

## **APPENDIX 1: TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2013**

### **1. Summary of activities September – November 2013/14**

#### **1.1 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)**

The Council continues to maintain 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. Involvement of Councillors and Officers at Board level is consistent with the practice of most BIDs across the UK, but it is expected that further direct involvement will lessen now that Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> appointed its first permanent BID Manager, who has been working with the Board since early October. The BID also appointed an events and marketing consultant who has been leading on the arrangements for the Orpington Christmas Lights event. During the autumn the terms for the proposed take over of the Walnuts Public Toilets by the BID Company have been in development, following agreement in principle earlier in the summer. It is hoped that agreement on the detail can be reached between the Council and the BID by the end of November.

As reported in September Town Centre Managers have explored 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. In order to ensure that the strategy adopted has widest possible support amongst Members, officers incorporated a briefing meeting for Beckenham ward Councillors in early November to discuss the proposed approach – which is to concentrate on a Bromley BID initially and then revisit the feasibility for a Beckenham BID late in 2014. The report on the findings of the feasibility study and the recommended approach is being reported to Members under another agenda item at the R&R PDS meeting on 26 November and then to the Executive on 15 January 2014.

#### **1.2 Environmental issues**

As in previous quarters Town Centre Managers have actively reviewed the quality of the environment in Beckenham, Bromley and Penge – with issues arising being pursued by the relevant TCMs, mostly involving liaison with colleagues in other Divisions within Environmental and Community Services.

### 1.3 Vacant units

Below are the latest Local Data Company counts of vacant units in the 4 largest towns:

Bromley 11.3% (46 out of 407 retail units) – Nov 2013

Orpington 12% (25 out of 207 retail units) – May 2013

Beckenham 9.5 (15 out of 167 retail units) – June 2013

Penge 7.4% (6 out of 90 retail units) – May 2013

For comparison, the National retail vacancy rate is **14.1%** so all the borough's main towns remain below average in terms of vacancies. Discussions with local commercial property agents suggest that the market for both retail and office space is picking up with an increased number of enquiries and deals during the summer and autumn, which may translate into reduced vacancy levels.

## 1.4 Beckenham Town Centre

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 launch of a new town heritage trail. The Town Centre Manager has also supported the launch of the new Beckenham Town Centre Team which first met and agreed its constitution and terms of reference on 26 September. The Town Centre Team is designed to be a membership body for all stakeholder organisations with a focus on Beckenham town centre – including resident organisations, businesses and public sector organisations such as the Council and the Metropolitan Police Service. The purpose of the Town Centre Team is to be both an advisory panel and a practical delivery body to agree on and implement improvements to the town centre, whether that be providing a sounding board for the development of plans for the proposed TfL Area Based Scheme (currently awaiting the result of the bid to TfL), advising on short term improvements or supporting the Town Centre Manager in delivery of special events and activities in the town centre.

## 1.5 Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund

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
- Chatterton Village
- Coney Hall
- St Mary Cray

Projects funded by the scheme are being implemented for:

- Anerley Hill – including improvements to paving and street furniture, new local history mural, vacant shop improvements and a deep clean
- Chislehurst High Street and Belmont Parade – including new community notice boards, purchase of new Christmas lights, lamp column banners, new pay and display bays and contribution to a new village sign

- Hayes, Station Approach and Hayes Street – including improvement to alleyways, signage and frontage of Hayes Village Hall
- Penge – Improvement to pavements along frontages in the High Street, new bins and planting of permanent Christmas tree.
- Keston – New village sign was unveiled at a ceremony attended by the Mayor in September

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

### **1.6 Bromley North Village Improvement works**

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. Close contact is being maintained with the businesses affected, including the email dispatch of a weekly project status bulletin.

## 1.7 Town Centre Events

Events coordinated by the Town Centre Team during the period September to November included:

- Penge 'pop up' market on Maple Road – 21 September (NB from October responsibility for oversight of these markets passed to the Councils Street Trading Team)
- Beckenham Local Produce Market and launch of new Heritage Trail – 19 October
- Commissioning the display of giant poppies in Bromley and Beckenham town centre in late October / early November to mark the annual remembrance events.

## 1.8 Business Support Programme

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](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/businessgrowthclub).

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.

## 1.9 Partnerships

During the period under review the Town Centre Management & Business Support team coordinated the quarterly meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership and a meeting of the Commercial Property Agents Forum.

In addition, Town Centre Managers supported the development and ongoing work of local traders groups including Beckenham Business Association, Biggin Hill Business Association, Chislehurst Town Team, Penge Traders Association,

Petts Wood Business Association and West Wickham Traders. In Bromley Town Centre efforts have been focussed on developing a town-wide stakeholder group, which met first for the first time on 22 October.

## **2. Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from November – January 2013**

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

- Delivery of a programme of large scale Christmas events in:
  - Bromley Town Centre, including Christmas Parade and Santa Dash – 1 December, 11am – 4pm
  - Beckenham Town Centre – 7 December, Noon – 6pm
  - Penge – 21 November, 3pm – 7pm
- Working with a range of groups in other town centres to assist with the successful delivery of other Christmas events, including in:
  - Biggin Hill, Saturday 16 November, 4pm – 5pm
  - Orpington, Wednesday 20 November, 4pm – 7pm
  - Hayes, Station Approach, Saturday 23 November, 4pm
  - Chislehurst, Saturday 30 November, 3pm – 5pm
  - Petts Wood 30 November, 10am – 7pm
- Ensuring the safe and effective display of Christmas lights in 9 town centres across the borough, encompassing all those for which the Council lets a contract. In all but 4 town centres the Council lets the contract on behalf of local business groups and Christmas lights committees, who are responsible for raising the funds to pay for the displays.
- Engaging with and strengthening partnerships with local businesses and other town centre stakeholders. Officers will continue to support the Beckenham Town Centre Team, and the newly formed stakeholder group for Bromley town centre, due to meet again in late January. The meeting

is expected to feature a discussion of the BIDs concept and also the Lesley Jones report about possible improvements to the town centre.

- Continue to support the development of the Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID through officer representation on the BID Board and liaison on key matters including the recovery of the BID levy for 2013/14 and the proposed transfer of operations for the Walnuts Public Toilets.
- Presentation to the Executive of the recommended strategy for extension of the BID concept to other town centres. Assuming Member agreement on funding, Officers in this team will formulate a detailed project plan and convene an internal project team to start the implementation of a BID in Bromley.
- Continue to take a leading role in business liaison and communications in respect of the major improvement works for Bromley North Village, especially as these start operations again in January.
- Continue to guide and promote the Bromley Business GrowthCLUB programme, including evaluation of the programme which completes in January 2014. Coordination of other business support events in partnership with third party organisations, e.g. Start up loan event with Prospects on 19 November, and joint LBB / Metro Bank / ICAEW events on 5 December 2013 and 23 January 2014.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin and promotion of the Bromley Business Guide and Directory. The team will continue to engage with businesses through attendance at various networking events.
- Coordinate the Bromley Economic Partnership – due to meet in January 2014 – and facilitate the next meeting of the Commercial Property Agents Forum. The latter will focus on a discussion of the Local Plan – due out for the next round of consultation in January / February 2014.