

APPENDIX 1: TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT APRIL 2014

1. Summary of activities January to March 2013/14

1.1 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

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. Discussions have been ongoing between the BID, Town Centre Management and Liberata about the arrangements for BID levy collection in 2014/15, and the BID has been setting its budget and activity programme for the new financial year. On 1 February the BID officially took over the running of the Orpington Walnuts public conveniences and, with a grant from the Council to support this initiative, have refurbished the facilities to a high standard. The expected launch date is 19 March.

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 15 January Executive meeting, where the Executive endorsed the setting aside of £110k from reserves to fund a project to introduce BIDs to Bromley town centre. The means of implementing this project is the subject of a separate report to the R&R PDS Committee (on 2 April 2014).

1.2 Environmental issues

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.

Environmental monitoring in Bromley town centre has focused around ensuring the Bromley North Village works by the contractor Conway are being carried out with the least amount of impact on the shopping environment as possible.

Discussions have taken place regarding the storage of the green bags collected by Kier in Beckenham as these are constantly being torn and the contents strewn about. A solution has been identified. Enforcement notices have been issued to premises in Beckenham re waste issues behind shops. Work has been on going with the Odeon cinema regarding fly tipping in their car park. Clean up days organised with business volunteers in Beckenham. TCM visited Barclay's Bank to discuss with the business manager environmental issues in front of the branch. Barclays staff to help on future clean up days.

Local Shopping parade Initiative funding may be used to help address Pigeon problem in Penge.

1.3 Vacant units

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

Beckenham - 9 empty units - 3.4% vacancy rate (March 2014) * cf December 2013 - 2.4% (Source: TCM count)

* NB Work has already begun refurbishing 3 of the vacant units and a fourth is under offer

Bromley – 29 units empty – 8% vacancy rate (February 2014) cf December 2013 - 8.2% (Source TCM count)

Penge – 15 units empty – 8.5% vacancy rate (December 2013) cf July 5.9% (Source TCM count)

Orpington – High street vacancy rate 13.7% (March 2014) cf May 2013 – 9.2%
(Source: Local Data Company)

NB For comparison, the National vacancy rate is 12% (Source: Local Data Company)

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.

1.4 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

- Clockhouse
- Mottingham – High Street

Projects funded by the scheme include:

- Anerley Hill – including improvements to paving and street furniture, new local history mural, vacant shop improvements and a deep clean
- Biggin Hill – Christmas lights, tree pit for Christmas tree, noticeboards and flower towers
- Chatterton Village – flower towers and hanging baskets
- Chislehurst, High Street and Belmont Parade – including new Christmas lights (which were installed and working over Christmas period), village signs, community notice boards, resurfacing of alleyways and additional pay and display parking (under consultation)
- Coney Hall – Christmas lights, new bins, planters, village signs, new trees, pavement repair – although some of this work is pending a favourable decision on signage from TfL and also a possible change to parking and loading bays
- Cray Valley – provision of street lamp banners to promote Cray Festival
- Hayes Village, The Street – including resurfacing of forecourt, improvement to frontage of village hall, street signs and new bins
- Hayes, Station Approach – new permanent Christmas tree, community noticeboards, repair to car park entrances and deep clean.
- Keston - Village Sign
- Mottingham, Kimmeridge Cross – including new planters, hanging baskets, community noticeboards and benches
- Petts Wood – New Christmas lights
- Penge – resurfacing of forecourts, new bins, new permanent Christmas tree and improved signage

In each case, Town Centre Managers have been assisting local groups to identify costs and explore feasibility for a variety of projects. By the end of the 2013/14 financial year it is expected that £117k of the original £250k will have been spent. However, another £118k has been authorised and is planned expenditure for 2014/15. There is therefore £15k available to allocate to projects in parades and small town centres not yet served by this programme.

1.5 Bromley North Village Improvement works

The Bromley North Village improvement works commenced in late July and are expected to run until November 2014. Works commenced in the first week of January in Market Square and are

expected to continue there until the summer. This will have an impact on the ability of Town Centre Management to utilise this space for events or for promotions (which generate income for the Town Centre Management programme). Inevitably the works are causing disruption for businesses in the Bromley North 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. The TCM has been involved in commissioning a number of promotional initiatives, for example vinyl signs and banners which have been installed across the town to promote Bromley North Village and its businesses.

1.6 Events

The last quarter of the year is traditionally quiet for public events – but in mid-February there was a Valentines-themed ‘Love your local high street’ event in Beckenham, which incorporated a popular Lego workshop, promotional banners and balloon decorations.

In Bromley, the Town Centre Manager has concentrated on developing a strong stakeholder group for the town centre and two town-wide business meetings have taken place – with a focus on the future of the town and the potential for a Business Improvement District (BID).

TCM is seeking to develop a more retailed involvement in the Beckenham Business Association and a date has been set for a breakfast networking meeting as felt may be a more suitable time for traders to attend. This event will be sponsored by Weatherspoon and Love a Slice.

1.7 Business Support Programme

The Bromley Town Business Growth Club had its last workshop in early January. Since then officers have been undertaking a survey of the programme users to help understand what the impact of the programme has been on the participating businesses. The survey was undertaken online and via telephone – and had 28 responses, mostly from businesses based in the Bromley area. Of these, 13 saw an increase in turnover during the period of the programme and 9 took on additional staff. 6 employees were taken on directly as a result of the support provided and 10 jobs were safeguarded due to the support.

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 event in early January, and ‘Financial Fitness for Business’ workshop on late January (co-hosted with Metrobank and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW)). In late March an event to promote the Growth Accelerator programme, for fast growth business, will be held in the Central Library.

1.8 Business and Traders Group liaison

In addition to the main town centre groups, the Town Centre Management team has maintained links and attended meetings, providing support and advice where required to a number of traders and town centre groups across the borough.

A new edition of the Bromley Town Centre Guide for 2014 has now been published. This booklet provides visitors, residents and businesses a guide to Bromley Town Centre, highlighting not only the shopping and leisure on offer but also the history and culture of the town. Copies have been distributed to key locations in and around the town centre.

2. Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from April to June 2014

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

- 2.1 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 and also the re-established Beckenham Town Centre Working Group – which has a focus on guiding and influencing the developing designs for the major TfL-funded scheme for Beckenham. In Bromley, the Town Centre Manager will work closely with the forming Bromley BID Task Group to help engage with a wide cross section of the towns businesses.
- 2.2 Continue to support the Orpington 1st BID through officer representation on the BID Board, and liaison with Liberata and the BID to set up the BID Levy billing and recovery process for 2014/15.
- 2.3 Subject to Member approval of a proposed grant to the forming Bromley BID Task Group (see separate report on the R&R PDS agenda for 1 April), officers in this team will start to work closely with the Group, as they lead on the development of a proposed BID in Bromley town centre. The aim is to run a ballot for the establishment of a BID in Feb or early March 2015. An internal BID project team will be formed to ensure that the Local Authority role in developing the BID is coordinated.
- 2.4 Continue to take a leading role in business liaison and communications in respect of the major improvement works for Bromley North Village.
- 2.5 Liaison with local town centre groups to plan for the funding and development of public events, including special markets, during the year.
- 2.6 Subject to Member approval, officers in this team will commission procurement of Christmas lights services for the 2014 season in Bromley, Beckenham and Penge and will make arrangements for the transfer of ownership of the Orpington lights to the Orpington 1st BID.
- 2.7 Work with partner organisations to develop a programme of support workshops and seminars for local businesses during the year – at low cost to the Council.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin and promotion of the Bromley Business Guide and Directory (2013/14 edition). Work with an external partner to arrange for publication of the Business Guide in future years – without cost to the Council. The team will continue to engage with businesses through attendance at various networking events, and also facilitate the Bromley Economic Partnership and the Commercial Property Agents Forum.