

# BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

**Meeting:** Bromley Economic Partnership

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015

**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 4<sup>th</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 – January to March 2015

### 2.1 Business Improvement Districts

2.2 The **Bromley BID Working Group**, with the help of Central Management Solutions (CMS), completed the Feasibility Stage of the BID set up process in early February. This involved a review of the business rates data and a consultation survey of 13% of the businesses who may be expected to vote in the BID ballot and subsequently pay the BID levy. The purpose of this light touch survey was not to ask whether the businesses were in favour of a BID but about what issues are important to them and what their priorities would be for any future BID. The results of this showed that the majority of those responding made the promotion and marketing of the town centre along with public events, the highest priority. Environmental quality and crime / anti-social behaviour issues, whilst considered important, were considered secondary to encouraging more customers and investors into Bromley. In parallel with the feasibility work, some discussions have taken place between the BID Working Group and the Council to start to put in place the key legal agreements which will underpin the future relationship between the Council and the BID. Discussions have also been ongoing with regards to the operation of the ballot and the development of a levy system in the event the ballot is successful.

2.3 In early March the BID Working Group launched an in-depth consultation which will help provide a more in-depth understanding of the issues for the town centre, and the aspirations of the businesses that could potentially be met through a BID. The consultation, which is seeking to engage with a minimum of 45% of the business rate payers, will also gather some anecdotal evidence of the likely response of the businesses to the concept of the BID. So far, with around 37% of the potential

voters canvassed for views, this has generally been positive. Alongside the consultation process, the BID Working Group will be working with the Council to enhance and develop the database of business rates payers for the town to arrive at a voter list which can be used to run the postal ballot, which has a provisional closing date of 5 November. The results of the BID consultation will feed into a draft Bromley BID Proposal and Business Plan. It is expected that a copy of the BID Proposal and Business Plan will be submitted to the Council for approval to proceed to a ballot in June or July 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. Recent highlights of the BID programme include:

- Opportunity Orpington Business Expo (19/2) – one day expo to showcase the best of Orpington businesses. It was also an opportunity for the Council to field stands to promote business relevant services and plans for improving the public realm in the town centre.
- Orpington’s Finest business awards gala event (19/2).
- Love Orpington Wedding Fair (22/2)
- Launched Successful Mums business start-up course (started on 10/3) hosted at the Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> business hub.

## 2.5 Local Parades Improvement Initiative Fund

2.6 During the past 3 months work has been ongoing to implement improvement projects in various areas. Note that a number of projects agreed for some locations were not possible to complete due to a variety of factors beyond our control. Therefore a number of revised applications are in the pipe line.

- Penge - High street lamp column banners subject to planning approval.
- Chislehurst (Royal Parade) – project including lamp column banners, signage and planter being costed up.
- Clockhouse – proposed improvements were reviewed as lack of landlord response made them untenable. An amended application is to be submitted to include a plaque with local history depicted, subject to planning approval.
- Coney Hall – additional planter on order. Further work on resurfacing and tree planting awaiting possible parking changes.
- Sundridge Park – a new application has been submitted for authorisation, which includes park car park signage and additional Christmas lights.
- Hayes Village (The Street) – new application to be submitted to include bespoke cycle racks. Local identity signage outstanding.
- Hayes (Station Approach) – awaiting planning consent for community noticeboards, and bench by Iceland
- Keston – tree to be planted in memory of local resident, partly funded by the LPII. Officers are investigating the purchase of Christmas lights and refurbishment of the water fountain on the green.

2.7 Town Centre Managers have been assisting local groups to identify costs and explore feasibility for a variety of projects paid for through the Member Initiatives fund allocation of £250k. Since the start of the programme (in 2012/13) £201k has

been spent on projects in various locations. An additional £45k has been allocated to projects with £12k of this expected to be spent by end of 2014/15 financial year and £33k in 2015/16. There is approximately £4k unallocated.

## **2.8 Bromley Town Centre**

2.9 The Bromley Town Centre Manager continues to lead on the second stage of a review of the operation, location and offer of the town's 3 day market funded from a section 106 allocation. A market research agency and a specialist markets consultancy were appointed in January to assist officers with the project. Market Research has been undertaken with both shoppers and businesses in Bromley Town Centre being surveyed on various aspects of the market. Shoppers in outlying town centres were also surveyed about the Bromley town centre and its market – and a focus group is planned. Market Traders have also been surveyed to capture their views. Once the results of the research have been analysed the market consultants will provide initial concept design and options for a new market configuration. The outcome of the review and options for the future shape, location and operation of the market will be reported to Councillors for a decision on implementation (which may require Capital funding) in late summer.

2.10 During the past quarter the Town Centre Manager has also:

- Continued to re-establish communications with key businesses and stakeholders in the town centre, supported networking events and reinstated the regular monthly communications to local businesses.
- Provided ongoing support to the BID Working Group, particularly with the consultation stage, organising business workshops and communications to local businesses.
- Organised the Bromley North Village Spring Event (Saturday 21st March) to celebrate the completion of the Bromley North Village public realm improvements working with new and existing businesses to promote and encourage additional footfall to the area.
- Discussed potential projects and events for High Street Fund bid with Bromley North Village Town Team
- Provided footfall and vacancy rates analysis to monitor the success of the Bromley North Village Public Realm Improvements. Vacancy rates before the works in Feb 13 were 8.1%, during the works in Feb 14 were 9.1% and when the works completed the vacancy rates reduced to 6.6%. Footfall in Bromley North Village has increased 62% on a weekday and 49% on a Saturday (compared to 2011).

## **2.11 Beckenham Town Centre**

2.12 The Town Centre Manager continues to support the Town Centre Team and the Beckenham Member Working Group, and has also been involved in planning and liaison regarding the public consultation exercise taking place during March. A number of short term improvements complementary to this scheme are in the process of being implemented following the allocation of £47k from a section 106 agreement., for example restoration work for the heritage pump on the High Street has been commissioned.

2.13 During the past quarter, the Town Centre Manager has also:

- Coordinated the development of the Purple Flag project – which is about developing a programme to promote improvements to safety in the evening economy in partnership with colleagues in Public Protection, licenced premises, Police and other partners (e.g. Street Pastors). This included working on “Operation triangle” a successful operation to reduce late night anti-social behaviour over the Christmas / New Year period with street marshals, taxi marshals with support from local police and licencing. A recent audit run by the ATCM suggested that the project is on track to get Beckenham accredited by the autumn.
- Developed and supported a programme of networking including breakfast meetings which have proved very popular, supported by Barclays. Series of evening and breakfast events planned for rest of the year.
- Enhancements to the Beckenham Business Association (BBA) web site
- Supported the BBA in outreach to retailers with the aim of increasing the number of high street businesses in the BBA membership on going

## **2.14 Penge Town Centre**

2.15 During the past quarter the Town Centre Manager has:

- Continued to support the Penge Town Centre Team.
- Liaised with parking operator Blenheim centre to try to solve on-going issues.
- Working on event plans including the Easter market event on 21 March.

## **2.16 Events**

2.17 The last quarter of the year is traditionally quiet for public events – but on 21 March there were two events, one in Bromley and the other in Penge.

2.18 The Bromley event was a public celebration of the achievements of the Bromley North Village public realm improvement programme and sought to spread the message that the quarter is open for business. The event (with a Spring theme) included live entertainment, heritage trail walks, spring animal petting zoo, magician, balloon modeller and Morris dancers. Over 15 businesses from Bromley North Village got involved with the event and provided special offers and promotions.

2.19 The Penge Easter event comprises a local market, entertainment from local bands on stage, Easter egg hunt, petting farm, bonnet making, egg and spoon races, face painting, children’s rides, hog roast and a 1940’s DJ.

## **2.20 Business Support Programme**

2.21 The team 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. Events taking place during the period include:

- Joint event with the Institute of Chartered Accountants and Metro Bank on the theme of Fitness for your business – including content on business planning and HR
- Business Planning Workshop with Action Coach as part of the Bromley Business GrowthCLUB
- Very popular ‘Writing for your website’ workshop as part of the Bromley Business GrowthCLUB
- Promotion of the Council and its business relevant services at the Opportunity Orpington Expo
- Growth Accelerator workshop – to provide a taster session and promotion for the Governments subsidised mentoring support service for high growth potential businesses
- Started a series of low cost workshops entitled ‘Getting You Up and Running’ to support residents with plans to start in business.

2.22 Planning for the Bromley Means Business Expo on 16 June 2015, to be hosted in the Great Hall.

2.23 The bi-monthly Business e-Bulletin continues to be sent out every other month, with issues published in mid-January and mid-March. Additional interim emails ‘Bromley Business Extras’ are now also being sent out in-between times to promote Council supported business events and initiatives.

2.24 Liaised with BDUK and other parties to explore options for attracting external funding to facilitate the introduction of high speed broadband to some of the rural parts of the borough.

## **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 1<sup>st</sup> BID through both formal and informal meetings.

## **2.27 Priorities for the Town Centre Management & Business Support Team from April to June 2015**

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

- Continue to support the Bromley BID Working Group and CMS in engaging with businesses across the town centre to consult on a potential BID – including assisting with joint communications and voter database cleansing. Coordinating the Council’s internal officer team in responding to the development of the BID – including agreement on protocols for the ballot, development of legal agreements and the framework for the levy billing process.
- Support for the Beckenham Town Centre Team and the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group – including assisting with public consultation on the

major TfL-funded scheme for Beckenham. The TCM will also support the Town Centre Team in delivery of the High Street Fund alleyway improvement project – which has been successful in being awarded £20k funding. Continue to work on the delivery of other interim improvement projects including possible stage cover and infrastructure to support markets and events on Beckenham Green.

- Continue to coordinate the Purple Flag project to improve the safety of Beckenham's night time economy.
- Coordination of the second stage of the review of Bromley markets – including ensuring all survey data and supporting information is available to the markets consultant, and overseeing their input into the review of future options.
- Continue to deliver the agreed projects for the Local Parades Improvement Initiative (LPII) or where the originally agreed projects have not been feasible, to obtain authorisations for the re-allocation of any unspent funding to other LPII projects.
- Planning and delivery of a programme of TCM-coordinated summer events.
- Begin delivery of the revenue elements of the New Homes Bonus funding allocated to Penge and Orpington for expenditure in 2015/16 and 2016/17 along with High Street Fund business support project for Orpington. The initial stages will include consultation with stakeholders on the exact form of the support required and commissioning this programme.
- Oversee the re-launch and promotion of the online Bromley Commercial Property Database.
- Work with partner organisations to deliver a programme of support workshops and seminars for local existing businesses and start-ups, including the Business GrowthCLUB, ICEAW / MetroBank joint events and the Bromley Means Business Expo in June.
- Maintain regular business communication channels and publications – including the business e-bulletin, website content, including a new Bromley Business Directory (for publication in late 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.