

# BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

**Meeting:** Economic Partnership  
**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014  
**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 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2014/15.
- 1.2 Note and endorse the plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity during the next quarter.

## **2. Summary of Activities – April to June 2014**

### **2.1 Proposed Bromley Bid**

2.2 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 Council Executive meeting, where the Executive endorsed the setting aside of £110k from reserves to fund a project to introduce BIDs to Bromley town centre.

2.3 At the 1 April 2014 R&R PDS meeting, a follow up report on the proposed BID was provided to Council Members. This recommended that the method of delivery for the project should be business-led and that therefore a BID working group should be formed of people representative of the whole town centre in terms of its various geographical quarters and different types and sizes of business. Members approved of the formation of the BID Working Group and that a grant of up to £90k be provided to this Group subject to an agreement which stipulated a funding schedule conditional upon the Group meeting certain project milestones. Mr Marc Myers, the new General Manager of Intu Bromley (formerly The Glades) Shopping Centre, was appointed as the Chair of the Working Group, and is ideally placed to lead on the project as he is the retiring Chair of Ilford BID – with which he has been involved for a number of years including through its recent renewal ballot – and also sits on the national Board of British BIDs.

2.4 Since April, much work has gone into building a BID working group and putting in place governance arrangements – a pre-requisite for any grant agreement to become operational. In doing so the Chairman has been mindful of the need to ensure the group is representative of the full range of potential levy-paying

businesses operating in the town – and to co-opt business owners and managers with a depth of knowledge of the needs of the town centre. In addition the Working Group has been augmented by a group of non-voting advisers representing users of the town such as residents, voluntary sector bodies and churches. The Working Group, although still looking to recruit from certain sectors and areas of the town, has already met twice and recently signed off its governance arrangements and will shortly appoint a delivery partner – subject to the finalisation of the Council’s grant agreement, which is expected before end of June.

2.5 Originally the timescale for the Bromley BID proposal to go to ballot was in February 2015. However, due to concerns raised in the most recent BID Working Group meeting that this would still be too soon after the severe disruptions experienced by businesses due to the Bromley North Improvement Works, a re-scheduling of the project timescale has been agreed. There are only a few times during the year when a BID ballot does not clash with significant activities in the business calendar (e.g. Christmas, Summer Holidays, etc): Generally the best times for a BID Ballot are Feb / March, June / early July or October / early November. Although a June 2015 date for the ballot was considered, it is noted that this would entail having a campaign period running parallel with a General Election (May 2015) which may cause some confusion. Therefore the Working Group are now aiming for an October 2015 ballot, with a view to starting the BID (if successful) on 1 April 2016.

2.6 With this revised schedule in mind, the Working Group (with assistance from a delivery partner) will start to undertake the first two stages in BID development which is to complete the feasibility study started by LBB officers, followed by an in-depth consultation of at least 45% of the potential levy payers to understand the issues for the town centre, which could potentially be tackled by a BID in the future. An Council Officer project group has been formed to provide coordination of the Council’s response to the Local Authority requirements of the project as it moves forward. The results of the BID consultation and a draft Bromley BID Proposal are expected to be available in early 2015 – at which time a further update on the project will be reported to Councillors.

## **2.7 Orpington BID**

2.8 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. The BID refurbished the Orpington Walnuts public conveniences and have been running the facilities since March. Bills for the 2014/15 BID levy have been issued and the BID has been finalising its budget and activity programme for the new financial year. Alongside the existing offer the 2014/15 proposed programme includes the launch of a joint purchasing initiative to help BID members save money, environmental improvements to the High Street, a social media campaign, specialist markets and promotions, an inward investment campaign and major events (such a Fun in the Park event to coincide with Father’s Day in June, a Summer bunting festival throughout the summer, and a Christmas spectacular planned for late November).

## **2.9 Vacant Units**

2.10 Vacancy rate summary 2011-2014  
(Source: Local Data Company)

2.11 Vacancy rates shown as a % of all retail units

TOWN	Jan 11	Feb / Mar 11	Jun / Jul 11	Dec 11	Jan 12	Mar 12	May 12	Oct / Nov 12	May / Jun 13	Nov / Dec 13	Apr / May 14
Beckenham			9.6	9.4			9.5	8.4	9.5	9.1	
Bromley			10.3	9.3			9.5	10.1	11.8	11.3	12.8
Orpington		13.3				14.2			12		15.5
Penge		8.7			5				7.4		8.1
National (GB)	14.5			14.3			14.5	14.4	14.1	14.1	13.5

Notes

1. Local Data Company (LDC) survey the furthest extent of the towns as defined by DCLG boundaries including more peripheral areas and buildings not included in TCM surveys and also areas more prone to high vacancies. The boundaries for the LDC surveys for Bromley are being reviewed in the light of local boundaries for the town centres (e.g. Orpington BID boundary) and should be available for the next TCM Update report to Members.
2. For Bromley Town Centre the overall vacancy figure for the Retail Core masks some differences between the different sections of the town. In May 2014 there were 62 vacant units out of a total of 507 (including both retail and leisure) giving a 12.2% rate. This breaks down as follows:

Area	No of units	Vacant units	Rate %
High Street	351	37	10.5
Intu Bromley	138	21	15.2
The Mall	18	4	22.2

3. Similarly for Orpington Town Centre there are 255 units (both retail and leisure) which are surveyed by LDC – of which 39 are vacant, giving a rate of 15.3%. However this breaks down as follows:

Area	No of units	Vacant units	Rate %
High Street	203	27	13.3
Walnuts Shopping Centre	52	12	23

- 2.12 At the last PDS Committee Meeting Members asked for information about the level of churn – number of openings and closures within the main town centres. This information is summarised in the table below:

Openings & closures in retail core during last 12 months

TOWN	Openings	Closures	Net gain / loss	Notes
Beckenham	14	17	-3	
Bromley	66	68	-2	Majority of changes (gains and losses) have been in Comparison Retail.
Orpington	17	30	-13	Majority of gains in Leisure sector; Majority of losses in Comparison Retail
Penge	8	10	-2	

## **2.13 Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund**

2.14 Work has been ongoing to implement improvement project in various areas in response to bids to the Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund.

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. Mostly completed.
- Biggin Hill – Christmas lights, tree pit for Christmas tree, noticeboards and flower towers. A grant has been provided to the Business Association.
- Chatterton Village – flower towers and hanging baskets. Installation completed.
- Chislehurst, High Street and Belmont Parade – including new Christmas lights (which were installed and working over 2013 Christmas period), village signs, community notice boards, resurfacing of alleyways and a deep clean. This project is ongoing.
- Clockhouse – including improvements to damaged shop frontage, a deep clean and upgraded litter bin. This project has recently received approval and will be started soon.
- 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. Consultation with traders and residents on parking changes is ongoing.
- Cray Valley – provision of street lamp banners to promote Cray Festival in 2013. Banner fixings will be reused in 2014 and future years.
- Hayes Village, The Street – including resurfacing of forecourt, improvement to frontage of village hall, street signs and new bins. Project ongoing.
- Hayes, Station Approach – new permanent Christmas tree, community noticeboards, repair to car park entrances and deep clean. Community notice boards awaiting planning approval.
- Keston - Village Sign completed. New planters and flower tower installed.
- Mottingham, Kimmeridge Cross – including new planters, hanging baskets, community noticeboards and benches. Project ongoing.
- Mottingham, High Street – funding for new Christmas lights agreed.
- Petts Wood – New Christmas lights – grant provided to Business Association.
- Penge – resurfacing of forecourts, new bins, new permanent Christmas tree and improved signage. Mostly completed but anti-pigeon measures to be confirmed.

2.15 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 £237k of the original £250k was authorised by the Portfolio Holder. Of this, £138k has already been spent in 2012/13 and 2013/14, the remainder committed or earmarked. There is therefore £13k remaining unallocated for projects in parades and small town centres not yet served by this programme. At the success of the programme the R&R Portfolio Holder has asked officers work up a proposal to the Council's Executive for the funding of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Round of the scheme.

## **2.16 Bromley North Village Improvement Works**

2.17 The Bromley North Village improvement works are expected to run until November 2014. These continue to be complicated by the remedial work on Thames Water assets in the area. Works have been continuing in Market Square throughout this

quarter and are expected to continue there until late summer. The project is having 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 whole Bromley North area. The Town Centre Manager has been working closely with the Bromley North Village project team, including the contractor's Business Liaison Officer, 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 through the Council communications team.

## **2.18 Events**

- 2.19 Due to reduced funding available, and restrictions on space in pedestrianized part of Bromley, there have been no public events taking place in Bromley and Penge town centres during the past quarter.
- 2.20 In April a French Market took place in Petts Wood and Beckenham – which was well supported and brought an additional 'continental' interest to these towns. Another very successful local produce market was organised in mid-May in partnership with the Copers Cope Area Residents Association and the Beckenham Business Association. The popular market on Beckenham Green was augmented with entertainment and a stall promoting businesses from across the town, along with a display caravan publicising the TfL funded plans for regeneration of the High Street.
- 2.21 Looking ahead to Christmas, for which a number of events are already in planning stage, the Town Centre Team has been running a Request for Quotes Procurement process during May and June to secure the services of a suitable contractor to install, de-install and maintain Christmas lights during the period from November 2014 to January 2015. The contract will include the supply of new lights and maintenance of existing ones in 8 town centres across the borough, 5 of which are being externally funded by local business groups / lights committees. It is expected that the contract will be finalised by early July.

## **2.22 Business Support Programme**

- 2.23 Town Centre Management has continued to work closely with various organisations to ensure that there continues to be a programme of support and networking opportunities for local businesses. The events are organised without any financial subsidy from the Council – but rely on offering third parties free use of space, promotion via our networks and officer time. For example, on 11 June the Council hosted a joint ICEAW / MetroBank seminar at the Civic Centre to help businesses market themselves more effectively. On 18 June the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms became the venue for the first 'Bromley Means Business' Expo, with over 30 stands, seminars, one to one support surgeries and networking sessions – opened by the Mayor of Bromley and attracting hundreds of visitors.
- 2.24 In addition to events, the business support role of the team also involves ensuring free flow of information about support schemes of benefit to our businesses – e.g. the Government's £1000 discount off Business Rates for Retailers, or the £3000 voucher scheme to help businesses access faster broadband. One of the tools for

this is the bi-monthly Business e-Bulletin, re-launched in June with a new look, and emailed to over 3000 business addresses.

## **2.25 Business and Traders Group Liaison**

- 2.26 In addition to the main town centre activities, the Town Centre Management team has maintained links, providing support and advice where required to a number of traders and town centre groups across the borough. As discussed in 1.2 the Town Centre Management team maintains direct links to the Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID through both formal and informal meetings.
- 2.27 The TCM for Beckenham has worked closely with the Beckenham Business Association (BBA) membership secretary to visit High Street traders door to door to raise awareness of the proposed regeneration scheme for the town and encourage sign-ups for the BBA. The TCM also coordinated a new format networking and information sharing breakfast meeting for BBA members and other local businesses – which took place at the end of April. Further BBA breakfast meetings are planned. A Penge Traders Association meeting also took place in June at which a number of issues were discussed – including how to improve the town’s environment and to attract inward investment.

## **2.28 Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from July to September 2014**

- 2.29 The Town Centre Management & Business Support team’s main priorities for this quarter will be:
- Engaging with and strengthen partnerships with local businesses and other town centre stakeholders. We will continue support for the Beckenham Town Centre Team and the 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 continue to work closely with the forming Bromley BID Working Group and their delivery partners to help engage with a wide cross section of the towns businesses as the project moves forward. Officers in this team will play a lead role in the internal project group to ensure that the Local Authority role in developing the BID is coordinated.
  - Continue to support the Orpington 1st BID through officer representation on the BID Board, and will also be monitoring the BID Levy billing and recovery process for 2014/15.
  - Continue to take a leading role in business liaison and communications in respect of the major improvement works for Bromley North Village.
  - Continue to implement the Local Parades Improvement Initiative where funding bids have been authorised, and manage the process for allocation of the final remnant of funding. Work up a proposal for additional funding to implement a Round 2 of the Initiative.

- Liaison with local town centre groups to plan for the funding and development of public events, including special markets and Christmas lights switch-ons.
- Officers in this team will finalise the procurement of Christmas lights services for the 2014 season in Bromley, Beckenham, Penge, Orpington and some smaller towns.
- Work with partner organisations to deliver a programme of support workshops and seminars for local businesses during the year – at no cost to the Council.
- Work with colleagues in the Council’s Town Centre Renewal team to oversee the final evaluation of the Outer London Fund Round 2 programme – which will be undertaken by an external consultant and will be concluded by end of September for reporting to the GLA.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin, website content, including a possible new Bromley Business Directory (for publication in 2015). 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.