

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting: Economic Partnership
Date: 14th January 2014
Subject: Town Centre Management and Business Support Update
Authors: Martin Pinnell, Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support
martin.pinnell@bromley.gov.uk , 020 8313 4457

1. Recommendations.

The Partnership is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 3rd 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 – October to December 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.
- 2.3 Following a recruitment campaign during the summer, the Board appointed a permanent manager in early October and most liaison between the Town Centre Management unit and the BID now takes place through this post holder. This includes detailed discussions about a proposal for the BID to take over the running of the town centre public toilets, already threatened with closure.
- 2.4 Following a feasibility study about an extension to the BID concept, involving analysis of business rates data and consultation with businesses in Bromley and Beckenham, recommendations for action were reported to the Council's Renewal & Recreation Committee in November. The report is going on to the 15 January Executive meeting for a decision about whether to focus resources on a potential Bromley town centre BID.

2.5 Environmental Issues

- 2.6 During the autumn, 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.

2.7 The Town Centre Manager for Penge worked alongside colleagues in ECS Area Management and local businesses and residents to organise a community clean up day in the town during in November.

2.8 Vacant Units

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

Beckenham – 6 units empty – 2.4% vacancy rate (December count) cf April 4.5%
Bromley – 30 units empty – 8.2% vacancy rate (December count) cf April 8.2%
Orpington – 30 units empty – 12% vacancy rate (December count) cf April 8%
Penge – 15 units empty – 8.5% vacancy rate (December count) cf July 5.9%

NB For comparison, the National vacancy rate is around 14% (Source: Local Data Company)

2.10 TCM continue to seek to engage 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.

2.11 Beckenham Town Team

2.12 The Town Centre Manager provided support to the emerging Town Centre Team – two meetings of which took place during the quarter. Officers worked with the Town Centre Team and other stakeholders to facilitate the launch of the new town heritage trail – on 19 October.

2.13 Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund

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

2.15 Applications to the Fund are in preparation or pending decision for:

- Biggin Hill
- Clockhouse
- Coney Hall (although new Christmas lights already approved and installed)
- Mottingham – High Street
- Petts Wood

Projects funded by the scheme are being implemented for:

- Chislehurst, High Street and Belmont Parade – including new Christmas lights (installed and working over Christmas period), village signs, 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
- Mottingham, Kimmeridge Cross – including new planters, hanging baskets, community noticeboards and benches

- Hayes Village, The Street – including resurfacing of forecourt, improvement to frontage of village hall, street signs and new bins
- Penge – resurfacing of forecourts, new bins, new permanent Christmas tree and improved signage
- Hayes, Station Approach – new permanent Christmas tree, community noticeboards, repair to car park entrances and deep clean.
- Cray Valley – provision of street lamp banners to promote Cray Festival
- Keston - Village Sign which was installed and unveiled in September

2.16 In each case, Town Centre Managers have been assisting local groups to identify costs and explore feasibility for a variety of projects. If all projects in implementation stage are delivered to budget and all pipeline applications are approved, the Local Parades Initiative is expected to be virtually spent or committed by end of 2013/14 financial year.

2.17 Bromley North Village Improvement Works

2.18 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. There was also a launch event for the re-opened East Street on 7 December, coinciding with Small Business Saturday, to showcase the shops, restaurants and services located in this part of the town centre and to attract additional footfall to the revamped road.

2.19 Events

2.20 The focus for Town Centre Management events during this quarter has been the delivery of several Christmas celebration and lights switch on event, with direct management of the following:

Beckenham – 7 December

Featuring a candlelit procession, Christmas market, live music and Father Christmas. The event counted down the switch on of lights including new ones installed on trees in Beckenham Green.

Bromley – 1 December

Including the Santa Dash for the 2nd year running (delivered in partnership with MyTime Active), Christmas parade with Santa and real reindeer. Switch on by stars of Churchill Theatre Pantomime and Mayor of Bromley, followed by fireworks finale. Entertainment was provided on stage all day. The event was sponsored by Foresters.

Penge – 21 November

Featured Christmas market, live music and entertainment including David Beckham lookalike.

2.21 TCMs also supported town centre groups to deliver events in the following towns:

Biggin Hill – 16 November
Chislehurst, High Street – 30 November
Chislehurst, Royal Parade – 24 November
Hayes - 23 November
Petts Wood – 30 November
West Wickham – 7 December

2.22 In Orpington – the White Christmas event was delivered 20 November. This was the first time such a large scale event was delivered by Orpington 1st BID. The event featured craft market, children’s rides, live music, real reindeer and fireworks. The event also included an appearance from 2 of Charlton Athletic FC’s stars and for the first time dray horse rides along the high street. Also for the first time, the BID also organised activities, including dray rides, for three Saturdays in December to encourage additional footfall and dwell time during the peak shopping season.

2.23 Business Support Programme

2.24 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 planning workshops and a webinar during the autumn. The programme is coming to its end in January and officers have been working with ActionCOACH to design and promulgate a feedback survey to help understand what the impact of the programme has been on the participating businesses. Further information about the programme is being promoted on the Council website: www.bromley.gov.uk/businessgrowthclub.

2.25 In addition to the Business Growth Club, officers have also been working closely with other organisations to organise and host joint support events - such as a Start Up Loans evening in November (co-hosted with Prospects Business Services) and a networking event in December (co-hosted with Metrobank and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW)).

2.26 Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from January to March 2014

2.27 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 continuing support for the Beckenham Town Centre Team who will play a key role in planning improvements in the town centre, whether or not the bid for TfL scheme funding is successful. The Bromley TCM will continue to establish the Bromley Stakeholder Group and will organise a meeting in early February – with a focus on a possible Business Improvement District.
- Continue to support the Orpington 1st BID through officer representation on the BID Board, including bringing to a successful conclusion negotiations around the proposed BID takeover of the public toilets in Orpington.
- Presentation of the options and issues for BID development to the Council’s Executive Committee. Assuming a positive decision on the recommendations, the TCM team will then start work on an action programme to support the businesses

of Bromley in establishing a new town centre BID – aiming for a possible ballot date of March 2015.

- Continue to take a leading role in business liaison and communications in respect of the major improvement works for Bromley North Village – entering a critical phase in January as the focus of the works moves to Market Square and High Street North.
- Preparation of plans for an events and activities programme for the managed town centres during 2014/15 financial year and presentation of options and recommendations to Councillors.
- Finalise the take down of Christmas lights in Bromley, Orpington, Penge, Beckenham and smaller town centres. Given that the contract for all Christmas lights will expire in 2014 – a new contract will be required for Christmas 2014 – officers will be working on a review of the Council’s policy regarding its financial support for Christmas lights. A report on options and recommendations for a Christmas lights policy and procurement of Christmas lights services will be presented to Councillors in early April 2014.
- Promote the last Bromley Business GrowthCLUB programme events, and undertake evaluation of the programme for reporting back to the GLA as part of the Outer London Fund evaluation.
- Work with colleagues in the Council’s Town Centre Renewal team to finalise the arrangements for evaluation of the Outer London Fund Round 2 programme – including commissioning of appropriate surveys.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin and promotion of the Bromley Business Guide and Directory (2013/14 edition). Explore options for replacement of the Guide during 2014/15. 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.