traffic modelling undertaken with respect to Rectory Road, and how traffic volumes and pollution would be monitored for the duration of the project.

2) The said report to clarify the action to be taken if predicted traffic volumes are exceeded.

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| 100 | BECKENHAM GREEN CANOPY |
| | <p>Mr Oliver brought an update concerning the proposed canopy to cover the stage at Beckenham Green. As this was located in a conservation area, the canopy had to be unobtrusive as well as being durable and providing value for money. The canopy had to be built bespoke due to problems with the foundation of the stage caused by tree roots. The canopy would be built from a high tension fabric that could take a ton in weight. The colour of the canopy would be confirmed in a planning application.</p> <p>The Chairman asked if power could be supplied to the stage, and Mr Oliver confirmed that this was possible. A member asked how the canopy would be cleaned, and Mr Oliver stated that this would be taken up with the Parks Contractor. Some members of the Group stated that they were not keen on the design for various reasons. Chloe-Jane Ross, whilst appreciating the work undertaken so far, felt that sides or an overhang was required. It was agreed that she would discuss this further with Mr Oliver and Mr Munnelly post meeting.</p> <p>Mr Old expressed the view that the design was unimaginative and was from the 1980's, and was not designed with Beckenham in mind. Dr Parker suggested that a competition be organised to come up with a design. Mr Munnelly expressed reservations concerning this, as he felt that constraints existed in terms of time and budget. Cllr Collins stated that the idea of a competition had merit. Cllr Dunn expressed a similar view, and was in favour of a competition being run via an Art School.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting Note:</i></p> <p><i>The draft minutes of the meeting of the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group were noted by members of the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee on 26th January 2017.</i></p> <p><i>The PDS Committee resolved that the proposed competition for a canopy design be approved.</i></p> |
| 101 | ALBEMARLE ROAD/HIGH STREET JUNCTION UPDATE |
| | <p>Mr Warner stated that work was being undertaken on fixed traffic signal timing. It was the case that high quality materials and loops were required, as well as resurfacing. One post was going to be moved by TfL. A member asked what a 'loop' was, and it was explained that this was a device that had a detector to pick up traffic queues.</p> |

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| | <p>Mr Warner stated that the widening of the corner turn had benefitted the corner locksmith premises. Heavy lorries no longer mounted the corner protection bell-bollards and crashed down, with the vibration breaking the shop windows.</p> <p>Marsha Berg requested half a dumb-bell by the locksmith's, instead of a full one. The dumbbell should be of a contrasting colour to assist those who were partially sighted.</p> <p>Mr Goy expressed the view that the proposed new cycle racks on the narrow path near Beckenham Junction Train Station would obstruct pedestrians, particularly when crowds left the station. Another mentioned that this was also the flower stall location.</p> <p>Resolved that the Junction update be noted.</p> |
| 102 | TOWN TEAM UPDATE |
| | <p>Ms Ross directed thoughts to Christmas lights for 2017. She mentioned that the lights on the trees on the Green were now broken as the trees had grown and damaged them. It was noted that there was a provision for new lights on the Green in the Major Scheme.</p> <p>The artificial Christmas tree and associated Christmas tree lights at Shortlands were praised, and it was hoped that Beckenham would be able to have a similar scheme. If there was any money available for bespoke lighting, then a bid should be made as soon as possible to obtain a competitive price. Mr Munnely requested further information concerning the Shortlands scheme. Alice Marsh commented that the public loved the Shortlands Tree, and that she would like to see some form of Christmas lighting at the Beckenham War Memorial. There was some confusion as to the cost of the tree and Christmas lighting at Shortlands. Jackie Groundsell had been quoted a cost of £8.5k, whilst Chloe Jane Ross had been quoted a cost of £2.5k.</p> <p>The Group, whilst appreciative of the Christmas tree at Beckenham Green, felt that it was a bit small. Ms Groundsell stated that she had been informed that the storage costs for the Shortlands Tree was in the region of £2.5-2.7K per annum. The advantage of storage was that it avoided a future capital cost.</p> <p>The contractor had been instructed to save and move the Christmas lights brackets from the existing lamp columns to the new lamp columns. No construction work was to be undertaken in the two months spanning the important Christmas and New Year trading period.</p> |

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| | <p>It was noted that a response from TfL had not yet been received to the request for a new bus countdown unit at Fairfield Road bus stop. It was agreed that a plan of the proposed loading bays would be sent out with the final minutes.</p> <p>Resolved that a plan of the proposed loading bays would be sent out with the minutes.</p> |
| <p>103</p> | <p>LOCATION OF WAR MEMORIAL</p> |
| | <p>It was noted that listed building consent would be required to move the War Memorial. The Group heard that any attempt to move the location of the War Memorial (even if they were inclined to do so) would be met with opposition from the Conservation Officer and Historic England.</p> <p>The Group agreed that the memorial should not be moved, and that crash barriers were not required. It was suggested that taller flowerbeds be used instead to offer some additional protection to the Memorial.</p> <p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(1) The War Memorial should not be moved and the existing listed low brick wall should not be removed.</p> <p>(2) Crash barriers should not be used to protect the War Memorial.</p> <p>(3) Taller flowers or flower beds should be sited around the War Memorial.</p> |
| <p>104</p> | <p>LOCATION OF PURPLE FLAG</p> |
| | <p>The Group felt that a planning application should be submitted as soon as possible so that the Purple Flag could be sited.</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that he had emailed the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Renewal and Recreation in an attempt to get consensus on the location where the flag should be sited. It was noted that Tina Slater was the officer leading on this, but that she was not present at the meeting for consultation.</p> <p>The Group were still in favour of siting the Purple Flag outside of Beckenham Junction Train Station, and were hoping for a quick decision concerning this going forward. It was recommended that plans to site the Flag be incorporated into the design for Beckenham Station. The Chairman requested that the Flag be illuminated, and supported by an explanatory plaque. He asked that this be dealt with as a priority.</p> |

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| | <p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(1) A planning application be submitted as soon as possible to site the Purple Flag at Beckenham Junction Train Station</p> <p>(2) The Flag be illuminated and supported by an explanatory plaque</p> <p>(3) Plans to site the Flag should be incorporated into the design for Beckenham Station</p> |
| <p>105</p> | <p>PLAQUES</p> |
| | <p>Mr David Wood gave an update concerning plaques, and a computer generated example of a plaque was passed around the Group. The size was twelve inches in diameter, and was similar in design to the ones that had already been laid in Bromley. It was agreed that the plaques should incorporate the Beckenham Coat of Arms.</p> <p>Mr Wood asked how many of the plaques would be funded by LBB. Mr Oliver confirmed that a budget was available for plaques and that LBB would place the order. It was agreed that the Beckenham Society would sort out the final wording. Mr Munnelly confirmed that there would be no cost to the Beckenham Society.</p> <p>It was clarified that because FM Conway would use a special boring machine to drill holes to site the plaques, this would be undertaken collectively for all of the plaques at the end of the project.</p> <p>Mr Goy stated that there were possible errors in the booklet 'A walk around Beckenham'. It was agreed that the errors needed to be eliminated.</p> <p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(1) The Beckenham Society decides on the final wording for the plaques, and liaises with LBB who would place the order.</p> <p>(2) Errors in the booklet 'A walk around Beckenham' should be corrected.</p> |
| <p>106</p> | <p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> |
| | <p>It had previously been requested that crossing points (with a pedestrian refuge) be sited on Rectory Road, but these were not showing in the plans. The Chairman stated that this should be taken up with Mr Warner for clarification.</p> |

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| | <p>It was mentioned that someone had tweeted that LBB were charging for entry to Kelsey Park, but this was not the case.</p> <p>Susan Ryall asked what was being done about the empty shops in Beckenham. The Chairman suggested that a report be requested concerning the empty shops in Beckenham.</p> <p>Mr Goy raised the matter of the grey tarmac pavement on the south side of Croydon Road between the War Memorial and Beckenham Beacon Medical Centre and asked if the pavement could be upgraded. This included shopping frontages by Faversham and Shaftesbury Roads which were a continuation of the town centre retail and restaurant premises. The pavement opposite and further away, outside of Tesco Express/Kwik Fit was already herringbone pink paving, but anomalously there was only grey tarmac there.</p> <p>Mr Goy suggested that instead of progressing with the current proposal for the permanent Canopy at Beckenham Green, (with design limitations), a large marquee be purchased and be available for community events instead, saving the cost of hire expense which was likely to be in the region of £600-£700.</p> <p>RESOLVED that</p> <p>(1) Mr Warner clarify if there are any plans to site crossing points (with a pedestrian refuge) in Rectory Road</p> <p>(2) A report be brought back to the next meeting to update the Group concerning empty shops in Beckenham Town Centre</p> |
| 107 | DATE OF NEXT MEETING |
| | The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 9 th March 2017. |

The Meeting ended at 9.30 pm

Report No.
CSD17040

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: Beckenham Town Centre Working Group

Date: 9th March 2017

Decision Type: Non Urgent Non Executive Non Key

Title: **MATTERS ARISING**

Contact Officer: Steve Wood, Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 020 8313 4316 E-mail: stephen.wood@bromley.gov.uk

Chief Officer: Mark Bowen, Director of Corporate Services

Ward: N/A

1. Reason for report

1.1 **Appendix A** updates Members of the Group on matters arising from previous meetings.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 The Group is asked to review progress on matters arising from previous meetings.

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| Non-Applicable Sections: | Policy/Financial/Legal/Personnel |
| Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer) | Minutes and Action Points from the previous meeting |

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council/Quality Environment, Thriving Town Centres,
-

Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost to Democratic Services
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Democratic Services
 4. Total current budget for this head: £335,590
 5. Source of funding: 2016/17 revenue budget
-

Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 8 posts (7.27fte)
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: Completion of "Matters Arising" Reports for PP&S PDS meetings (and their sub groups) can take up to a few hours per meeting.
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None
 2. Call-in: Not Applicable
-

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): This report is intended primarily for Members of the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Ward Councillors attend and comment at the meetings.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

| <u>Minute Number/Title</u> | <u>Matters Arising</u> | <u>Update</u> |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Minute 99 12th January 2017</p> <p>Major Scheme Update</p> | <p>1) A report is presented to the next Group meeting, explaining the traffic modelling undertaken with respect to Rectory Road, and how traffic volumes and pollution would be monitored for the duration of the project.</p> <p>2) The said report to clarify the action to be taken if predicted traffic volumes are exceeded.</p> | <p>A short briefing on pollution has been added to the agenda.</p> <p>If a report were required on traffic volumes then an outside contractor would have to undertake the work, and the relevant budget found.</p> |
| <p>Minute 100 12th January 2017</p> <p>Beckenham Green Canopy</p> | <p>There was support for a design competition to be set up via an Art School for a new design of the Beckenham Green Canopy. Approval for this was also given subsequently by the R&R PDS Committee.</p> | <p>The original design presented by Stephen Oliver was affordable and met the design brief.</p> <p>Update to be provided at the meeting.</p> |
| <p>Minute 103 12th January 2017</p> <p>War Memorial</p> | <p>Resolved that taller flowers or flower beds be located around the War Memorial.</p> | <p>TBC.</p> <p>This may need a re-think as taller flowers could interfere with the sight lines of drivers driving around the Roundabout.</p> |
| <p>Minute 104 12th January 2017</p> <p>Location of Purple Flag</p> | <p>A planning application be submitted as soon as possible to site the Purple Flag at Beckenham Junction Train Station</p> <p>The Flag be illuminated and supported by an explanatory plaque</p> <p>Plans to site the Flag should be incorporated into the design for Beckenham Station</p> | <p>The Planning Application is required under Advertising Regulations and will be submitted shortly-this is just for the Flag, and not the pole.</p> <p>The pole will be spot lit from a lamp column.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Flag Pole location has been decided.</p> |
| <p>Minute 105 12th January 2017</p> <p>Plaques</p> | <p>The Beckenham Society to decide on the final wording for the plaques, and liaises with LBB who would place the order.</p> <p>Errors in the booklet 'A walk around Beckenham' should be corrected</p> | <p>An update from the Beckenham Society will be provided at the meeting.</p> |
| <p>Minute 106 12th January 2017</p> <p>AOB</p> | <p>Mr Warner to clarify if there are any plans to site crossing points (with a pedestrian refuge) in Rectory Road.</p> <p>A report to be brought back to the next meeting to update the Group concerning empty shops in Beckenham Town Centre.</p> | <p>Mr Warner will provide an update on this at the meeting.</p> <p>A brief written update will be provided at the March meeting</p> |

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UPDATE ON AIR POLLUTION

The following update has been received from the Environmental Health Officer—Hedley Pugh:

In 2007 the Council declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) encompassing the North and North West of the Borough. To ensure Bromley continues to meet air quality obligations, the single automatic air quality monitoring station at Harwood Avenue (near Bromley Town Centre) continues to operate. In line with other Authorities, continuous monitoring is supplemented by diffusion tubes, located at nine locations, within the AQMA-- including Elmers End Road and Beckenham Road.

Following the cut of a number of Pollution Officer Posts, there is insufficient capacity to undertake additional air quality monitoring over and above that required to meet legal obligations. Should the Traffic and Road Safety Division require additional monitoring for a given scheme this will need to be undertaken by external consultants.

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Details will be updated on <http://www.westbeckenhamra.org/>



BUS DIVERSIONS DURING BECKENHAM HIGH STREET WORKS

Phases one and two of works on Beckenham High Street have started at the junction of Albemarle Road.

The works impact bus routes **54, 162, 194, 227, 352, 354, 358, 367, and N3.**

The proposed date for the first diversions to start is 11 March, lasting to July. The whole project will last approximately 18 months, with a number of phases as the works move down the High Street from Albemarle Road to the War Memorial. In all phases buses will remain on their normal routes northbound (towards Bromley or Woolwich) but will be diverted southbound (towards Crystal Palace or Croydon) past the relevant section of the High Street. There may be special schedules on the affected bus routes. For the bus diversions TfL are planning to have three phases, with a break over Christmas 2017, –

- from 11 March to July 2017.
- from July 2017 until mid-December 2017.
- Between mid-December 2017 and early January 2018 the High Street should reopen fully for the holiday period, with no buses diverted.
- Then the final phase will be from early January 2018 to some time in Summer 2018.

The current diversions being proposed for each route is set out below. These plans are still subject to change and are not yet finalised.

- **Route 54** from Southend Road's junction with Rectory Road, turning right onto Rectory Road, taking the second exit at the roundabout onto Croydon Road and then back to its normal line of route.

Details will be updated on <http://www.westbeckenhamra.org/>

- **Route 162.** towards Eltham from Rectory Road's junction with Southend Road via Albemarle Road, St George's Road and Bromley Road back to line of route. Routeing towards Beckenham Junction will remain unchanged.
- **Route 194** and **Route 358.** No diversion planned at this time
- **Route 227.** towards Crystal Palace from Bromley Road's Junction with Manor Road, travelling ahead on Manor Road, ahead again on High Street before joining its usual line of route.
- **Route 352.** No diversion planned at this time
- **Route 354.** towards Penge from Southend Road's junction with Rectory Road, turning right onto Rectory Road then taking Beckenham Road before joining its normal line of route.
- **Route 367.** towards West Croydon Bus Station from Bromley Road's junction with Manor Road, ahead on Manor Road, ahead again on High Street then back to normal line of route.
- **Route N3.:** towards Oxford Circus from Wickham Road's junction with Manor Road, left onto Manor Road, ahead onto High Street then back to normal line of route. The routeing towards Bromley North Station remains unchanged.

All buses should play a bus recording "The next stop is closed. Please listen for further announcements". TfL will also put notices on bus stops and the "on bus" announcements at the last 'normal' stop on each route before the bus begins its diversion, give passengers a chance to decide whether to alight at that stop or stay on the bus. Drivers should to tell passengers of the new route.

TfL plan temporary bus stops to try to minimise the distance southbound bus users will need to walk to reach the High Street,

TfL are finalising the publicity for the bus diversions for the first two phases (March to December 2017). They will also post information on bus stops for the current phase from about one to two weeks ahead. All publicity will include a brief description of the reasons and details of the alternative bus stops.

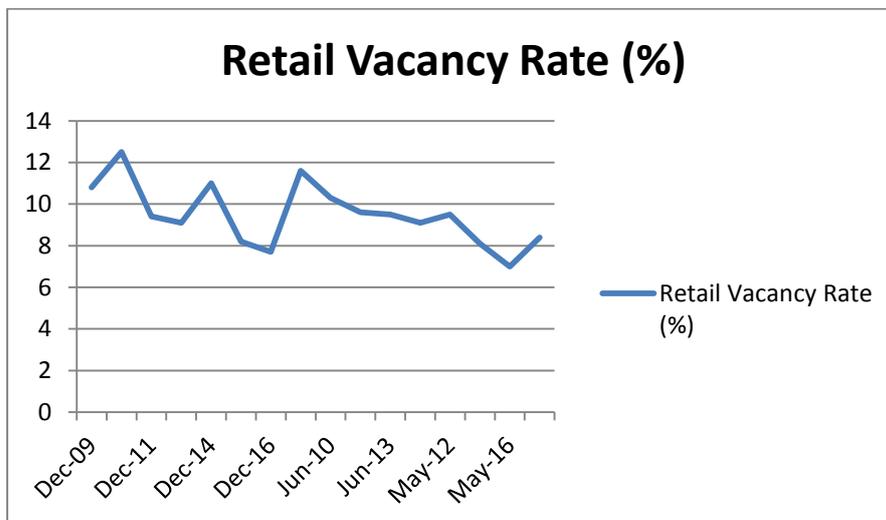
BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP 9 MARCH 2017

UPDATE ON VACANT UNITS IN BECKENHAM TOWN CENTRE

The following summarises the current position with regards to voids in Beckenham Town Centre and compares this with the national picture and the historic trend for Beckenham. The briefing note concludes with some suggestions for how the problem of vacant units could be mitigated in the Beckenham context.

A survey of the ground floor units on the High Street was undertaken by an officer from the Town Centre Management team on 23 February. The extent of the survey was an area bounded by the junction of Southend Road / Copers Cope Road in the North, Beckenham Beacon in the South, Chancery Lane in the East and War Memorial Roundabout in the West. In that area a total of 13 units were vacant. A list of these – with addresses, previous use (if known), length of time empty (if known) and other information – is provided as APPENDIX A.

In the area under survey there are 208 ground floor commercial units (retail, catering or services). This means at present the vacancy rate for the town centre is 6.25%. This is consistent with a survey of the town centre undertaken by the Local Data Company (LDC) in December 2016 which showed that the overall vacancy rate was 6.1%. Splitting the LDC figures down into retail and leisure vacancies shows a retail vacancy rate of 7.7% and a leisure vacancy rate of 1.7%. In comparison with national average figures for vacancies Beckenham has a very low rate of voids in the town centre. The national overall vacancy rate is 11%, retail vacancy rate is 12.1% and leisure vacancy rate is 8.1%. In comparison Beckenham's vacancies are well below the average – significantly so in terms of leisure units. It should also be noted that the trend for Beckenham vacancies has reduced considerably since the height of the recession – in 2009 and 2010 the retail vacancy rate was 11% and 12% respectively. See chart below.



Source: Local Data Company

The list of shops in the appendix shows that 4 of the 13 empty units are already in the process of being refurbished or have plans for re-occupation in train. This suggests that the vacancy rate could move even lower in the near future. Of the 13 listed 3 were known to be unoccupied for more than a year. It is not known at this stage as to why these have been on the market for so long, but it could be a number of factors including location, state of repair or planning use classification. Generally, however, given the relatively low level of vacancies across the town centre, and the relatively short period most units remain empty, the market for retail space in the town centre would appear to be reasonably buoyant.

LDC data shows that in the period between May and Dec 2016, there were 8 new openings of businesses in the town centre, and 10 closures – with a net loss of 2 businesses. Mostly the changes had no effect on the mix of business uses but there has been some net loss of businesses in the Fashion & General Clothing and Estate Agents & Auctioneers classifications (4 units in total).

The relatively low level of vacancies and the apparently buoyant market for retail units in the town centre as evidenced by the above data suggested that little needs to be done in terms of intervention by the Council. Although there may be some short term challenges to this buoyancy related to disruption from the major improvement scheme for the town centre, in the medium to long term (barring a significant deterioration in the national economy) it is expected that the usual market mechanisms will help maintain vacancies at the current low level. Indeed increased business investment in Beckenham will be encouraged by the planned public realm improvements.

The units which may be of more concern are those which have been empty for some time. Officers could explore the potential for engaging with landlords for these units to offer assistance with marketing (e.g. use of the free Bromley Commercial Property database) or potential application of techniques to mitigate the impact of the vacant frontage – such as shop front vinyls or meanwhile uses. It should be noted however that the Council itself has very few property holdings in Beckenham and therefore is dependent upon the willingness of private landlords to engage with these sorts of initiatives. There is also a cost to undertaking these projects and at present no Council budget is identified which could be used for this purpose. Potentially funding of such initiatives could be within the remit of any future Business Improvement District (BID) for Beckenham.

Martin Pinnell
Town Centre Management & Business Support
1 March 2017

APPENDIX A

Vacant ground floor retail outlets in Beckenham as at 23/02/2017

| <u>Address</u> | <u>Old use</u> | <u>Approx. time empty</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 82 Bromley Road | Clinic | 3-4 years | |
| 96 Bromley Road | unknown | over a year | |
| 69 High Street | Furniture shop "Publiki | unknown | Undergoing refurbishment |
| 49 High Street | Frock follies ladies wear | unknown | Soon to be steak house extension |
| 10 High Street | New regency cabs | 2 years | |
| 120 High Street | Computer shop | unknown | |
| 162 High Street | Fashion boutique | unknown | |
| 206 High Street | unknown | unknown | About to open as Art/Photo shop |
| 218 High Street | unknown | 9 months | Undergoing refurbishment |
| 242 High Street | Argento – Jewellers | 2 months | |
| 286 High Street | Chicken takeaway | 2-3 years | Has sample paving outside |
| 241 High Street | Your move Estate agents | 3 months | Viewings are ongoing |
| 223 High Street | Remels kids store | unknown | |

The area checked included: Beckenham High Street, Bromley Road (Chancery Lane), Manor Road, Village way and Croydon Road

The limits were:

- North - Copers Cope Road
- South - Beckenham Beacon Hospital
- East - Chancery Lane
- West – Odeon Cinema

Summary: 2 vacant units on Bromley Road, 11 on High Street of which 3 are under refurbishment.

Where known, the use was: 3 clothing, 1 fast food, 1 Estate agent, 1 Jewellers, 1 cabs, 1 IT sales, 1 furniture and 1 clinic.
3 with unknown former usage.

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