

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Preliminary draft recommendations – Revitalisation of High Street and Town Centres

Mapping

The Commission recommends the Council maps Southwark's various local economies as part of the implementation of its economic renewal plan, ensuring we develop a comprehensive understanding of how the diversity of the borough is reflected in its economy

Ownership and Landlords

- Building on previous recommendations from this Commission, the Commission recommends that the Council actively explores supporting new community ownership structures. To practically support this, the Commission recommends the Council reviews its existing asset portfolio with a focus on identifying which assets present the strongest case for going into community ownership
- The Commission recommends that the Council explore early involvement with the GLA's nascent Landlords' Charter as a means of getting private developers and landowners to support more community-led activity

Innovation

- The Commission supports the Council's existing efforts to support high streets and town centres, both through its emerging economic renewal plan and existing policies e.g. on encouraging beneficial meanwhile uses of vacant property. The Commission recommends the Council take a more active role in finding creative new uses for the high street, with an explicit focus on place making that creates community wellbeing spaces and a greater health focus for high streets and town centres
- The Commission notes that Southwark Council was one of a small number of councils to receive funding from Arts Council England (ACE) to establish a Creative Compact, but unlike other councils has paused work on its compact during the pandemic. The Commission notes that other councils who have received funding from ACE are continuing to develop their compacts and are using them as vehicles to co-ordinate their recovery from Covid-19. The Commission recommends that the Council ensures that the funding from ACE

has been used effectively and creates a strategic partnership between the borough's cultural and creative industries, education providers and the health sector to drive forward the council's recovery plans

- The Commission notes the immense impact measures related to the pandemic are having on young people and supports the Council's commitment to maximising apprenticeship opportunities and using initiatives like the Southwark Pioneers Fund to support young entrepreneurs

- The Commission recommends that the Council also explores:
 - Creating incubator hubs on high streets to showcase and support new and diverse economic uses such as social enterprises, especially those led by young people and others disproportionately impacted by the pandemic

 - Making future rounds of the High Street Challenge explicitly focused on helping businesses reconfigure and test new innovations in response to shifting trends in high streets and urban centres. This should involve the following:
 - Enabling the borough's high streets to increase their use of digital products and services to reach new customers
 - Improving digital and physical connections and accessibility to high streets and urban centres that enable local businesses to reach new and diverse audiences
 - Ensuring that the borough's high streets are connected to high speed fixed-line or mobile broadband
 - Enable the borough's retail, hospitality and leisure sectors to develop green, low-carbon and low-emission delivery services using electric vehicles or similar
 - Ensuring that the borough's high streets become attractive shopping destinations to encourage local footfall and support active travel – aligned with the council's low-traffic strategies
 - Enabling the establishment of new spaces or animation of existing spaces that improve the local experience and support health, wellbeing and social interaction.