

Item No. 18.	Classification: Open	Date: 10 December 2013	Meeting name: Cabinet
Report title:		Walworth Road Business Mix - Response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		East Walworth, Faraday, Newington	
Cabinet Members		Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy; Councillor Richard Livingstone, Finance, Resources and Community Safety; and Communities and Economic Wellbeing	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR VICTORIA MILLS, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC WELLBEING

Supporting our high streets and town centres through tough economic times is a top priority for the council. With reductions in funding we need a clear focus to our efforts in supporting local economic growth.

The council is committed to bringing investment into all our high streets so that they are thriving places to visit and offer a good mix of shopping to local residents. Much is already underway.

The Community Restoration Fund saw the council invest a total of £440,340 in support of businesses and business networks, including £184,000 in Walworth. This helped to support a range of activities including direct support for the East Street market traders and local events to increase the number of people coming to the area, as well as allowing local young people to get valuable business experience through running a pop up shop.

Early in 2014 the council will launch a Town Centre Growth Fund of £600,000 which will again put direct investment into business-led groups who want to reinvigorate their local high streets. I hope that Walworth businesses bring forward a bid. I know that their knowledge of and commitment to the area are the key to seeing Walworth succeed.

The council has made clear its opposition to payday lenders, pawn brokers and betting shops on our high streets. Too many of Southwark's high streets are seeing an increase in these businesses which prey on people on low incomes and prevent other local businesses from flourishing. We are pursuing a range of initiatives to encourage responsible lending. This includes:

- Not letting council-owned buildings to payday lenders, betting shops or pawn brokers and looking at what powers the council can use to not renew the leases of those businesses already operating.
- Asking the government for the power to place a levy on these shops in Southwark.
- Being the first council nationally to make it more difficult for these kinds of businesses to open by bringing into force two Article 4 planning directions on change of use of retail and business premises.

- Securing agreement from two of the council's billboard advertising contractors not to display payday loan adverts in Southwark.

The council has also committed to look at business rate exemptions and discounts to encourage mixed high streets. In the current financial climate, as the report makes clear, it is unlikely that the council will be able to offer large scale discounts or to offer discounts to a large range of businesses. However, I recognise that it is a good time to investigate whether the council can help some businesses. It is possible that this work may find that a more effective way to offer help is instead a programme of grants or other initiatives.

I know that the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle will bring unprecedented opportunities to the communities and businesses in that area. However, I also accept that such a change in the retail offer available to local residents could bring challenges to the businesses on and around the Walworth Road. That means that rather than adopting a 'wait and see' approach the council is in the process of developing a 'vitality, viability and vulnerability' study for the area. This will measure its capacity to attract ongoing investment, its ability to adapt to changing needs and assess the underlying challenges and barriers to growth. This will help us better understand the health of the Walworth Road and offer recommendations for future action.

I am pleased that this report sets out the good work the council is already doing and how this corresponds to the recommendations put forward by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet

1. Note the responses from the Cabinet members for regeneration and corporate strategy; finance, resources and community safety; and communities and economic wellbeing on the set of recommendations in the report '*Walworth Road Business Mix: report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee*' (July 2013).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Earlier this year, the Walworth Society asked the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to carry out a scrutiny review of the trading environment on the Walworth Road. Following a review of the Walworth Road business mix, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report to Cabinet in September which set out nine recommendations for Cabinet to consider.
3. It was resolved at the September cabinet meeting that the relevant cabinet members would bring back a report to cabinet in order to respond to the overview and scrutiny committee recommendations.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. Officers have reviewed the recommendations put forward by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and have provided the following responses on behalf of the cabinet members for regeneration and corporate strategy; finance, resources and community safety; and communities and economic wellbeing.

Recommendation 1

Although recognising that the council's powers are limited, the committee recommends that the Cabinet's general approach to preventing saturation by payday loan, pawn shops and betting shops on our high streets should be assertive and robust and as pro-active as the law allows. Specifically, the committee recommends that:

(i) Cabinet and Planning Committee to explore the possibility of using Article 4 Direction powers for Walworth Road.

5. Overall, the clustering of betting shops and other types of A2 uses such as pay day loan shops and pawnbrokers in the borough's shopping frontages is considered to have a detrimental effect on the diversity and therefore the health of the high street. The council's ability to manage the balance of high street uses and the clustering of A2 uses through planning policies is constrained by legislation on permitted development rights. The council considers that use of Article 4 Directions will be an essential part of helping to protect local amenity and to help ensure proper planning of protected shopping frontages.
6. Recently, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a statement to the media in response to correspondence uncovered between Ladbrokes and Nick Boles (Planning Minister), obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by shadow communities secretary Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP. The letter from Ladbrokes complained of the "unfortunate attitude" of some councils which regarded bookmakers as "unacceptable and inappropriate additions" to the high street. Ladbrokes said that "some councils are now placing whatever obstacles they can in the way of our ability to obtain planning permission". The shadow minister suggested that the betting industry had influenced the provisions in the Growth and Infrastructure Act with regard to allowing buildings to convert temporarily to a set of alternative uses including shops (A1), financial and professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3) and offices (B1) for up to two years.
7. In response, DCLG denied the betting industry had influenced its reforms. A spokesman for the DCLG said the bill had been prepared three months before Ladbrokes contacted ministers. They also added that local planning authorities were able to issue Article 4 directions removing permitted development rights in consultation with the local community, and cited work in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham that specifically targeted betting shops (i.e. Article 4 Direction and also Supplementary Planning Guidance).
8. On 8 October 2013 a report was taken to Planning Committee to request approval for the immediate implementation of two Article 4 Directions to withdraw the permitted development rights granted by Schedule 2, Part 3, Class C and Schedule 2, Part 4, Class D of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) for changes of use in Southwark's Protected Shopping Frontages. This includes change of use from:
 1. A3 (restaurants and cafes), A4 (drinking establishments) and A5 (hot food takeaways) to A2 (financial and professional services).
 2. A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (restaurants and cafes), A4 (drinking establishments), A5 (hot food takeaways), B1 (business), D1 (non-residential institutions) and D2 (assembly and leisure)

to a flexible use falling within either class A1 (shops), class A2 (financial and professional services), class A3 (restaurants and cafes) or class B1 (business).

9. Issues associated with the clustering of A2 uses and ability of the council to manage the balance of high street uses mainly affect the borough's protected shopping frontages. In line with the definition of primary and secondary frontages in the NPPF, the protected shopping frontages contain a high proportion of retail uses, including food, drinks, clothing and household goods, as well as other uses appropriate in shopping frontages. Core Strategy policy 3 and saved Southwark Plan policy 1.9 recognise the importance of the continued viability of these locations and the importance of the services they provide. In the light of the importance given to protected shopping frontages by planning policy and the fact that it is these areas which are most affected, it was considered that protected shopping frontages should be the relevant area for a withdrawal of permitted development rights.
10. Planning Committee approved the two Article 4 Directions, which have now come into force immediately on 17 October 2013, and occupiers of units located within the protected shopping frontages have been notified. Planning permission will now be required from this date forward for change of use. A planning application will be determined against relevant policies contained in the council's development plans, the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework and other material considerations.

(ii) Cabinet asks officers to look at whether recent changes to National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) allow the council more powers which could be of use in influencing the balance of retail use along a high street.
11. Under the arrangements for the localisation of business rates, the council is able to retain a proportion of any local growth in income from business rates in the borough. Under the new scheme 50% of the business rates the council collects must be paid to the government, and 40% of the remainder must be paid to the GLA. There is, however, still some uncertainty over the operation of the business rate retention scheme making it difficult to comment at this time as the extent to which the powers can be used to specifically influence the balance of retail use along the high street.
12. The London Assembly Economy Committee reported in the publication 'Open for Business: Empty shops on London's high streets' (March 2013) that it is unlikely that the new business rate retention scheme will have a direct or positive impact on existing high street shops. As councils can only retain the proceeds of growth, their main incentive is to encourage new business premises to be built rather than focus on existing businesses.
13. Cabinet should also note some caution in that the changes introduce some risk for the council particularly for general fund budget setting. As it currently stands, the share of the amount of business rates that the council collects has to be supplemented by a business rates top up and the revenue support grant to get to the council's full funding level. As the council's business rates grows, the top up will reduce, and taken with forecast cuts in overall funding, reduces any chance of business rates growth generating equivalent additional resource to that lost through government funding reductions.

14. It is therefore appropriate that officers look further into the changes set out through the new business rate retention scheme to test the extent to which they could deliver social and economic value to support the council's wider strategic objectives. Beyond any changes to the NNDR, there is already a commitment to achieving thriving town centres and high streets in the borough within the Economic Well-being Strategy (2012-2020). Further details are set out in paragraphs 23-26.
15. Furthermore, the council acknowledges that the Localism Act 2011 introduced new provisions which gives councils more freedom to offer business rate discounts – which can help attract new businesses, investment and jobs. The council is currently considering this option. Whilst the council would need to meet the cost of any discount from local resources, it may be that the immediate cost of the discount is outweighed by the long-term benefit of attracting growth and jobs to the borough. However, it would be unlikely that wide scale discounts could be offered at this time and further consideration is needed on the most appropriate course of action.

(iii) Council uses the powers it has under Article 4 directions to ensure that properties in Class 2 business use have to go through the planning process in order to convert to payday loan, pawn and betting outlets.

16. As set out above in paragraphs 8-10, two Article 4 Directions were implemented on 17 October 2013 to withdraw the permitted development rights for change of use within the borough's protected shopping frontages. Planning permission will now be required for change of use to A2 use class. The council will determine change of use proposals in accordance with the development plan which includes the London Plan, the Core Strategy, saved policies in the Southwark Plan and adopted area action plans. The relevant saved policy in the Southwark Plan is policy 1.9 'Change of use within protected shopping frontages'. This states that change of use from an A1 (shops) use to another A class use will be granted provided that the proportion of A1 shops in the frontage does not fall below 50% and the premises have been vacant or not made a profit over 12 months and that the proposal does not harm the vitality of the frontage. Where frontages are within town centres, saved policy 1.7 would also apply which requires that proposals do not harm the vitality and viability of the centre.

(iv) Cabinet engage with Central London Forward and Westminster City Council in order to explore cross-London solutions to economic and planning problems affecting the high street, for example the use of London-only statutory powers.

17. The Leader represents Southwark on Central London Forward (CLF), who identify strategic priorities in collaboration with the seven member boroughs to work to improve the vitality of central London as a place to work, visit and do business. Working with other CLF boroughs, the development of a "City Deal for London" is being explored which will focus on key policy areas where a pan-London approach is more likely to deliver a better deal for central London boroughs and residents. Key themes being explored include tourism, housing, skills and wider employment support. A working party involving senior officers, and London Council's representatives, has been established to consider project feasibility and delivery.

18. The council also actively works with London Councils, which is a cross-party organisation who act as a focal point for representing the 32 London boroughs' interests. London Councils makes the case to government on current issues, and they represent boroughs' views through responding to government consultations, organising events for borough officers to share good practice and to consider the implications of new policy developments. London Council's aim to ensure that the government acknowledges that borough action is essential to the success of London's high streets and town centres. Their work includes:
- Lobbying government to position boroughs as leaders in shaping high streets and town centres
 - Ensuring government policy supports local government leadership role around planning
 - Ensuring any funding streams support boroughs to deliver their vision for local high streets and town centres
 - Responding to the GLA's and government policy proposals and evidence gathering
 - Working with boroughs to establish and promote new models and ideas to improve high streets and town centres to government and other stakeholders
19. The council continues to proactively engage with London Councils and provides input to the work it carries out. London Councils recently published a report '*Streets Ahead? Putting high streets at the heart of local economic growth*' (August 2013) which provides 13 recommendations to place boroughs at the centre of local economic development in their high streets and town centres. The report recommends that London's local government must be given more powers and the corresponding resources to plan for long-term growth in their local high streets and respond to the changing desires of local consumers. Amongst the recommendations are that the government should make changes to the Use Class Order (UCO) system that will encourage more balanced economies; and the government should simplify and bolster existing local planning tools for high streets to allow local discretion in the planning system and create places local people want to visit.

Recommendation 2

That Cabinet seeks to actively encourage the creation of a credit union on the Walworth Road.

20. The London Mutual Credit Union is a financial co-operative that exist for the benefits of our members who live and/or work in the London boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth Westminster or Camden. The credit union, like banks and building societies, is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA). Savers' deposits are protected by the same Financial Services Compensation Scheme that covers banks and building societies. Their mission is to provide our members with access to reasonably priced financial services and encourage the development of good financial practice.
21. Within Southwark, the Credit Union currently has branches in Peckham, Denmark Hill and Bermondsey. However, they have no plans to open a branch on the Walworth Road. The council has explored, and will continue to explore, opportunities with the London Mutual Credit Union to raise their profile. This has

included the issuing of press releases and other marketing and public relations opportunities, including a feature to be published in Southwark Life.

Recommendation 3

That Cabinet consider introducing a greater level of detail into the assessment of the existing retail mix as part of sustainability appraisals for new planning policy documents.

22. The sustainability appraisal process helps to identify the environmental, social and economic issues that particular planning policies need to address and any links between the issues which are identified through an initial scoping exercise. The sustainability appraisal process involves the evaluation of a range of options for their overall sustainability, and helps to demonstrate what type of planning guidance or policy is the most appropriate given the reasonable alternatives.
23. Emerging planning policies to address the development of new retail and other town centre uses are currently considered against a range of sustainability objectives to assess the overall social, environment and economic performance of the policies. As part of the preparation of the New Southwark Plan, there will be an opportunity to review the sustainability appraisal objectives and indicators which are currently used to appraise draft planning policies. There will also be the opportunity to review current and future baseline information for the Elephant and Castle/Walworth Road town centre and identify the social, economic and environmental issues affecting the area, including retail composition and mix of uses.

Recommendation 4

That Cabinet instructs officers to review the capacity of Walworth trade, cultural and business associations in order to ensure the maximisation of the local offer.

24. The council is committed to bringing investment into our town centres and high streets across the borough so that they are thriving places to visit. This is a key priority set out in the Economic Well-being Strategy which supports the Council Plan and overall vision to achieve a fairer future for all. Much is already underway including the Community Restoration Fund (CRF), which saw investment of £440,340 in support of businesses and business support networks in town centres. The Walworth Road Town team received £100,000 of CRF funding to support local businesses to work with the community. This included activities to promote the work of the business network, direct support for the East Street market traders and the running of local events to increase the number of people coming to the area.
25. The council's budget for 2013/14 included earmarked reserves of up to £1m for a business support fund to be allocated over a period of up to three years which will be used to assist local business (both existing and new) and business networks to develop activities that help sustain and to stimulate local economic growth. The intended outcomes of the business support fund are:
 - more innovative business growth opportunities across the borough;
 - a clear, well defined and common understanding of local business needs, including the barriers to business development and opportunities that exist or may be created;

- business to business support to encourage a stronger business voice and role within the community; and
 - successful town centres and high streets, supported through better engagement between the council and local business networks.
26. A next step is the development of a town centre growth fund of £600,000 (which includes the £100,000 high street innovation fund awarded from government). The initiative will bring additional investment in business-led groups who want to reinvigorate their local high streets. Plans for delivery are currently being developed.
27. Looking also to the future, the council is exploring ways in which it will continue to support the work of business networks like the Walworth Town Team, further investing in business networks to tackle issues associated with economic vitality and build on the sustainability of the town teams. We will work closely with the businesses in Walworth Road to identify how this support can be used to tackle issues specific to the area.

Recommendation 5

That Cabinet ensures that the council, in its capacity as landlord of a number of retail premises in the Walworth Road area, recognises the long term commercial advantages of a healthy retail environment and develops a lettings policy that positively promotes cultural, social and economic regeneration.

28. Although the Council has relatively few retail premises on the Walworth Road itself, a portfolio-wide policy is being brought forward for approval under Independent Decision Making arrangements, which will exclude new uses that are inconsistent with the goals of achieving vibrancy and sustainability in the retail estate. Primarily it recommends prohibiting against new betting shops and payday loan shops. Other uses will be controlled on a more flexible basis, depending on the established tenant mix in a given parade or locality. Once approved a policy statement will be published on this element of the Council's lettings policy. The Corporate Asset Management Plan approved previously by Cabinet sets out the wider letting policy for the commercial portfolio, with which the initiatives now proposed are fully consistent.
29. There are limitations on what may be achieved or enforced under Landlord & Tenant regulations, particularly with regard to existing tenants occupying premises under Business tenancies. Therefore the main areas of intervention proposed are:
- a) determining the uses to which a particular retail unit may be put when it is re-let; and
 - b) ensuring through a regime of periodic estate management inspections that user and other lease clauses, including those to observe statutory requirements, are being satisfactorily complied with.

Recommendation 6

That Cabinet takes steps to identify opportunities for introducing new community facilities into the Walworth Road area, for example a health centre and facilities for youth provision.

30. The adopted planning policy framework for the area encourages the development of new community facilities, with a strategy to locate local facilities together so that the services required by the community including, housing services, services for young people, health centres, police facilities and community space are provided in accessible locations in a way in which different facilities can complement and support each other.
31. A programme of consultation on the cabinet's vision for the Walworth Town Hall, which was seriously damaged by fire in March, has recently commenced. In line with the cabinet's revised approach to community engagement, it is imperative that future plans are supported and informed by what local people want from the new facility. The vision approved by cabinet in July is for a new facility that would include a range of community facilities which would bring life and activity to Walworth Road. These include:
- An enhanced Newington Library space;
 - A space for the display of the Cuming collection and potentially a Southwark museum;
 - A flexible space that could be used for a variety of purposes including community and civic events, exhibitions and performances;
 - Facilities for marriage, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies undertaken by the Southwark registrar's service.
32. The project is in its early phase and there will be opportunity to consider how the building can provide facilities for youth provision as the design evolves.
33. Subsequent detailed phases of the Heygate masterplan also provide an opportunity to consider how community facilities can be further provided in the area. The second phase of the scheme which is centred on the site immediately to the north of the Walworth town hall has the potential to incorporate a new health facility. Council officers are working with the Lend Lease development team to explore this option together with the NHS commissioning team. The detailed application for this site is programmed for submission next summer and there will be public consultation on the proposals in advance of this.

Recommendation 7

That Cabinet considers commissioning external research into:

- (i) The impact of payday loan, pawn and betting shops on the wellbeing of the locale.***
- (ii) The medium and longer term business development in the Walworth Road.***

The results to be available to the Walworth Town Team and the Economic Development Team in order to develop a more comprehensive "view of the whole".

34. The council is currently developing a specification for a vitality, viability and vulnerability study for the Walworth Road. Vitality is a measure of how busy a centre is and viability is a measure of its capacity to attract ongoing investment for maintenance, importance and adaptation to changing needs. An assessment of vulnerability assesses underlying challenges and barriers to growth. The study

will measure a series of indicators to enable the council to better understand the health of the Walworth Road, and offer recommendations for future action.

35. Issues to be considered as part of the study include:

- accessibility: the ease and convenience of means of travel, including the frequency, penetration and quality of public transport services, the quality, quantity, location and type of car parking, and the quality of provision for people with a mobility handicap, pedestrians and cyclists;
- customer views: surveys of customers' views;
- diversity of uses: amount and location of floor space for different uses and how this is changing;
- environment quality of the centre;
- pedestrian flow: the number and movement of people on the streets, in different locations, at different times of the day or evening and over a period of time;
- retailer profile: the existing composition, retailer demand and other potential changes;
- retailers' views: surveys of the views of existing town centre retailers;
- shop rents: pattern of movement in that part of the town centre with the highest rents; and
- vacancy rates: particularly the proportion of vacant street level floor space in primary shopping areas;

Recommendation 8

That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Community Safety monitors reports from local police and Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU) to see whether evidence of anti-social behaviour emerges in relation to betting shops, gambling arcades and fast food outlets on the Walworth Road.

36. The council considers that an integrated local approach to address concerns relating to the operation of particular uses on the high street is vitally important. Therefore the council's existing partnership working relationship with the Metropolitan Police Safer Neighbourhood Teams operating in the area will help to facilitate a wider understanding of the kinds of policing issues associated with a variety of licensed premises, and the nature of complaints relating to anti-social behaviour which may be associated with the operation of these types of uses.

37. Through feedback provided by the police and also the Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, the council can use this information to consider how to best encourage safe and socially responsible practice by betting shops. Broad healthier high street measures such as planning controls, and the facilitation of safe and clean town centres can also enact positive change over time.

Recommendation 9

That a meeting be arranged between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Chair of the Walworth Society, the Chair of Planning Committee and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy in order to discuss ways in which the development of the Elephant & Castle can best enhance the retail offer on the Walworth

Road and improve what needs improving without damaging what is currently good about the area.

38. The council's Regeneration North team will be able to arrange and facilitate a round table meeting. It is suggested that the Cabinet Member for communities and economic wellbeing and the Strategy and Partnerships manager, along with the owners of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre, the owners of 50 New Kent Road and Lend lease are invited to attend the meeting. All three developers are currently in the process of bringing forward schemes incorporating a new retail offer for the area. The council has also started considering whether there is scope for an 'anchor' retail store presence at the southern end of Walworth Road, and what this might look like. It is envisaged that the vitality, viability and vulnerability study for the Walworth Road (see paragraph 33) will help to identify potential opportunities for further exploration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

39. There are no immediate resource implications arising from this report.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

40. The report sets out the responses from the Cabinet members for regeneration and corporate strategy, finance, resources and community safety and communities and economic wellbeing to the nine recommendations contained in the report *'Walworth Road Business Mix: Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (July 2013)* and recommends that the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the responses from the Cabinet members.
41. Recommendations 1, 7 and 8 relate, inter alia, to payday loan, pawn and betting shops and measures which the council can implement to prevent the proliferation of these uses including the use of Article 4 Directions pursuant to the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. There are stringent guidelines on the application of an Article 4 Direction. Circular 9/95 "General Development Order Consolidation 1995" contains Government Guidance which states:
- "Permitted development rights have been endorsed by Parliament and consequently should not be withdrawn locally without compelling reasons. Generally.... permitted development rights should be withdrawn only in exceptional circumstances".*
42. An Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights to reduce the clustering of betting shops and payday loan shops must be supported by a substantive body of local evidence which demonstrates local need and the harmful effects of clustering and informs the development of specific policies to address this issue. There would be a need to carry out extensive public and business consultation in the areas proposed for an Article 4 Direction to limit permitted development rights. Any body of evidence compiled to support an Article 4 Direction which sought to control the proliferation of betting shops would have to be robust and conclusive in terms of any harm resulting as a result of this proliferation or potential challenge from interested parties.

Recommendation 1

43. Recommendation 1 requires Cabinet and Planning Committee to explore the use of Article 4 Directions in Walworth Road. Article 4 Directions restrict permitted development rights and could be used to prevent the change of use to A2 Use (Financial and Professional Services including betting shops) from other use classes without planning permission.
44. The report confirms that two Article 4 Directions were implemented on 17 October 2013 to withdraw the permitted development rights for change of use within the Borough's protected shopping frontages and planning permission will now be required for a change of use to A2 use class. The Council will determine change of use applications in accordance with the Development Plan.
45. It is also recommended that officers consider whether changes to the National Non Domestic Rates will provide the council with more powers to influence the balance of retail use in the high street. It is noted that it is unlikely that the new provisions will have a direct or positive impact on existing high street shops but it is acknowledged that the new business rates scheme may support the Council's wider strategic objectives. It is noted that funds have been allocated to the Walworth Road Town team. Further the Council's budget for 2013/14 earmarks reserves of up to £1m for a business support fund to assist local businesses.
46. Cabinet is recommended to engage with Central London Forward ("CLF") and Westminster City Council to explore cross-London solutions to economic and planning problems affecting the high street. It is noted that the Council is part of Central London Forward and actively works with London Councils to this end.

Recommendation 2

47. Recommendation 2 provides that cabinet seeks to actively encourage the creation of a credit union on Walworth Road which provides an alternative to payday lending through regulated financial services with fixed interest rates on loans. It is noted that the London Mutual Credit Union has no plans to open a branch on the Walworth Road but the council is working with the London Mutual Credit Union to raise its profile in the Borough.

Recommendation 3

48. Recommendation 3 requires cabinet to consider introducing a greater level of detail into the assessment of the existing retail mix as part of sustainability appraisals for new planning policy documents.
49. It is noted that part of the preparation of the New Southwark Plan, there will be opportunity to review the sustainability appraisal objectives and indicators which are currently used to appraise draft planning policies. There will also be the opportunity to review current and future baseline information for the Elephant and Castle/Walworth Road town centre and identify the social, economic and environmental issues affecting the area including retail composition and mix of uses.

Recommendation 4

50. Recommendation 4 requires cabinet to instruct officers to review the capacity of Walworth trade, cultural and business associations in order to ensure the maximisation of the local offer.
51. It is noted that the council is exploring ways to continue to support the work of local business networks and will work closely with businesses in Walworth Road to identify how this support can be used to tackle issues specific to the area.

Recommendation 5

52. It is recommended that cabinet ensures that the council, as landlord of retail premises in the Walworth Road area, recognises the long term commercial advantages of a healthy retail environment and develops a letting policy to positively promote cultural, social and economic regeneration.
53. It is noted that a portfolio-wide policy is being brought forward for approval under Independent Decision Making arrangements which will exclude new uses that are inconsistent with the goals of achieving vibrancy and sustainability in the retail estate.

Recommendation 6

54. Recommendation 6 requires cabinet to identify opportunities for introducing new community facilities into the Walworth Road area.
55. It is noted that the adopted planning policy framework for the area encourages the development of new community facilities. A consultation programme on the cabinet's vision for the Walworth Town Hall has recently commenced which includes a range of community facilities. Further, subsequent detailed phases of the Heygate Masterplan also provide an opportunity to consider how community facilities can be further provided in the area.

Recommendation 7

56. Recommendation 7 requires cabinet to consider commissioning external research into the impact of payday loan, pawn and betting shops on the wellbeing of the locality and the medium and longer term business development in the Walworth Road. It is noted that the council is currently developing a specification for vitality, viability and vulnerability study for the Walworth Road and in addition to the issues to be considered as part of the study which are listed in the report, the impact of payday loan, pawn and betting shops should also be examined.

Recommendation 8

57. It is noted that the council considers that an integrated local approach to address concerns relating to the operation of particular uses on the high street is vitally important. The council is committed to working with the Police and Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit and use the information received to consider how to encourage safe and socially responsible practices by betting shops.

Recommendation 9

58. It is recommended that a meeting is arranged between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chair of the Walworth Society, the Chair of Planning Committee and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Corporate Strategy in order to discuss ways in which the development of the Elephant & Castle can best enhance the retail offer on the Walworth Road.
59. It is noted that the council's Regeneration North team will arrange a round table meeting and that the owners of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, 50 New Kent Road and Lend Lease are invited to attend the meeting.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services

60. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes that there are no immediate resource implications arising from this report. Any additional resources required in the future will need to be financially appraised and their approval will be subject to the council's policies and procedures.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At
Walworth Road Business Mix: report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (July 2013)	
Link http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s40355/Appendix%20A%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Report.pdf	
London Assembly Economy Committee 'Open for Business: Empty shops on London's high streets' (March 2013)	
Link http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/open-business-empty-shops-londons-high-streets	
Southwark's Economic Well-Being Strategy (2012-2020)	
Link http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/3275/economic_wellbeing_strategy	
Streets Ahead: Putting high streets at the heart of local economic growth: London Councils (August 2013)	
Link http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/economicdevelopment/boroughecdev/streetsahead.htm	

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Members	Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy Councillor Richard Livingstone, Finance, Resources and Community Safety Councillor Victoria Mills, Communities and Economic Wellbeing	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Authors	Danny Edwards, Strategy and Partnerships Manager Juliet Seymour, Planning Policy Manager Matthew Jackson, Corporate Assets manager Jon Abbott, Project Director, Regeneration Stephen Gaskell, Head of Strategy and Partnerships Jonathon Toy, Head of Community Safety and Enforcement	
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Dated	29 November 2013	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Members	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		29 November 2013