

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting: Economic Partnership
Date: 8th October 2013
Subject: Town Centre Management and Business Support Update
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1. Recommendations.

The Partnership is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 1st Quarter 2013/14.
- 1.2 Note and endorse the plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity during the next quarter.

2. Summary of Activities – June to August 2013

2.1 Business Improvement District (BID) for Orpington.

2.2 The Council continues to maintain direct contact with the Orpington 1st BID Board through the attendance of non-voting members Cllr William Huntingdon-Thresher and the Head of Town Centre Management & Business Support. During July the BID took on a temporary manager to start delivering some of the projects and oversee the setting up of internal management and finance systems. A sub group of the Board was established to oversee the financial aspects of the BID and this has been chaired on a temporary basis by the Head of Town Centre Management & Business Support – and has also at times included representatives from Liberata (the agency tasked with collecting the BID levy). During the summer the Board has been running a recruitment campaign for the appointment of a permanent manager. Interviews took place in late August and a permanent incumbent has now been offered the role, and subject to contract will be starting in early October.

2.3 As the Council's intensive involvement in the Orpington BID project comes to an end, officers have been exploring the feasibility of extending the BID model to other towns in the borough, particularly the other 2 large towns, Bromley and Beckenham. Business Rates data has been used to model potential financial gains for these towns and TCMs have undertaken some initial consultation with selected business stakeholders in each town centre. The findings of the feasibility study and recommendations for action will be reported to Council Members during latter part of the autumn.

2.4 **Environmental Issues**

2.5 During the summer, environmental audits have taken place in a number of the towns including Beckenham, Bromley, Orpington and Penge – with issues arising being pursued by the relevant TCMs, mostly involving liaison with colleagues in Environmental and Community Services.

2.6 The Beckenham Town Centre Manager worked alongside colleagues in ECS Area Management and Direct Line to organise a community clean up day in the town in early August.

2.7 **Vacant Units**

2.8 Below are the most recent Town Centre Manager counts of vacant units in the 3 largest towns:

Beckenham – 11 units empty – 4.9% vacancy rate (April count)

Bromley – 30 units empty – 8.2% vacancy rate (July count)

Orpington – 21 units empty (8 in the Walnuts) – 8% vacancy rate (April count)

Penge – 9 units empty – 5.9% vacancy rate (July count)

NB For comparison, the National vacancy rate is around 14.1% (Source: Local Data Company)

2.9 TCM have been engaging landlords and agents for vacant units across the borough to press for the installation of shop window vinyls or temporary use for displays / pop up shops.

2.10 **Beckenham Town Team**

2.11 Officers have been working on implementation of short term improvements to Beckenham Town Centre following the recommendations agreed by the Beckenham & West Wickham PDS Working Group – including the installation of a new town centre sign (unveiled at a ceremony on 6 July) and planning for the launch of a new town heritage trail – taking place on 19 October. The Town Centre Manager has been working closely with the new Beckenham Town Centre Team to develop draft terms of reference and a business plan – with its first formal meeting involving all stakeholders taking place on 26 September.

2.12 **Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund**

2.13 Work has been ongoing to respond to applications from local areas for funding from the Local Parades Improvement Initiative.

Applications to the Fund are in preparation or pending decision for

- Biggin Hill
- Coney Hall
- Hayes, Station Approach
- Hayes Village
- Penge

Projects funded by the scheme are being implemented for:

- Chislehurst, High Street and Belmont Parade – including new Christmas lights, village sign, community notice boards, resurfacing of alleyways and additional pay and display parking
- Anerley Hill – including improvements to paving and street furniture, new local history mural, vacant shop improvements and a deep clean
- Cray Valley – provision of street lamp banners to promote Cray Festival
- Keston - Village Sign which was installed and unveiled in September

In each case, Town Centre Managers have been assisting local groups to identify costs and explore feasibility for a variety of projects.

2.14 **Bromley North Village Improvement Works**

2.15 The Bromley North Village improvement works commenced in late July and are expected to run until November 2014, with a one month break for the Christmas season this December. Inevitably there has and will be disruption affecting the businesses in the area. The Town Centre Manager has been working closely with the Bromley North Village project team to help minimise the disruption and provide as much information as possible to the town's businesses and members of the public. This included the coordinating of a public event and a business event in mid-July to provide detailed information on the changes and the potential impact of the different phases of the project. The TCM has also been in touch with the Valuation Office and secured a reduction in Business Rates for businesses in the most affected streets – and provided information to businesses about appealing this settlement. Close contact is being maintained with the businesses affected, including the email dispatch of a weekly project status bulletin.

2.16 **Events**

- 2.17 In Bromley the innovative installation of an artificial lawn forming a green link between the High Street and Church House Gardens has formed the background for a range events and activities delivered by the Town Centre Management Team. Between mid July to end of September the 'High Street Garden' activities have included sports and martial arts displays and demonstrations, children's art and craft sessions, storytelling, dance workshops, live music and special promotions from local businesses and community groups. The initiative is supported by the Mayor of London's Outer London Fund.
- 2.18 On Sunday 1 September, the summer activities on the grass were brought to a climax with a family entertainment day entitled 'Are you Bromley's future?' The event included an outdoor cinema, inflatable bowling alley, play sandpits, a "Magical Garden", balloon modelling and storytelling, craft workshops, music and dance performances, martial arts display, and a Pimms Hut. Models and plans for Bromley's future were also on display in a pop-up exhibition area. As with the 'High Street Garden' this event was supported by the Mayor of London. This event replaces the originally planned HG Wells / Heritage autumn event which was deemed impractical to deliver at this time due to access issues arising from the Bromley North Village works.
- 2.19 The Beckenham Town Centre Manager assisted with the coordination of an unveiling event for the new Beckenham town signs on Thornton's corner and Memorial Roundabout on 6 July. Following the success of the Beckenham Local Produce Market and event in May, a follow up market on Beckenham Green was

organised in partnership with Copers Cope Residents Association (CCARA) and the Beckenham Town Centre Team on 3 August. The event included entertainment and music to help draw in additional footfall. Also in August, the Beckenham Business Association delivered a successful shop window display competition, for the second year running, in association with the Town Centre Manager.

2.20 In Penge a new 'pop up market' in Maple Road was launched on 27 July with a follow up markets on 24 August and 21 September. The first two markets were considered such as success for the traders and for the town that plans are in hand to run these markets on a more regular basis.

2.21 **Business Support Programme**

2.22 The Bromley Town Business Growth Club continues to be delivered in partnership with ActionCOACH Business Coaching and is supported by the Mayor of London's Outer London Fund – with a number of workshops and webinars running over the summer. Further information about the programme is being promoted on the Council website: www.bromley.gov.uk/businessgrowthclub.

2.23 The Growth Club was promoted along side other business-relevant Council services at the Bromley Council stand at the Bromley Business Expo in June – which was attended by hundreds of local businesses.

2.24 **Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from October to December 2013**

The Town Centre Management & Business Support team's main priorities for the coming quarter will be:

- Engaging with and strengthen partnerships with local businesses and other town centre stakeholders. There will be a focus on developing and supporting the Beckenham Town Centre Team, and establishing a town-wide partnership body for Bromley town centre – with a first meeting of stakeholders planned for 22 October.
- Continue to support the Orpington 1st BID through officer representation on the BID Board.
- Following the summer's consultation and feasibility work for a possible BID proposal for Beckenham and Bromley, formulating a strategy for implementation of further BIDs – for presentation of the options and issues to Councillors.
- Continue to take a leading role in business liaison and communications in respect of the major improvement works for Bromley North Village.
- Leading on Town Centre Management elements of the short term improvements programme for Beckenham – including facilitating the launch of the new heritage trail. Facilitating the work of the Beckenham Town Team in developing new improvement proposals for potential funding from the scheme.
- Preparation and delivery of the events programme across the borough including markets in Beckenham and Penge – but also Christmas lights switch on events and celebrations in each of the managed town centres during November and

December. The TCM team will also coordinate the now annual display of Poppies in Bromley for commemoration during early November.

- Manage existing contracts for the successful display of Christmas lights in Bromley, Orpington and Penge, and finalise arrangements for delivery of lights displays in Beckenham and smaller town centres.
- Continue to guide and promote the Bromley Business GrowthCLUB programme, including evaluation of the programme which completes in January 2014.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin and promotion of the Bromley Business Guide and Directory (2013/14 edition). The team will continue to engage with businesses through attendance at various networking events.
- Facilitate the Bromley Economic Partnership and the Commercial Property Agents Forum.