

## Summary of activities in Quarter 3 2012/13

### 1. Christmas 2012 events

#### 1.1 Beckenham

##### **Saturday 17 November**

The Town Centre Manager worked closely with Beckenham Business Association and Copers Cope residents Association. The majority of the event was held on Beckenham Green, however some performances also take place along the High Street. The event included a Christmas parade from the George pub to St Georges Church, traditional carol singing, stage performances from various local groups and also professional acts. There were also various traditional food stalls, children's rides, face painting and other craft activities for children. Father Christmas, the Pearly King and Queen and members of the cast from the Churchill Theatre pantomime assisted the Deputy Mayor and the Beckenham MP to switch on the lights on the Christmas tree on the green at the end of the afternoon.

An estimated 2000 people attended the event on the Green throughout the afternoon and usage of the St Georges car park was 14% up on the previous week. Feedback from local traders and residents associations has been very positive. Col Bob Stewart MP said after the event: "A really worthwhile celebration. Proud to be involved."

#### 1.2 Bromley

##### **Sunday 2nd December**

More than 500 runners took part in a 2k 'Santa Dash' run through Bromley as part of the event, which finished in the High Street and was organised in partnership with Bromley Mytime. Market Square was the centre of the event – with a stage which featured entertainment from both local schools and amateur groups along with professional acts, and an appearance from the Peter Pan pantomime stars. There was also carol singing, a festive parade with Santa, live reindeer and a spectacular fireworks display from the roof of Bonmarche in Bromley North.

A giant Christmas tree was in Market Square throughout the festive period, sponsored by EW Payne Fine Jewellers. A large static Nativity scene was also on display in the town centre. Bromley town centre's Christmas celebration was organised in partnership with Bromley Mytime, with additional contributions from the Churchill Theatre and a number of local businesses – who donated prizes for the Santa Dash.

The weekly market was augmented by a Christmas Market, which ran from Thursday 13th December to Christmas Eve

Feedback from the Glades suggests that 25% more people visited the shopping centre on the day of the event than the equivalent Sunday in 2011. There was an increase of 40% on numbers of people in the town centre on the day of the event compared to the same day the week before. Many businesses also reported an increase in numbers through the door and trade on the day. Numbers in the car park also increased by 11% on the equivalent Sunday in December 2011. In addition to this over £1,000 was raised for the youth charity JusB through sponsorship of the Santa Dash.

### 1.3 Orpington

#### **Wednesday 21st Nov**

This Community event – organised in partnership with Churches Together, Walnuts shopping centre and Orpington College – comprised a stage with local schools and Churches performing, an Italian Market, Sainsburys food tasting, craft stalls, face painting and a mini fun fair. The event culminated in a spectacular firework display from the roof of the Walnuts Shopping Centre.

Sponsorship for the event came from McDonalds, Sainsbury, Cargo, Walnuts Shopping centre, Crofton Residents Association, Knoll Residents and Park Avenue Residents Association. The Rotary Club also kindly provided the stewards.

Around 3,500 people were in attendance at the climax of event. The Walnuts Shopping Centre reported an increase on the previous weeks footfall of 54%. Feedback from local traders has been positive, with one local business owner (who had a promotional stall at the event) stating: “I think it may have been the

best Christmas festival yet. The turnout was particularly impressive, given the very poor weather. As a business, we felt it was a very worthwhile evening with significant interest in our work.” The Royal British Legion also attended as a stall holder and raised £200 for the Poppy Appeal. The Orpington MP, Jo Johnson, commented: “St Olaves brass band did brilliantly to fire up Orpington on a wet and windy afternoon. Congratulations to Orpington Town Centre Manager, as well as the Street Pastors for organising such a great event.”

## **1.4 Penge**

### **Thursday 22 November**

The event included a stage in Empire Square which featured performances from a local primary school, dancing, and local bands ‘The Rise’ and 2011 X-Factor contenders ‘Rough Copy’. Children’s rides, face painting and food stalls also featured, along with appearances from Father Christmas and the traditional Penge Town Crier. The event included a switch-on the Penge Christmas Tree by Father Christmas and ‘Rough Copy’ band members.

TCM worked in partnership with Penge Traders to deliver the Christmas event, with input and sponsorship from Penge Partners and Penge Forum. Designer Drapes and Urban Chain Studios also provided sponsorship.

Whilst estimated numbers of attendees are not available at time of writing, the town centre was extremely busy during the event, and for much of the time Empire Square was at capacity during the various performances. The Chairman of the Penge Traders Association commented: “the event was the best ever (the word from the street!)”.

## **1.5 Small town centres**

Community events took place during November and December in 6 smaller town centres across the borough, supported by Town Centre Management. These were Biggin Hill, Chislehurst, Hayes, Petts Wood, St Mary Cray and West Wickham.

## **2. Christmas lights**

Christmas lights schemes were in place for the 4 main town centres thanks to funding from the Town Centre Management Initiative Fund along with contributions from local businesses and residents. Town Centre Management also provided donations of £500 to 10 smaller town centres across the

borough, but the majority of the costs for these schemes were found through business and community fund raising.

The Town Centre Managers were able to arrange enhancements to the basic schemes in some of the towns, thanks to additional contributions from external partners. For example a 20ft Christmas tree on Beckenham Green was possible due to funding from Copers Cope Residents Association and a contribution from the Beckenham short term improvements fund. There was also a similar sized Christmas tree in Penge thanks to the generosity of local groups such as Penge Partners, Penge Forum and the businesses of the Penge Traders Association. For the first time a lights scheme has been installed in Sundridge Park Parade, with the lights and installation paid for from the Local Shopping Parades Improvement Initiative. It should be noted that traders in the Sundridge Park Parade will need to collect together all the required finances for the installation of the lights (now owned by the Council) for 2013.

Officers will provide more detail on the outcome of efforts to obtain sponsorship and other contributions to the Christmas Lights schemes, and possible spending requirements in 2012/13 financial year as part of the February Town Centre Management update report.

### **3. Other Town Centre Management highlights**

**3.1 Starting the Business Improvement District (BID) campaign for Orpington.** Now that the BID ballot is confirmed for 21 February 2013, officers continued to assist the BID Working Group with:

- Preparing legal agreement drafts
- Setting up a campaign action plan
- Undertaking a voter registration mailing
- Maintaining a publicity campaign material including the first of a monthly BID newsletter
- Managing the ongoing BID campaign
- Liaising with Electoral Services on the Ballot arrangements

The Orpington Town Centre Manager has focussed much of her time on the campaign which involves direct contact with all 350 business rates payers. The aim of the campaign is to offer one to one meetings, and have these with at least half of the business rates payers – to ascertain voting intentions. At time of writing (early December) around 170 initial contacts have been made with

ratepayers, and 100 one to one meetings or telephone conversations have taken place. As at early December there were 37 businesses with the intention of voting 'Yes' and 11 intending to vote 'No'. The majority of those contacted to date are undecided at present. Although all local decision makers (voters) have at least had initial contact, at least 200 of the 350 businesses have ratepayers not located within the BID area and there is much work still to do in terms of identifying and engaging with voters at the remote address.

To assist with the very intense campaign stage an external consultant, who is a local businessman with strong links to the town, has been engaged to work alongside Officers and the BID Working Group members. An administrative assistant has also been employed on a temporary basis to assist with the data management aspects of the BID campaign, which are complex.

It is expected that the campaign phase will run into mid- to late-January. The ballot papers will be issued on the 24 January and the registered voters will have until 21 February to send these back to Bromley Electoral Services. During this period the BID Working Group and the Town Centre Management team will be involved in canvassing the voters to encourage as high a turn out for the ballot as possible.

As the BID campaign involves a very fast-changing situation, Officers will welcome the opportunity to provide Members with a verbal update at the R&R PDS Committee Meeting on 17 January.

### **3.2 Environmental issues**

During Quarter 3 environmental audits have taken place in a number of the towns including Beckenham, Penge, Orpington and St Mary Cray - with issues arising being pursued by the relevant TCMs, mostly involving liaison with colleagues in Environmental Services.

### **3.3. Vacant units**

At the latest count (December) the number of vacant shops in each centre was:

	Ground floor voids (no.)	Percentage of total ground floor units
Beckenham	8	3.3%
Bromley	16	4.8%
Orpington	22	8.3%

Penge

5

3.8%

Note that the national retail vacancy rate is 14.4% (source: Local Data Company).

After negotiations with Town Centre Management, the leaseholders of the former Zenith Windows unit in Beckenham High Street, have undertaken (at their own cost) the design, production and installation of a bespoke vinyl window decoration for the unit, which is expected to remain empty until 2014. They have also given over the copyright of the image so that this design can be adapted and used in other vacant units in Beckenham town centre.

TCM are engaging landlords for other vacant units across the borough to press for the installation of shop window vinyls or temporary use for displays / pop up shops.

#### **3.4 Beckenham & West Wickham Working Group**

Officers are working on implementation of short term improvements to Beckenham Town Centre following the recommendations agreed by the Beckenham & West Wickham PDS Working Group. The team will also be supporting the meetings of the Working Group focussing on West Wickham.

#### **3.5 Local Parades Initiative**

Work has been ongoing to respond to applications from local areas for funding from the Local Parades Initiative (agreed following the Renewal & Recreation PDS meeting in July 2012). At present work is ongoing to implement improvements to Sundridge Park Parade (Christmas lights, hanging baskets, tree planning and village sign) and Keston Village (a village sign). An application has been received for Anerley Hill (and proposals included are in the process of being costed up). Proposals are also in early draft stage for St Mary Cray High Street and 2 Biggin Hill area parades.

#### **3.6 Remembrance poppies**

Poppies were installed in Bromley High Street and Mottingham village for the season of Remembrance as in 2011, with some additional poppy dressing taking place in Beckenham town centre for the first time. The displays receive many compliments and thanks from members of the public.

#### **3.7 Bromley Town Team**

The Bromley TCM continues to work closely with the Bromley Town Team. The Government is making the Bromley Town Team an official Town Team Partner and providing it with a package of support from the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) which includes £10,000 worth of funding to help towards putting some of its plans into action. A proportion of this will be used to contribute to a business support scheme (encompassing workshops and one to one mentoring) for both existing and new businesses for Bromley Town Centre, which is paid for mainly from the Outer London Fund round 2. Alongside the business support programme, due to launch in January or February 2013, the Town Team will also be overseeing a joint marketing project (a Bromley town centre visitor map) also paid for from Outer London Fund.

#### **4. Plans for Quarter 4 2012/13**

The Town Centre Management & Business Support team's main priorities for Quarter 4 of 2012/13 will be as follows:

- Concluding a successful campaign in favour the Orpington Business Improvement District (BID) Undertaking the canvassing stage of the BID project to ensure maximum possible turnout for the ballot, taking place on 21 Feb
- In the event of a 'Yes' result, putting in place necessary arrangements for the Orpington 1st BID to begin trading from 1 April 2013.
- Following up on successful Christmas events and lights schemes in 2012 with fund raising and requests for funding from partners and businesses – looking for contributions towards both the 2012 schemes and events and for the 2013 season.
- Engaging with and strengthening partnerships with local businesses and other town centre stakeholders – especially in the 4 main towns.
- Undertaking initial consultation and feasibility work for possible BID proposal in Beckenham town centre.
- Leading on Town Centre Management elements of the short term improvements programme for Beckenham, working with Town Centre

Development on capital projects. Liaising with the Beckenham and West Wickham Working Group about potential improvements to the town.

- Continue delivery of the events programme across the borough (including planning and preparation for 2012/13 events) and running a spring event funded by the Outer London Fund round 2 in Bromley Town Centre.
- Launch and promote a business support programme for Bromley Town Centre, funded by the Outer London Fund and the Bromley Town Team.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin, Bromley Business Guide and Directory (2013/14 edition due out March 2013) and the 2013 edition of the ‘A to Z Guide to Services for Business’.
- Work with local commercial property agents to develop a joint campaign to promote Bromley as a location for commercial space occupiers, including a possible promotional event.