

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting:	Economic Partnership
Date:	2 February 2011
Subject:	Update report on activities for Town Centre Management and Business Support
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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 3rd quarter 2010/11
- 1.2 Note the minutes of the final Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group meeting (attached as Appendix).
- 1.3 Note and endorse the plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity during the next quarter.

2. Town Centre Management

- 2.1 For Town Centre Management the main priority during the past quarter has been the delivery of Christmas lights schemes and Christmas Lights events, plus the development of action plans for the 2011/12 financial year.
- 2.2 Christmas Lights schemes were delivered across the 4 main towns (Bromley, Orpington, Beckenham and Penge) and in 8 smaller town centres (in partnership with local groups). For the first time all these schemes were brought under one contract and as a result some savings were achieved. Bromley saw the installation of an enhanced scheme – e.g. additional lights in trees in Queens Gardens. Further planned enhancements – with the addition of up to 8 cross streets – were unfortunately blocked by the difficulty in getting permissions from High Street building owners for sufficient fixings to be installed.

- 2.3 Christmas events were planned for 10 towns across the borough, with the Town Centre Management team playing a leading role in many of these. Whilst those planned for late November (e.g. Orpington) went ahead as planned and were successful, the severe wintry weather which prevailed for much of December had a disruptive effect on a number of the events planned for that month. As a result some had to be postponed (in the case of Bromley and West Wickham) or cancelled (as in the case of Chislehurst and Penge) and unfortunately attendees for the events run during December were lower than usual.
- 2.4 Town Centre Managers continue to monitor the vitality of the Town Centres primarily through footfall counts and vacancy rates. The following table summarises the Q3 results for the main town centres.

Town	Vacancy rate Q3 2010/11	Vacancy rate in Q3 2009/10	Footfall count Q3 2010/11	Year on year change compared with Q3 2009/10
Bromley	2.0% (in primary frontage only)	5.4%	198,624	- 8.2%
Orpington	8.7%	9%	24,084	- 38.7%
Beckenham	5.9%	9%	No count in Q3 due to adverse weather	NA
Penge	10.2%	12.7%	NA	NA

- 2.5 It should be noted that the footfall counts for Bromley and Orpington took place during the two weekends in December when severe wintry weather prevailed, which would almost certainly had an effect on the counts. The footfall for the Walnuts and the Glades shopping centres were also down during December – although not as severely as High Streets exposed as they are to the elements. To put these figures in a national context Springboard and the ATCM has declared that the annual (year on year) footfall in UK high streets fell by 11.2% in December, which is the greatest annual decline in December since the Index was first published in 2006.
- 2.6 In terms of vacancy rates the figures tell a more hopeful story with all 4 of the monitored towns showing a decrease in the number of vacant units, suggesting that an underlying trend towards recovery. To put the local figures in context it should be noted that the average town centre vacancy rate for the UK in December 2010 was 14.7% (source: Local Data Company).

3. Business Support

- 3.1 For the Council's Business Support team the focus of the third quarter has been on delivery of a local Boost Your Business event and the borough's first Commercial Property Expo. Also in this period the business e-bulletin

- was revamped and re-launched on a new footing and there was a review of content on the Business section of the Council website (20 deletions).
- 3.2 The Boost Your Business Local event was arranged in October specifically for the Bromley North businesses. The purpose was to showcase some of the ideas and plans arising out of the Bromley North Village improvement strategy – including potential plans for public realm improvements, marketing and branding the area. Although the event was not as well attended as hoped, those businesses in attendance were positive about the Council's interest and desire to improve the area in various ways.
 - 3.3 The Commercial Property Expo in November was organised in partnership with a number of the local commercial property agents, and included an expert question and answer session, exhibition of property related services and networking. The event was well attended and agents considered the evening successful enough to be repeated in 2011.
 - 3.4 Also in November a re-designed version of the Bromley Business E-bulletin was launched, with improved visuals, punchier text and the introduction of sponsored articles and links.
 - 3.5 During the quarter work was ongoing to review the content on the Council's Business web pages. This was in preparation for the introduction of a completely new content management system for the whole Council website – which will improve the overall look and functionality of the site. In the course of this review over 20 pages (representing a third) from the Business section were deleted and many more were updated with refreshed information.

4. Work and status of Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group

- 4.1 The Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group met in December. Minutes from the meeting are attached as an appendix.
- 4.2 Members of the sub-Group discussed the role of the group at the December meeting and the key point of agreement was the partnership needs a group of people to lead on the communication aspects of the local economy – specifically to proactively disseminate 'good news stories' about the borough as a good place to do business.
- 4.3 It is now proposed that the sub-Group will no longer operate as a separate group as most of the members also meet as part of the main Partnership – and those that have not done so will receive an invitation to become part of this body. It is intended however that the communications element of the Partnership's role will be emphasised in the future agendas of the main body – and that erstwhile members of the sub-group will continue to contribute to this agenda in the future.

5. Proposed activities for the Town Centre Management and Business support service.

5.1 The key priorities for Town Centre Management during quarter 4 include:

- Deliver spring events in Bromley, Beckenham and Penge – the first being 'Love Bromley' Valentine-themed event on 10 February.
- Consult on and finalise Town Centre Management action plans for 2011/12
- Finalise and secure funding for events programme for 2011/12
- Develop Town Centre Safety Partnership and ShopSafe Radio scheme.
- Consult with businesses and develop a policy on Christmas lights for 2011
- Develop a strategy for improving promotion and rides in town centres during 2011/12
- Continue environmental monitoring and improvements (particularly in Bromley).
- Undertake feasibility work on possible introduction of BIDs
- Work with local groups (particularly in the 4 main towns) to raise profile and increase participation.

5.2 The key priorities for Business Support during quarter 4 include:

- Deliver major Boost Your Business event on 30 March 2011
- Improve welcome packs and increase number of local business groups participating / contributing material
- Continue review of Business pages on website
- Commission High Growth Coaching scheme to be delivered through Bromley College until March 2012.
- Deliver procurement support through partners such as South East London Chamber of Commerce (Olympics event 22 Feb) and series of workshops on Pre Qualification Questionnaires to be delivered by Bromley College.
- Publish updated version of the Bromley Business Guide and Directory
- Revise and publish new version of A to Z Guide to Local Services for Business – in partnership with NewsShopper.
- Publish new online (printable) visitor guide map for the borough
- Work with external consultants to develop inward investment brochure to be launched at planned inward investment event during 1st Quarter of 2011/12.