

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 19 November 2021	<b>Decision Taker:</b> Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Town Centres
<b>Report title:</b>		High Street Recovery Fund (Part 2 - further development group)	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director of Strategy and Economy	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Town Centres allocates £25,000 of grant funding from The High Street Recovery Fund to an applicant that received support from the council to develop their application further. The project recommended for award is set out in Appendix 1.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The aim of the High Street Recovery Fund is to support high street renewal and recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, aligned with Southwark's Economic Renewal Plan.
3. The COVID-19 crisis has threatened to exacerbate pre-existing challenges faced by our town centres and high streets. The council has therefore made their protection and revitalisation a priority. As part of this work, it was agreed to rebrand and refocus the previously known High Street Challenge as the High Street Recovery Fund.
4. In its previous form, The High Street Challenge, round one launched in February 2014 followed by another six rounds between September 2014 and September 2018. To date, fifty-six projects have been awarded funding to a total value of £1,062,835.
5. In January 2018, an evaluation of The High Street Challenge was carried out in order to understand its successes and highlight opportunities to improve its impact. This evaluation combined with an assessment of the needs our high streets and town centres in the current economic climate informed the development of this latest iteration of the programme.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. This report deals with the allocation of a grant to one successful project from the High Street Recovery Fund. A total of £25,000 is recommended for award through this IDM report.

7. A previous IDM report “High Street Recovery Fund (Part 1)” dated 10 September 2021 recommended that the Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Town Centres allocated £238,124 of grant funding from The High Street Recovery Fund to fund 11 projects.
8. One additional applicant who also presented particularly strong and innovative ideas was offered officer support to further develop the deliverability of their project ideas, prior to final consideration for funding. That project received detailed feedback, before re-evaluation upon submission of an improved application. That project is now recommended for funding having provided a significantly improved application.
9. Combined with the projects awarded grants without further development and outline in the part 1 IDM report, this will mean a total of 12 projects are being supported via the High Streets Recovery Fund, with grant awards totalling £263,124.
10. Applicants were asked to consider a number of specific key objectives, including:
  - Supporting town centre recovery following the pandemic
  - Producing sustainable benefits to the local economy beyond the funding period
  - Introducing new or creative approaches to improving Southwark’s high streets and town centres
  - Adding to and aligning with existing initiatives in the proposed area
  - Building the capacity of local businesses or groups
  - Making our high streets and town centres more inclusive, particularly for low income and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
  - Benefiting a significant number of local businesses and not disproportionately benefit a few
  - Attracting match funding from other organisations or crowd funding
11. Under these objectives, a set of six broad themes were identified to define the scope of the activities that can be commissioned through the fund. Applicants were advised to ensure that projects align with two or more of these themes - with one of the two being Southwark Stands Together:
  - **Healthy and Safe High Street:** Activities that support the safe reopening of high streets, and make them safe and welcoming places to visit.
  - **Cultural / Community Events:** Activities that will celebrate and acknowledge diversity and the unique identity and heritage of our town centres, help to foster a sense of social cohesion and promote town centres as the heart of our diverse communities.
  - **Vibrant, Resilient and Connected High Streets:** Activities that will support the improvement of digital connectivity in our town

centres, encouraging the development and delivery of connected services for people and businesses.

- **An Inclusive Greener Local Economy:** Activities that will support inclusive, greener economic growth in our town centres and high streets.
- **Sustainable, Accessible Places:** This theme aligns to the council's vision for a 15-minute borough and welcomes projects that aim to make localities more accessible, better connected and sustainable.
- **Southwark Stands Together:** All applicants will be required to demonstrate how their project will incorporate the ambitions of Southwark Stands Together; increasing diversity, reducing inequalities and tackling racism.

12. The successful projects will help to bring people back to our high streets, support local businesses, safeguard jobs and stimulate activity in our town centres. Furthermore, the activities of successful projects will act as a catalyst for economic growth by attracting and leveraging funding from other sources for future activities that will continue to redefine Southwark's high street offer to local residents and visitors.
13. In arriving at the proposed funding allocations, the evaluation panel has taken into consideration the scores achieved against the published criteria, the desire for a spread of projects across the borough's town centres, and an assessment of the likely impact of the project on local economic renewal and growth.

## Consultation

14. A range of internal and external stakeholders were consulted on the purpose and scope of the High Street Recovery Fund, leading to agreement on the themes listed above. Internal stakeholders included Environment, Public Health, Culture, Regeneration and Planning Policy.
15. To ensure we have a consistent, cross-council approach to our overarching town centres and high streets work, including the development of the High Street Recovery Fund, we have worked with officers across the council. Governance arrangements are in place, through which the work is reported to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres.
16. Chaired by the Director for Strategy & Economy, a cross council Senior Officer Group meets on a monthly basis to discuss key issues, monitor activities and oversee the development and implementation of action plans for individual town centres.
17. In addition, we are working with nominated Town Centre Lead Officers in the development of these action plans. The action plans will track current activity, include current challenges and opportunities, as well as noting resourcing implications. Furthermore, the plans are being developed in partnership with ward members and key local stakeholders through local

Task Forces.

18. The evaluation of rounds one to seven of the High Street Challenge carried out in 2018 also captured feedback from funding recipients and council officers across departments, which also informed the development of the High Street Recovery Fund.
19. At the assessment stage, the evaluation panel consulted relevant colleagues such as those responsible for Markets, Highways, Licensing, Culture and Events, Regeneration, and Public Health.

### **Policy implications**

20. The refreshed Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017-22 was adopted in December 2016 having secured council-wide endorsements. Support to businesses is central to two of its strategic objectives:
  - **Business:** A growth borough, where business thrives and prospers.
  - **Thriving town centres and high streets:** Dynamic, diverse, digital centres that are great places to visit, spend time and enjoy.
21. The High Street Recovery Fund will support the delivery of the Economic Wellbeing Strategy through the opportunities presented by the fund to harness the energy of businesses and other imaginative and enterprising people or groups, in order to breathe new life into our town centres and use innovative approaches to stimulate footfall and customer spend.
22. The Southwark Economic Renewal Plan developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and it captured all council activities aimed at reducing and mitigating the economic impacts of the crisis. The activities are set out under four key themes – employment & skills, business, wellbeing, and high streets and town centres. The High Street Recovery Fund falls primarily under the last of the four themes, forming part of a cross-council approach to supporting our town centres and high streets in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, but it was designed in such a way that its outcomes will cut across all the themes of the plan.
23. The High Street Recovery Fund has been designed to support the ambitions of the council's Southwark Stands Together Programme, with Southwark Stands Together included as one of the fund's six key themes and the only theme for which alignment was a mandatory requirement for applicants.
24. In line with the council's emerging Climate Change Strategy, all applications were also required to ensure that their proposal would not have any detrimental impact on the environment.

### **Community impact statement**

25. Community benefits will accrue through the direct outputs of this project

(i.e. increased number of visitors to the high street, increase in customer spend, public spaces created or improved, under used or empty spaces brought back into use, retail spaces improved, young entrepreneurs engaged, match funding secured and new jobs created).

26. Due regard has been paid to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 specifically; to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and those who do not. The principles of the PSED are imbedded in the core objectives of the High Street Recovery Fund, as the programme intends to improve and develop participation from all sections of the community in a manner that will positively impact high streets and town centres. As part of the assessment process, applicants were asked to define how their projects would be inclusive and welcoming to all, linking directly to the council's Southwark Stands Together initiative. When considering the response to this question, the panel scored applicants based on how well their proposed project would engage a diverse local community and business groups, and promote inclusivity.
27. Care has also been taken in development of the prospectus to ensure the accessibility of the fund for Southwark-based businesses, community groups, educational establishments and voluntary sector organisations.
28. As part of the evaluation process, proposals were assessed for their ability to build the capacity of local businesses and residents to support their high street or town centre to thrive beyond the life of the fund. Therefore, it is expected that the projects that have been recommended for funding will have a long-term positive impact in their chosen areas.

### **Financial Implications**

29. The full cost of the funding recommendation for this project will be met by £25,000 High Streets Funding secured as part of the New Homes Bonus. All other costs will be met within existing resources.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

#### **Director of Law and Governance**

30. The cabinet member is empowered to allocate funding from the High Street Recovery Fund under the delegation set out in Part 3D of Southwark's constitution. This delegates budgetary decisions about the agreement of significant programmes to individual cabinet members in relation to their areas of responsibility.
31. The Localism Act 2011 gives councils a general power of competence whereby they have power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This power can be used even if legislation already exists that allows a

local authority to do the same thing. This includes the power to give financial assistance to any person. The allocation of funding under the HSRF is therefore permitted by the 2011 Act.

32. The cabinet member should consider the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The council must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The report author has demonstrated how those duties are relevant to this decision in the community impact statement above. The cabinet member is advised to consider these paragraphs and the council's duties.
33. The decision has been identified as a key decision and can be treated as such on the basis that it has a significant impact on Southwark's communities.

#### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (CE21/051)**

34. This report is requesting the Cabinet Member for Business, Jobs and Town Centres to allocate £25,000 of grant funding from The High Street Recovery Fund to one project from the further development group. The project recommended for award is set out in Appendix 1.
35. The Strategic director of finance and governance notes the financial implications and understands that the cost implications of this report will be funded from High Streets Funding secured as part of the New Homes Bonus.
36. Staffing and any other costs connected with this report will be contained within existing divisional revenue budgets.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
<a href="#">Economic Wellbeing Strategy</a>	Strategy and Partnerships, Local Economy Team, 160 Tooley Street	Patrick Doherty

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	High Street Recovery Fund – Projects recommended for funding from further development group.

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephen Gaskell, Director Of Strategy and Economy	
<b>Report Author</b>	Patrick Doherty, Principal Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	25 October 2021	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	18 November 2021	

**APPENDIX 1**

**High Street Recovery Fund – Projects recommended for funding from further development group**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Value of the grant award rec'd</b>	<b>Area</b>
Brandon 1 Tenants & Residents Association	<i>“We want to improve the Maddock Way shopping parade on the landmark post-war Brandon Estate - develop a weekend farmers market, install plants &amp; street furniture &amp; public art, improve existing retail, increase footfall, and make the parade more functional for residents, by re-engineering the use of space.”</i>	£25,000	Brandon Estate (Walworth)