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| <b>Item No.</b>                    | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>20 September 2023   | <b>Decsion Taker:</b><br>Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Thriving High Streets Fund (Part 2) |   |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | All                                 |   |
| <b>From:</b>                       |                                | Head of Local Economy               |   |

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business agrees to the award of £109,449 of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund. The projects recommended for award are set out in Appendix 1.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. Our Council Delivery Plan (CDP) 2022-2026, sets out an intention to “launch a new Thriving High Streets Fund to invest in all of Southwark’s high streets” as part of our goal to create a thriving and inclusive economy. In line with this commitment Cabinet approved proposals to set up a Thriving High Streets Fund (THSF) in December 2022, funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Communities and Place allocation. Round 1 of the THSF launched in April 2023, inviting proposals from community groups and businesses for projects that could deliver real, tangible benefits for the borough’s economic centres. Successful projects would be awarded grant funding to deliver their proposals.
3. Delivery of the THSF also supports other themes and commitments within our CDP, including:

*Transforming our borough*

- Deliver thriving and sustainable neighbourhoods;
- Investment in your town centre and high streets.

*A thriving & inclusive economy*

- Make Southwark a Right to Food Borough, working with local businesses, community groups and schools to ensure everyone in Southwark has access to healthy, affordable food within a short walk of their home;
- Encouraging the expansion of street markets across Southwark;
- Providing extra support for entrepreneurs who are underrepresented in business, including women, Black, Asian, minority ethnic and disabled people.

*A healthy environment*

- Create safe, healthy, green streets.

4. Through our emerging Economic Strategy 2023-30, we want to “encourage community participation in the stewardship of local high streets”. The THSF contributes significantly to this aspiration, by encouraging all sections of our community to play a part in shaping and improving our town centres and high streets. The Economic Strategy also recognises the many global and societal challenges that can affect businesses and places at a local level – including climate change, poor wellbeing and isolation of certain communities, and discrimination. The THSF is a means to support town centres and high streets to tackle some of these issues, by funding projects that focus on two or more of the themes outlined in paragraph 10.
5. As part of Southwark 2030, the council has undertaken a series of conversations with the intention of understanding the hopes and ambitions our community have for their area. Alongside Southwark 2030, the newly launched Neighbourhoods Programme is seeking to translate and deliver a number of CDP commitments that build on our communities’ existing relationship with their local areas. Both Southwark 2030 and the Neighbourhoods Programme recognise the valuable and intrinsic relationship between community participation, inclusive local economies, and thriving places – the THSF seeks to bolster this relationship by directly supporting projects the community have developed to improve town centres and high streets in the borough.
6. As well as the strategic goals that the THSF supports, the Fund comes at a time when many businesses are experiencing challenging circumstances due to the cost of living crisis and the legacy of the Covid pandemic. Our two previous high street support programmes (The High Street Challenge Rounds 1-7, and the High Street Recovery Fund) demonstrate how impactful these types of programmes can be (see High Street Challenge Evaluation 2018) for town centres facing an array of challenges.
7. In July 2023 six projects were approved for funding through Round 1 (Part 1) of the THSF, and a further eight projects were invited to participate in the “further development group (FDG)”. Applicants invited to the FDG were offered feedback from the evaluation panel and asked to resubmit their proposals for a second assessment. Appendix 1 outlines those applicants that are being recommended for funding through Round 1 (Part 2) of the THSF.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

8. Five projects from the FDG are being recommended for funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund, further details of which are included in Appendix 1. The total funding recommendation for these projects is £109,449.
9. Applicants were asked to consider a number of specific key objectives, including:
  - Supporting town centre recovery and helping it to thrive following economic challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, and the cost of living crisis
  - 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
  - Requiring no further funding or resources, including staff time, from the Council beyond the initial offer of grant funding
  - Attracting match funding from other organisations or crowd funding
  - Having no negative impact on the environment
10. Under these objectives, a set of four 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:
- **A Greener Southwark:** Activities that support our work to tackle the climate emergency, achieve net zero in the borough and promote environmental sustainability, such as reducing carbon emissions or pollution, waste reduction and greening.
  - **Cost of Living Crisis:** Activities that support our aim for a fairer, more inclusive local economy, reducing the impact of the cost of living crisis on businesses, residents and visitors to our high streets. For example assisting businesses in lowering energy costs, growing and selling reduced price fresh produce and supporting alternative community uses of existing spaces on our high streets.
  - **Healthy and Safe High Streets:** Activities that target health inequalities including, but not limited to, working to abolish food deserts in the borough, increasing access to health promoting goods and services, and creating green recreational spaces, or those supporting safety measures combatting violence against women and girls (VAWG) amongst others.
  - **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.
11. The successful projects will help to bring people 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.
12. 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.

## **Policy implications**

13. The THSF has emerged directly from the Council Plan Delivery (CDP) commitment to “launch a new Thriving High Streets Fund to invest in all of Southwark’s high streets” as part of our goal to create a thriving and inclusive economy in Southwark. The programme also supports other CDP commitments that intend to create healthy, green and inclusive town centres and neighbourhoods.
14. The emerging Economic Strategy 2023-2027 notes the following objectives:
  - Support high streets in the CAZ and across the borough to adapt and respond to shifting footfall patterns.
  - Support the recovery of the hospitality, night-time and cultural economy while also recognising and addressing health and community safety concerns.
  - Protect the role of high streets and town centres as providers of essential goods and services to communities.
  - Encourage community participation in the stewardship of local high streets.
  - Encourage businesses participation in good practice such as the Women’s Night Safety Charter and activities that improve the health and wellbeing of their workforce and communities they serve.
15. The THSF supports the delivery of the emerging Economic Strategy 2023-2027 by harnessing the energy of businesses and other imaginative and enterprising people or groups to breathe new life into our town centres and use innovative approaches to stimulate footfall and customer spend and overcome challenges including the climate crisis and safety concerns.
16. The programme also supports a range of cross cutting council programmes, such as Southwark 2030 and the Neighbourhoods Programme, both of which are exploring how the Council can work more closely with the community and residents to improve their influence and stake in their local areas. The council’s mission to create more healthy high streets is also supported by THSF, as the fund encourages projects that promote health equality.
17. The THSF 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 four key themes and the only theme for which alignment was a mandatory requirement for applicants.

## **Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts**

18. Community and socio-economic 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).
19. 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 THSF, 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.

20. Southwark Stands Together was included as one of the fund's four key themes and the only theme for which alignment was a mandatory requirement for applicants. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. Health and Safe High Streets was one of the four themes that proposals were asked to address. The Fund sought proposals that alleviate health inequalities through their activity.

### **Climate change implications**

24. In line with the council's Climate Change Strategy, all applications were also required to ensure that their proposal would not have any detrimental impact on the environment.

### **Resource Implications**

25. In July 2023, £135,235 was awarded to projects through Round 1 of the THSF. The recommendation to award a further £109,449 to projects in the further development group (FDG) would bring the total awarded through Round 1 to £244,684.
26. The full cost of the funding recommendation for this project will be met by £460,000 funding secured as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding, Communities and Place allocation. All other costs will be met within existing resources.

## **Consultation**

27. A range of internal stakeholders were consulted on the purpose and scope of the THSF, leading to agreement on the themes listed above. Internal stakeholders included Environment, Public Health, Culture, and Sustainable Growth.
28. To ensure we have a consistent, cross-council approach to our overarching town centres and high streets work, including the development of the THSF, we have worked with officers across the council who work directly on town centres. Governance arrangements are in place, through which the work is reported to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business.
29. Chaired by the Head of Economy, a cross council Senior Officer Group meets regularly to discuss key issues, monitor activities and oversee the development and implementation of action plans for individual town centres. The Group has been kept abreast of the THSF and their feedback and comments on the programme were sought.
30. 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 and subsequently the Thriving High Streets Fund.
31. At the assessment stage, the evaluation panel consulted relevant colleagues responsible for Markets, Culture and Events, Environment, Public Health, and Town Centre Leads.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)**

32. This report seeks approval of a further allocation of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund totalling £109,449, which is an Executive decision. Part 3D of the council Constitution reserves the approval of grants to voluntary organisations over £2500 to the relevant Cabinet Member.
33. The establishment of this fund and policy is consistent with the powers of general competence set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
34. The Cabinet Member will need to ensure that the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is considered, namely to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people with protected characteristics and others. Reference is made to this in the “Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts” section above with specific information about how the process has included consideration of equalities implications.

35. All of the funded recipients will be regulated by grant agreements with the council which will set out the respective responsibilities and obligations in relation to the making of the grant.
36. This is a key decision as it likely to be significant in terms of the impact on communities and specifically in more than one wards.

**Strategic Director of Finance (SC23/031)**

37. The report is requesting Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business to agree of £109,449 of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund. The projects recommended for award are set out in Appendix 1.
38. The strategic director of finance notes that this allocation will be funded from Southwark's allocation of £460,000 funding secured from GLA's UK Shared Prosperity Funding, through the Community & Place theme and notes details of the total award of grant and remaining grant, as detailed in financial implications.
39. Staffing and any other costs to be funded from departmental revenue budgets

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

| <b>Background Papers</b>  | <b>Held At</b>   | <b>Contact</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Council Delivery Plan</p> <p><a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/fairer-greener-safer-southwark-s-council-delivery-plan">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/fairer-greener-safer-southwark-s-council-delivery-plan</a></p> | <p>Strategy and Communities,<br/>Southwark Council,<br/>160 Tooley Street</p>  | <p><a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a></p> |
| <p>The Thriving High Streets Fund (Cabinet Report)</p> <p><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=65213">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=65213</a></p>   | <p>Local Economy Team,<br/>Southwark Council,<br/>160 Tooley Street</p>        | <p><a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a></p> |
| <p>Thriving High Streets Prospectus – Round 1</p> <p><a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/176737/SouthwarkThrivingHighStreetsFundingProspectus2023.pdf">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/assets/attach/176737/SouthwarkThrivingHighStreetsFundingProspectus2023.pdf</a></p>            | <p>Local Economy Team,<br/>Southwark Council,<br/>160 Tooley Street</p>        | <p><a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a></p> |
| <p>Developing Southwark’s new Borough Plan</p> <p><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s107962/Report%20Developing%20the%20Borough%20Plan.pdf">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s107962/Report%20Developing%20the%20Borough%20Plan.pdf</a></p>                       | <p>Strategy and Communities,<br/>Southwark Council,<br/>160 Tooley Street.</p> | <p><a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a></p> |
| <p>Thriving High Streets Fund grant awards (Round 1) approval</p> <p><a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7909">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7909</a></p>  | <p>Local Economy Team,<br/>Southwark Council,<br/>160 Tooley Street</p>        | <p><a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a></p> |



## **APPENDICES**

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Title</b>   |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Thriving High Streets Fund – Further development group projects recommended for funding. |

## **AUDIT TRAIL**

|   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Lead Officer</b>   | Danny Edwards, Head of Local Economy   |                          |
| <b>Report Author</b>  | Nazmin Yeahia, Senior Strategy Officer |                          |
| <b>Version</b>  | Final                                  |                          |
| <b>Dated</b>  | 20.09.23                               |                          |
| <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> |
| Assistant Chief Executive (Governance and Assurance)                    | Yes                                    | Yes                      |
| Strategic Director of Finance   | Yes                                    | Yes                      |
| <b>Cabinet Member</b>   | Yes                                    | Yes                      |
| <b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>                    | 20/09/2023                             |                          |