

**Decision Maker:** Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation for pre-decision scrutiny by the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee

**Date:** 10 July 2012

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

**Title:** Local Parades Improvement Initiative 2012/13

**Contact Officer:** Martin Pinnell, Head of Town Centre Management & Business Support  
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**Chief Officer:** Director of Renewal & Recreation

**Ward:** Plaistow & Sundridge (for pilot), All Wards for full project

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1. Reason for report

Council on 26th March approved the setting aside of £2,260k in an earmarked reserve for Member priority initiatives. The original report provided a breakdown of schemes which included £400k for investing in small shopping parades and targeted neighbourhood activity, £250k of which was delegated to the Renewal & Recreation Portfolio Holder for implementation. This fund is set aside for one off spending on schemes which are designed to improve the attractiveness, quality of life and economic viability of small shopping parades. This report describes and seeks Member approval for a proposed methodology for implementing this initiative.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**The Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder is requested to approve:**

**2.1 The expenditure of £250k for improvement projects at Local shopping parades across the borough.**

**2.2 The proposed scheme of delegation (as set out in paragraph 3.11) for decision making on requests on behalf of other local parades for expenditure from the allocated fund, based on the parameters and criteria set out in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.12 below.**

## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Vibrant, Thriving Town Centres
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost £250k
  2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Earmarked Reserve for Member Priority Initiatives
  4. Total current budget for this head: £2,260k
  5. Source of funding: Earmarked Reserve for Member Priority Initiatives
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## Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 3 current staff
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None: This scheme is discretionary.
  2. Call-in: Applicable
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approx 1184 businesses (and their local residents / customers) across 76 local parades across the borough.
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

### 3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Council on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012 approved the setting aside of £2,260k in an earmarked reserve for Member priority initiatives. The original report provided a breakdown of schemes as set out below.
- 3.2
- (i) £750k for footways, highways and general improvement projects;
  - (ii) £250k relating to support for “Friends” Groups;
  - (iii) £150k to renew/replace the Council’s community recycling sites;
  - (iv) £400k for investing in small shopping parades and targeted neighbourhood activity;
  - (v) £500k to support tackling youth unemployment amongst young people;
  - (vi) £250k to support immediate Beckenham Town Centre improvements and support a bid to Transport for London for traffic and public realm improvements;
  - (vii) £250k for community based initiatives;
  - (viii) £70k to encourage physical activities in parks
- 3.3 The responsibility for delivery of Item (iv) is split between the Renewal & Recreation and Public Protection and Safety Portfolios, with £250k devoted to the Shopping Parades element. Items (v) and (vi) fall solely within the remit of the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio. Members should note that there are separate reports to the R&R Committee dealing with these matters.
- 3.4 Local shopping parades play an important role in local communities right across our borough – providing choice to consumers, opportunities for entrepreneurship, easier access to services (especially for the less mobile) and places to express and develop a sense of local community. The importance of local parades has been recognised by the Government in its recent green paper ‘Parades to be Proud of: Strategies to support local shops’ (Dept for Communities and Local Government, June 2012).
- 3.5 Local parades, of which there are some 76 across the borough, play a key part in our local economy – with many of our independent and new businesses being based in these locations. However, in recent years some local parades in the borough have suffered from the effects the economic downturn in addition to several years of neglect and although most have vacancy rates below the national average, a few are carrying high levels of vacancy, which has a detrimental impact on footfall, visual amenity and trading conditions for other local businesses. Although the vast majority of the local parades are privately owned and operated and the Council may not have a direct say in how much of the commercial premises is managed, there are a number of levers which can be used to improve parades which need a boost, including:
- Improving the public realm through investment in elements such as enhanced paving, street lighting, wayfinding, street furniture and planting. Hand in hand with this the Council can also undertake de-cluttering exercises to remove obsolete, unnecessary or duplicate street furniture.
  - Installation of heritage style ‘village’ signs to enhance a sense of place
  - Working with landlords and agents to improve the look of empty shops, through use of shop front dressing or short term ‘pop up’ uses
  - In addition to the projects such as the ones suggested above, the Council can also ensure that decisions and actions taken under its responsibilities for Planning, Public Protection and Parking are sympathetic to the needs of local parades. The Council can also use its powers to enforce various regulations to ensure that private landlords and occupiers do not neglect

sites or erect signage or other street clutter (e.g. A-boards) which have a detrimental effect on the street scene.

- 3.6 When the Council set aside the sum of £250k for improvements to local parades it was on the understanding that this was for one off investment in projects which would have a lasting effect. This means that the funding cannot be used to support activities, such as events or promotions, which may only have a short term impact and which do not result in any permanent or semi-permanent change to the environment.
- 3.7 The type of centre to be supported through this programme will be limited to those defined as Local Neighbourhood centres and parades in the Council's hierarchy of centres as set out in section 11 of the borough's Unitary Development Plan (UDP). A list of all the centres allocated this designation in the UDP is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 3.8 The type of intervention in each location under this programme is expected to be one or more of the activities described in 3.5. How the programme would be implemented will be determined by the needs of each local parade put forward for inclusion and would need to take account of the expressed wishes of the local businesses, neighbouring residents and the available level of resource.
- 3.9 The range of activities proposed suggests that several sections of the Council, including both Environmental Services and Renewal & Recreation, would be involved in the delivery of these improvement projects. However, given that it is paramount that the traders are engaged with the project at all stages of the process it is suggested that the Town Centre Management Team takes the lead on delivery, and will commission work from other sections of the Council and external agencies as required.
- 3.10 Because there are over 75 local parades across the borough with a diverse range of needs there is likely to be considerable competition to be in receipt of funding from the scheme. Therefore the process for a particular local parade to be considered for funding needs to be clearly set out. The following provides some 'ground rules' for applications:
- 3.10.1 The application process will be Ward Member-led – so applications would only be accepted from a Ward Councillor from the relevant Ward. Local businesses or business groups wishing to avail themselves of the fund would therefore need to engage with their local Ward Councillor, to agree the priorities for their parade and the contents of the application.
- 3.10.2 Applications will only be accepted from Local Parades as defined in the UDP (and listed in **Appendix 1** of this report).
- 3.10.3 Ward Councillors are encouraged to engage with local businesses and residents before submitting an application to ensure there is a sufficient level of trader and community support for proposals. The level of consultation with local stakeholders will be taken into account when applications are considered.
- 3.10.4 Although there is no deadline for applications to be received, all applications will be considered on a first-come-first served basis, so earlier applications will be prioritised over later ones. Applications may be refused due to lack of funds.
- 3.10.5 Applications will be processed by the Town Centre Management team and an Officer from that team will be allocated to check the details, collate necessary estimates for work and present the application to the appropriate decision maker.
- 3.10.6 Proposals should not include any elements which may obligate the Council to pay additional future revenue costs. For example, the purchase of Christmas lights – the installation of which can be covered for the current financial year, but which would need an identified budget

to cover storage, installation and de-installation in future years – would be discouraged, as would the introduction of hanging baskets or planters. These could only be considered if there is a firm agreement with the traders or residents that they are committed to covering these costs in the future.

- 3.11 It is proposed that the decision to fund an application is delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Renewal & Recreation in consultation with the Chairman of the Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee for any scheme of a value of up to £25k. This will allow schemes of a smaller value to be decided upon and implemented quickly. For schemes with a total value of over £25k it is proposed that these are reported to the next available Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee for pre-decision scrutiny.
- 3.12 Applications will be assessed on the basis of potential to generate long term improvements for a parade, affordability / value for money and the level of evident support from local stakeholders. The potential implications of the activity on the Council’s revenue budgets would also need to be assessed (for example, installation of hanging baskets will imply a possible revenue cost in future years due to the need for maintenance). All or part of an application for funding may be refused on any one of these grounds.
- 3.13 In order to assist with the application process a catalogue of public realm elements (such as signage, street furniture, street lighting and street trees) has been created. This illustrates some common styles and provides guidance on estimated costs to for purchase and installation. The draft catalogue is provided as **Appendix 2** to this report. In addition, to help maintain a consistent approach in terms of information coming back with applications, a simple proforma application form for Ward Councillors to use will be provided.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Local Parades Improvement Initiative is in primarily in support of the Council’s Building a Better Bromley priority of encouraging Vibrant Thriving Town Centres. However, because of the cross cutting nature of the projects and due to the importance of the Parades to local communities across the borough also contributes to the Council’s ambitions for a Safer Bromley, a Quality Environment and Supporting Independence.

#### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012 the Council approved the setting aside of £2.26m in an earmarked Reserve for Member Priority Initiatives as detailed in 3.2.
- 5.2 This report seeks approval for the £250k to be made available for expenditure on local Parades according to the parameters set out above, once approved as per scheme of delegation described in paragraph 3.11.
- 5.3 The level of expenditure on the initiative and progress with implementation of the selected projects will be reported at future meetings of the Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee within the budget monitoring reports.
- 5.4 Any project that requires on-going revenue commitment should only be considered if there is a firm agreement with traders and/or residents that they are committed to covering these costs in the future.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Legal, Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	‘Parades to be Proud of: Strategies to support local shops’ (Dept for Communities and Local Government, June 2012)