

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting: Economic Partnership
Date: 7th October 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 2nd 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 – July to September 2014

2.1 Business Improvement Districts

2.2 Over the summer work has been ongoing to finalise governance arrangements for the **Bromley BID** Working Group – which was a pre-requisite for the grant agreement to become operational – and also recruiting to the membership of the Working Group to ensure that it is representative. The Limited Company formed as a legal entity to support the Working Group – Bromley BID Ltd – now has two Directors in place and is seeking to recruit a third. Twelve individuals representing a wide range of business types (independents and nationals) and from different areas of the town now make up the Working Group. The grant agreement was finalised and signed in early September and Bromley BID Ltd has now appointed a delivery partner – Central Management Solutions (CMS). As stated in the June update the timescale for the Bromley BID proposal to go to ballot was amended to aim for an October 2015 ballot, with a view to starting the BID (if successful) on 1 April 2016.

2.3 With this revised schedule in mind, the Working Group (with assistance from CMS) will start in October 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 to understand the issues for the town centre, which could potentially be tackled by a BID in the future. The results of the BID consultation and an early draft of the Bromley BID Proposal are expected to be available in spring 2015.

2.4 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. Projects ongoing and planned for the benefit of the town by the BID include:

- Negotiating a partnership with the Police to enhance town centre policing– to help tackle ongoing anti-social behaviour problems
- Development of a new enterprise hub in an empty office building on the High Street
- Exploring opportunities for a pop up shop to provide space for community engagement and test trading for start ups
- Joint purchasing opportunities for BID members through partnership with Meercat procurement specialists – to help businesses save money
- Sponsorship / organisation of public events including:
 - Priory Live Music festival (16 August)
 - Cycle Mania (28 Sept)
 - Christmas event – involving road closure at War Memorial end of High Street (20 Nov)

2.5 Prompted by discussions at the Economic Partnership officers have undertaken an initial 'light touch' feasibility study into the possibility of a Business Improvement District on the **Lower Sydenham / Beckenham Industrial Estate**. The potential BID levy yield of such a BID could exceed £50k per annum which is viable for an industrial estate style BID. Discussions have been ongoing with a representative sample of the local business community to understand the operational needs / issues for their businesses and to gauge their responsiveness to the BID concept. Initial indications are that this could be supported if introduced in a sensitive and supportive manner. The next steps may involve requesting funding to support the development of a BID in this estate from the GLA (who have recently formed a task group to look specifically at development of industrial BIDs in London). Officers will continue to explore feasibility and options for funding a development project, but a funding BID to the GLA may require a level of match funding from the Council which will need Councillor approval. Officers have also been following up some of the day-to-day issues arising from conversations with businesses – e.g. street cleansing regime, parking restrictions and fly tipping.

2.6 Vacant Units

2.7 The latest Vacancy Rates based on Local Data Company research are as follows:

Beckenham (June 14) – 9.1%

Bromley (May 14) – 12.8%

Orpington (March 14) – 15.5%

Orpington BID area (Sept 14) – 15.2%

Penge (April 14) – 8.1%

2.8 Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund

2.9 During the past 3 months work has been ongoing to implement improvement projects in various areas including:

- Anerley Hill – minor shop front improvements.
- Chatterton Village – flower towers and hanging baskets.

- Chislehurst, High Street and Belmont Parade – village sign, community notice boards, resurfacing of alleyways has taken place and a deep clean is planned.
- Chislehurst, Royal Parade – Liaison with businesses to identify possible projects has taken place
- Clockhouse – improvements to damaged shop frontage, a deep clean and upgraded litter bin installation planned.
- Coney Hall – awaiting installation of planters – with some other work - pending a possible change to parking and loading bays.
- Hayes Village, The Street – resurfacing of forecourt, improvement to frontage of village hall, street signs and new bins.
- Hayes, Station Approach – community noticeboards, repair to car park entrances, planters and deep clean.
- Keston - New planters and flower tower installed.
- Mottingham, Kimmeridge Cross – planters, hanging baskets, community noticeboards and benches.

2.10 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 for Renewal & Recreation. 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.

2.11 Bromley North Village Improvement Works

2.12 The Bromley North Village improvement works are expected to run until November 2014. Works in Market Square have now come to an end and this space starting to be utilised again for both promotions and public entertainment. East Street works are now completed – with bollards installed around street café areas to allow restaurants to utilise for outdoor seating and tables. East Street became the focus for a special celebratory event on 17 July which involved a temporary road closure, free food tasting and a visit from the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

2.13 Beckenham Town Centre Improvements

2.14 The Town Centre Manager continues to support the Town Centre Team and the Beckenham Member Working Group in their role of guiding and consulting on the design of the major TfL scheme currently in development. A number of short term improvements complementary to this scheme, but which may be implemented in advance of its commencement, have been identified by the Town Centre Team and have approval from the Working Group. Some of these, for example a permanent cover for the Beckenham Green stage, will be funded from a Section 106 Agreement related to a development in the Beckenham area.

2.15 Events

2.16 The now regular Beckenham Green local produce market was organised for 12 July and on 20 September, in partnership with the Copers Cope Area Residents Association and the Beckenham Business Association. Both markets were very popular 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. A discount voucher booklet which encouraged visitors to utilise the businesses throughout the High Street was a feature of both events.

2.17 In late July a French Market again took place in Petts Wood and Beckenham. Concern was raised over the ability of the market operator to promote the events in public spaces in those town centres – and officers in the Town Centre Management team are now in discussions with Street enforcement colleagues over a compromise solution to allow some appropriately located banners / posters to be displayed in the run up to these types of events.

2.18 Looking ahead to Christmas, a number of special events are already in planning stage and the confirmed dates are as follows:

- Beckenham 29 November
- Biggin Hill 22 November
- Bromley 30 November
- Chislehurst 29 November
- Orpington 20 November
- Sundridge Park Parade 29 November

2.19 Dates of switch-on / Christmas events for other towns not mentioned above will be circulated once these are confirmed.

2.20 A contractor for the borough wide Christmas lights contract (covering Beckenham, Bromley, Chislehurst, Coney Hall, Orpington, Penge and Sundridge Park) has been appointed and the details of the delivery of the contract have been finalised. It should be noted that the Council is funding only the parts of this contract which deal with Beckenham, Bromley and Penge. Funding for the other locations will be provided by local groups, for example Orpington 1st BID are funding the Orpington scheme. Other towns, not included in the contract, may still organise Christmas lighting displays, but these will be procured independently of the Council.

2.21 Business Support Programme

2.22 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. An example of this took place on 18 September, when Barclays with UKTI organised a joint international trade workshop for businesses, hosted in Committee Room 1 of the Civic Centre.

2.23 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, emailed to over 3000 business addresses in early August. A special issue of the E-bulletin was also published in early September, to ensure that our subscribers could be made aware of the large number of business events taking place during September and October.

2.24 In June Councillors approved the carry forward of £22.5k paid to the borough by Government for a special Business Support Scheme, as part of a range of support for businesses impacted by the winter flooding. This sits alongside funding available to provide Business Rate Relief and grants for flood resilience measures for both residents and businesses. To date £8.3k has been provided in business rates relief to 2 businesses affected by the flooding. However, no applications have so far been received from businesses for the Business Support Fund.

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 1.1 the Town Centre Management team maintains direct links to the Orpington 1st BID through both formal and informal meetings.

2.27 Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from October to December 2014

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

- Encourage and support the Bromley BID Working Group in engaging with businesses across the town centre to consult on a potential BID. Coordinating the Council's internal officer team in responding to the development of the BID proposal as the project progresses.
- Support for the Beckenham Town Centre Team and the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group – including assisting with engagement with businesses and other town centre stakeholders on designs for the major TfL-funded scheme for Beckenham, and delivery of funded short term improvement projects.
- Liaison with local town centre groups to plan for the funding and development of public events. Direct management and coordination of major Christmas events in Bromley, Beckenham and Penge. Development of an enhanced promotions, entertainment and specialist markets offer for Bromley – utilising the newly refurbished Market Square spaces. Reviewing how the regular weekly market may operate in future years to provide an enhanced offer for Bromley town centre.
- With a contractor now in place, officers in this team will oversee the delivery of Christmas lights services for the 2014 season in Bromley, Beckenham, Penge, Orpington and some smaller towns / parades.
- In collaboration with colleagues in the Town Centre Renewal Team follow up on the borough's bid to the New Housing Bonus funding stream from the London Enterprise Panel – administered by London Councils. If successful these projects will include an element of business support which will be focussed on assisting businesses in the town centres of Penge and Orpington.
- Work with partner organisations to deliver a programme of support workshops and seminars for local businesses – including organising and promoting a joint

seminar / networking event with ICAEW and MetroBank (2 October) and re-launching the Bromley Business Growth Club in partnership with Action Coach (23 October) – which will have monthly events hereafter. The Town Centre Management & Business Support team will also be coordinating the Council's stand at the Bromley and Kent Business Expo – at Coolings Nursery on 15 October. The Mayor of Bromley, the Leader and the R&R Portfolio Holder are all expected to be in attendance. Officers are also in discussion with the Mayor about a special business networking event in the Palace to take place on 6 November.

- 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 December for reporting to the GLA.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin, website content, including a 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.