

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Meeting:	Economic Partnership
Date:	13 April 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 4th quarter 2010/11
- 1.2 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 priorities have been:

- Delivery of spring events
- Finalising event and project budget and action plans for 2011/12
- Consulting with businesses to help develop a Christmas lights policy for 2011
- Continue environmental monitoring and improvements
- Undertaking a business survey and BIDs feasibility study for Orpington town centre.

In addition the TCM team have maintained regular communications with businesses through newsletters and email updates and have contributed to projects led by other sections of the Council, for example the Bromley North Village improvement strategy.

2.2 Events successfully delivered during the quarter include 'Love Bromley', a Valentines themed event which showcased a range of local businesses in the pedestrianised area of the High Street, an Alice in Wonderland themed

event with fireworks in Penge and a spring fair in Beckenham, alongside occasional specialist French and Italian markets adding a continental flavour to Bromley, Beckenham and Orpington during the period.

- 2.3 The events programme for 2011/12 was developed and refined during this quarter and a report was provided to the Council's Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee to request funding to assist delivery of the programme which will include a combined Easter / Royal Wedding event in Bromley, a Summer Slam Sports festival in Bromley, Orpington Town Fete, Autumn Market and Music. Council funding was agreed, including a budget to cover the advanced costs for a very high profile event to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in spring 2012, however the successful delivery of the events programme does rely on financial contributions from other partners including businesses. In addition TCMs met with a representative of Sainsbury's to present the Bromley approach to Town Centre Management and the TCM action plans for the main towns, with a view to requests for core funding which will be prepared and submitted during the first quarter of 2011/12.
- 2.4 During January and February the Town Centre Managers wrote to around 2000 businesses across the 4 main town centres to elicit views on whether they would be willing to contribute to the cost of Christmas lights in 2011. TCMs also made direct approaches to a number of larger occupiers and key stakeholders in these town centres. Overall, the level of response was disappointing, both in terms of number of replies and promises of support. However, the information from the consultation has been fed into a review of Christmas lights funding which is being reported to Councillors on the Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee in April – providing Members with a range of options ranging from zero Council funding for lights through to maintaining funding at 2010 levels.
- 2.5 Environmental monitoring continues to be a key role of the TCMs, with Bromley town centre coming under particular scrutiny in recent months. As a result a number of improvements have taken place including new bins (with a consistent design throughout the town), improved signage near the Hill Car Park, a facelift for the 'Bromley Zoo' mural at Naval Walk and the introduction of additional lighting in Market Square and Walters Yard (installation expected in April).
- 2.6 During the quarter a telephone survey of businesses in Orpington took place with 122 out of 315 businesses being interviewed. The results are still to be fully analysed, but although 87% of businesses had been affected by the economic downturn (most negatively) 75% still rate Orpington as a good place to do business. A number of suggestions were made through the survey as to how the local business environment could be improved. These were included as one of a number of inputs into a feasibility study on the potential for the establishment of Business Improvement District for Orpington which took place during March – the results of which will be with us shortly.

- 2.7 Town Centre Managers continue to monitor the vitality of the Town Centres primarily through footfall counts and vacancy rates. The following table summarises the Q4 results for the main town centres which shows that the vacancy rates have improved for Bromley and Orpington – comparing year on year. As a comparator the latest vacancy rates for the UK as a whole is 14.4% (Source: Local Data Company).
- 2.8 This is the first time we have commissioned a footfall count in quarter 4 (in February) so there is no comparative figure for previous year.

Town	Vacancy rate Q4 2010/11	Vacancy rate in Q4 2009/10	Footfall count Q4 2010/11
Bromley	3.6%	4%	140,406
Orpington	8%	9%	33,840
Beckenham	5%	NA	22, 200
Penge	10%	NA	NA

3. Business Support

- 3.1 For the Council's Business Support team the focus of the fourth quarter has been on:

- Delivery of the borough-wide Boost Your Business event in March
- Commissioning of High Growth Coaching Scheme and procurement support events and workshops
- Working with Business Link and economic / business sections in Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley on joint 'Business Growth Expo' events taking place in March (with one planned for early April).
- Editing and production of Bromley Business Guide and Directory
- Preparation of new online visitor map and guide for the borough
- Publication of a new electronic 'A to Z Guide to Local Services for Business' publication in partnership with News Shopper

In addition the Business Support team have contributed to the delivery of projects led by other Council sections, for example the Local Economic Assessment and the planned Invest Bromley event and brochure.

- 3.2 The 4th annual borough wide Boost Your Business event took place on 30 March. Over 160 people attended the event, 89 of which were delegates and the remainder were exhibitor staff. Although advance bookings were lower than in 2010, the drop out rate was very low in comparison, which is likely to be related to the introduction of an entrance fee of £20. We also found that most of the delegates stayed for the whole day and as a consequence may have derived more overall benefit from the event. At time of writing the feedback forms have yet to be analysed but initial verbal feedback received from delegates has been very positive. The event will be evaluated on the basis of both feedback forms from the day but also a follow up telephone survey which will help to ascertain the medium to long term impacts for the businesses taking part. In addition to

our home grown business support event, we have promoted and supported two joint 'South East Business Growth Expo' events – working in partnership with Business Link and neighbouring South East London boroughs of Bexley, Lewisham and Greenwich. The first event in Lewisham on 16 March drew 60 business people from across the sub-region.

- 3.3 The Council has been working with external partners to deliver its agenda for business support in terms of encouraging growth businesses and supporting those wishing to do business with the public sector. We have therefore launched the High Growth Coaching project with Bromley College – which provides subsidised one to one and workshop support for businesses to develop and implement their own growth strategies. With Council support the College has also been delivering workshops to help businesses tackle the paperwork involved in tendering for public sector contracts, including completing pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs). We also sponsored a special breakfast event, run by the South East London Chamber of Commerce at Bromley Football Club in February, to alert businesses to the opportunities still available from supplying to the 2012 Olympic Games.
- 3.4 Using the Society of London Manufacturers (Soloman) as an intermediary the Council engaged with manufacturing and industrial businesses based on the St Mary Cray industrial estate (Cray Avenue and adjacent roads). The engagement consisted of one to one interviews with the management of around 30 businesses, in order to understand issues facing the businesses. All these businesses were invited to an estate meeting which took place on 3 March and was attended by representatives from 14 businesses, plus representatives from the Council. The meeting resulted in some action points being adopted to tackle various issues around environment, crime, traffic and parking. It is expected that a committee of local businesses will be formed during April, initially supported by the Town Centre Management and Business Support team.
- 3.5 This quarter has also been a busy one for the production of business information publications – with a newly updated version of the 'A to Z Guide to Local Services for Business' being prepared and published and the design and proofing of the 'Bromley Business Guide and Directory 2011/12'. The former is now an electronic only publication produced in partnership with the News Shopper and hosted on both the Council and News Shopper websites. The final delivery of the 'Guide' has been slightly delayed but is expected to be available for distribution – free of charge – to businesses during April. In addition the new look Bromley Business E-bulletin has been prepared and dispatched twice during the quarter (in January and March) – and the e-bulletin has been actively promoted at business events.
- 3.6 In addition to the publications for businesses, work has been ongoing to prepare and design a visitor map and guide to the borough called 'Explore Bromley Borough'. This provides an overview map of the borough with

heritage, leisure, sports, countryside and parks attractions with clickable links to further information about each attraction. The 'Explore Bromley Borough' guide will be published on the Council website in April.

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

5.1 The key priorities for Town Centre Management during the first quarter of 2011/12 include:

- Finalisation of TCM action plans for 2011/12
- Proposals to potential sponsors for core funding or support for specific events / projects.
- Delivery of Spring and Summer events – including an Easter event in Bromley and celebration of new library opening in Orpington (expected May), and preparation for 2012 Queens Jubilee events.
- Finalisation of Christmas lights policy for 2011
- Follow up to feasibility study on potential BID for Orpington
- Development of town centres community safety partnership with Police and Shop Safe – including upgrade of system
- Maintain vigilance on environmental issues
- Continue to work with local business groups to encourage participation – e.g. re-launch of Beckenham Business Association
- Undertake a review of town centre markets, promotions and rides.
- Develop improved monitoring of town centre statistics, especially footfall

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

- Promotion and distribution of the new Bromley Business Guide and Directory
- Revision of the Business web pages on the revamped Council website to improve content and navigation
- Publication and promotion of the 'Explore Bromley Borough' visitor guide
- Develop inward investment plan for Bromley North Village
- Follow up and develop a response to results of the Orpington Business Survey
- Work with Communications and external consultant for publication of borough Invest Bromley brochure.
- Liaison with local commercial property agents through forum meeting
- Ensure publication of an edition of the Bromley Business E-bulletin and promote the wider take up of the service.
- Follow up and support for emerging Cray Avenue Industrial Estate business group.