

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>To:</b>
6	Open	25 February 2022	Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission
<b>Report title:</b>		Revitalising Southwark's Town Centres & High Streets - Update	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		ALL	
<b>From:</b>		Danny Edwards, Head of Economy	

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Commission notes the contents of the report providing an update on the cross council work supporting town centres and high streets.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The report provides an update further to the report to Cabinet dated 19 August 2021 responding to recommendations of the Commission.

### KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

#### Delivery of Town Centre Priorities

3. Town Centres and High Streets are one of the four central themes of Southwark's Economic Renewal Plan. The plan includes a commitment to maximise our efforts towards supporting town centres and high streets, whilst also acknowledging that each town centre has a unique character and may require a more targeted local approach.
4. Aligned to our "Southwark Stands Together" programme, such an approach can highlight the diversity of each town centre and the local communities within them, and ensure that we celebrate and enhance the distinctive identity of each locality.
5. A dedicated cross-council strategic response for Town Centres and High Streets has been developed under the leadership of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres and the Director of Strategy and Economy, in order to facilitate long-term planning while enabling rapid identification and response to short-term issues as they arise.
6. The strategic approach has been designed to enable us to meet our Borough Plan commitment to *"Help Southwark's high streets to be thriving and vibrant, seeking to achieve full occupancy and encourage residents to shop local"*.

The ongoing work is guided by five themes:

- Sustainable, accessible places – A 15-minute borough
- An inclusive, greener local economy
- Vibrant, resilient and connected high streets
- The heart of our communities
- Healthy and safe high streets

### Governance

7. To ensure Cabinet and Senior Officers retain oversight of a consistent, cross-council approach, appropriate governance arrangements have been put in place.
8. A Town Centres Senior Officer Group now meets monthly, including director level representatives from all key departments and chaired by the Director for Strategy and Economy. The group oversees the development and implementation of town centre strategy and decides upon short-term responses to key issues as and when they arise.
9. An activity log is maintained and periodically updated, which tracks current activities in town centres and the log is monitored by the Senior Officer Group.
10. The work of this group is reported to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres.

### Investment through the High Street Recovery Fund

11. Building on the successful High Street Challenge initiative, the High Street Recovery Fund (HSRF) supports high street renewal and recovery, bringing people back to our high streets, supporting local businesses, safeguarding jobs and stimulating activity in our town centres. It seeks to breathe new life into our town centres and use innovative approaches to stimulate footfall and customer spend.
12. The fund provides a mechanism for harnessing the creative energy of enterprising people, businesses and community groups in the borough. This also provides excellent value for money and match funding from other organisations and crowd funding are encouraged.
13. Applications were invited from Southwark-based businesses, community groups, educational establishments and voluntary sector organisations in July 2021. 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; building the capacity of local businesses or groups; and making our high streets and town centres more inclusive.

14. 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 Streets:** 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 are required to demonstrate how their project will incorporate the ambitions of Southwark Stands Together, increasing diversity, reducing inequalities and tackling racism.
15. The evaluation of applications included consultation with officers from across council services to ensure consistency with the cross-council approach taken in our wider town centres and high streets work.
16. Twelve community led projects were successful and have since moved into the delivery phase, supported and monitored by the Local Economy Team, with a total of £263,124 awarded from the fund and additional funds in excess of £120,000 in place through match and crowd funding.
17. Projects receiving investment are spread across the borough and are set to deliver significant and diverse benefits for Southwark communities. Direct beneficial outcomes of the supported projects will include:
- Small businesses in Walworth being supported to develop digital marketing campaigns
  - Coaching for small businesses, a new business newsletter and the development of meanwhile space use in Camberwell

- A series of market events for small black and women-owned businesses within Canada Water
  - A business support hub on Rye Lane in Peckham being created, with an associated community engagement campaign
  - A public space in Borough being reinvigorated
  - A cargo bike pilot being held in East Dulwich
  - 40 small Southwark retail businesses across the borough being supported to develop healthier food offers
  - Cultural events driving footfall and engaging communities in Elephant and Walworth, Bankside and Peckham
  - Markets for small traders and a hub for start-up businesses in Bermondsey being supported
  - Public art, greening and a farmers market being created on the Maddock Way parade on the Brandon Estate
18. Officers from the Local Economy Team are working closely with each project, monitoring and supporting them to ensure successful delivery against the outputs and outcomes.
19. Council officers will continue to monitor for additional opportunities for high street and town centre funding. A recent example being a successful bid for the GLA's "High Street for All" campaign, which will support the creation and development of a business forum in Peckham.

#### GLA's High Street Data Service and Partnership

20. The council has signed up to the GLA's High Street Data Service and Partnership, a hub that brings together important information about the economic and social health of High Streets and Town Centres. We now have access to new, regularly updated data showing footfall and spend, which will inform further development of the town centre action plans, the new economic strategy and town centre policies in the New Southwark Plan.

#### Refreshing Town Centre Planning policies

21. Members have requested a proposal to refresh our town centre policies prioritising Peckham, Camberwell, Walworth, Elephant and Castle and Lordship Lane, considering the impacts of COVID-19, Brexit and the changes to the planning use classes.
22. These issues have affected the wider environment and strategy for town centres, so consideration will be given as to whether planning policies also require adjustment to ensure the continued success of our town centres. Any refreshed policies will support the coordinated approach to town centre recovery and action planning detailed above.

### New Economic Strategy

23. A new economic strategy will replace the Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022. To lay a suitable foundation for this work, a baseline analysis of the Southwark economy has taken place and a consultation process is ongoing.
24. This analysis will map out differences in the local economy across different areas, with implications for future development of town centre strategy.

### Night-time plan

25. Work is also currently underway to develop a dedicated night-time plan. Officers will ensure that consideration is given to how this aligns with action plans for town centres and that town centre task forces/forums have the opportunity to feed into its development.

### Town Centre Action Plans

26. Action plans are being developed for individual town centres and “town centre lead” officers are in place, ensuring clear lines of communication and a single point of contact at the council for ward members and key stakeholders representing community and business interests in each area.
27. Initial focus has centred on Camberwell, East Dulwich, Peckham and Walworth, with the lead officers for these town centres developing action plans to include current challenges, opportunities, resourcing and next steps. The town centre leads are also establishing local “task forces” or town centre forums and providing regular updates to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Business and Town Centres and the cross-council Senior Officer Group.
28. The action plans will be further developed in partnership with ward members and key local stakeholders through the work of the “Task Forces”. This will take account of the five key themes driving the overarching strategic approach to town centres, but in a localised context appropriate for each particular locality.

### **Camberwell Town Centre Action Plan**

29. Development of the Camberwell Action Plan is being led by Matt Derry, Senior Regeneration Manager.
30. Key local stakeholders have been identified, including local residents and businesses, the SE5 Forum, Camberwell Society, local hospitals the Maudsley and Kings, University of the Arts, local landowners and developers, as well as TFL and Network Rail.

31. The draft plan acknowledges Camberwell's strong sense of identity as a historic town centre with a strong artistic heritage and a diverse range of independent shops including a blossoming food and drink scene.
32. An initial meeting with ward members was held in October 2021 to discuss plans for a Camberwell Town Centre Forum to engage residents and businesses on local priorities. The draft action plan and engagement plan were shared with ward members and local stakeholders. The plan will be further developed and progress monitored through ongoing engagement with ward members and the local forum. A meeting of the forum was held on 24.02.22, themed on business rates and available grant funding for businesses.

### **East Dulwich Town Centre Action Plan**

33. Development of the East Dulwich Town Centre Action Plan is being led by John Wade, Head of Traded Services.
34. The East Dulwich Town Centre Action Plan focuses on improving economic viability for businesses on the high streets in East Dulwich, particularly in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has reduced visitor numbers and led to changes to when, how and by whom the high streets are used.
35. The plan sets out that there are two main high streets within East Dulwich, Lordship Lane and Grove Vale, and that each has a range of businesses that not only support the local community but wider in terms of neighbouring postcodes and also regionally.
36. A Town Centre Forum is up and running and meetings have been held including local ward members, residents and businesses.

### **Peckham Town Centre Action Plan**

37. Development of the Peckham Town Centre Action Plan is led by Neil Kirby, Head of Regeneration South.
38. The Peckham Town Centre Action Plan notes that the area's unique character is defined by it being a centre of huge cultural diversity. The plan highlights that Peckham town centre benefits from good rail and bus access to central, south and east London, but acknowledges that the area faces challenges as we recover and move forward from the pandemic.
39. There are also some significant opportunities such as the redevelopment of the Aylesham Centre and the recent relocation of larger organisations such as Mountview wanting to play their part in the local community. The work to develop an inclusive business forum for Peckham has begun with GLA funding in place and local organisation "Tree Shepherd" commissioned to lead the first phase of the work.

40. A town centre task force is in development with current planning for the next meeting to focus on environmental issues.

### **Walworth Town Centre Action Plan**

41. Development of the Walworth Town Centre Action Plan is led by Jon Abbott, Head of Regeneration North.
42. The action plan acknowledges that Walworth has a strong history and identity, and various partners who are willing to work with the council in order to enhance further the area's true potential.
43. The plan notes that Walworth High Street has the potential to be a model 15 minute city project with a large residential catchment area, which can potentially be accessed by foot or bike. The growing local catchment area also brings potential commercial opportunities for the local businesses community and an organic process to develop a local traders association has started with the much longer-term goal of developing a Business Improvement District (BID) for the area.
44. Progress with the nascent business forum for Walworth has been slowed by COVID-19, but is now expected to pick up. Delancey and other local partners are facilitating. Plans for a local task force are also in development.

### **Policy framework implications**

#### Economic Renewal Plan

45. The Economic Renewal Plan sets out our priorities for renewing our local economy.
46. The plan captures cross-council activities aimed at reducing and mitigating the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting future inclusive economic growth in the face of these new economic challenges. It aligns with the council's wider recovery and renewal planning, links into our Southwark Stands Together commitments, and takes into account the inevitable economic impact of the pandemic on the council itself.

#### Southwark Stands Together

47. The town centres work acknowledges that each town centre has a unique identity and diverse communities within it, and may require a more targeted and distinct neighbourhood level approach. It supports inclusive growth in the face of new economic challenges and aligns with our Southwark Stands Together commitments.

#### Economic Wellbeing Strategy

48. In December 2016, Cabinet approved a refresh of the council's Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2017 to 2022, which reinforced our commitment to supporting local people into employment and apprenticeships, improving skills through access to work related training, and promoting financial wellbeing and independence. The refresh outlined our strategy to build a strong local economy for all, working in partnership with residents, businesses and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

49. The strategy promotes and encourages economic wellbeing by seeking to make Southwark a place where businesses thrive and prosper, a place with thriving town centres, as well as dynamic digital centres that are great to visit and can be enjoyed by everyone.

### Resource implications

50. There are no immediate resource implications identified as part of this report.

### Consultation

51. The cross-council approach to town centres and high streets ensures a coordinated and joined up approach. The governance framework outlined above ensures consultation across all key departments.
52. In addition, the creation of town centres task forces will ensure engagement with ward councilors, local businesses, residents and other key stakeholders, as well as relevant officers and members with a view to identify key opportunities and challenges in each of the priority town centres and develop action plans for implementation.

### SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

#### Director of Law and Governance

53. N/A

#### Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

54. N/A

### APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	N/A

### AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Danny Edwards, Head of Economy	
<b>Report Author</b>	Patrick Doherty, Principal Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	1	
<b>Dated</b>	25.02.22	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<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	N/A	N/A

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	N/A	N/A
List other officers here		
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	
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