

<b>Decision Taker:</b>	Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business
<b>Date:</b>	14 May 2024
<b>Report title:</b>	Thriving High Streets Fund grant awards (Round 2) approval
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>	All
<b>Classification:</b>	Open
<b>Reason for lateness (if applicable):</b>	Not applicable
<b>From:</b>	Head of Economy

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business agrees to the award of £240,019 of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund. The ten projects recommended for award are set out in Appendix 1.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Our Council Delivery Plan (CDP) 2022-2026 set out the 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 the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
3. Round 1 of the THSF launched in April 2023 and funded eleven projects at a total of £244,684 (see background papers). Some of these projects have now completed successfully while others continue to be delivered.
4. Round 2 of the THSF launched in February 2024, which, following feedback, saw the inclusion of an Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, used to determine eligibility at an earlier juncture. The inclusion of the EOI was successful, as nine non-eligible applications were identified at this initial stage – saving time for both applicants and the panel.
5. 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.

6. Through our Economic Strategy 2023-30, we want to “Support high streets across the borough to adapt and respond to shifting footfall patterns through our ongoing programme of investment and initiatives such as the Thriving High Streets Fund”. 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 12.
7. 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.
8. 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.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

9. Ten projects 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 £240,019
10. 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

11. Under these objectives, a set of five 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.
- **Cultural/Community Events:** Activities that celebrate and acknowledge the diversity and heritage of our town centres and help to foster a sense of social cohesion

12. 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.

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. Specifically, a four-person panel of officers scored all of the applications on a scale of 1-5 (5 being highest), against the following five criteria:
- how the project aligns with the themes of the THSF,
  - project viability,
  - value for money,
  - demonstration of need/demand,
  - diversity/inclusivity.

### **Policy framework implications**

14. 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.
15. The Economic Strategy 2023-2030 notes the following objectives:
- Protect employment space and attract new businesses investment into our town centres and high streets.
  - Use our planning powers and role as a landlord to protect the role of markets, high streets and town centres as providers of essential goods and services to our communities and to shape healthier high streets.
  - Support high streets across the borough to adapt and respond to shifting footfall patterns through our ongoing programme of investment and initiatives such as the Thriving High Streets Fund.
  - Put local communities and businesses at the heart of town centre improvements by co-creating individual town centre action plans.
  - Support the recovery of the hospitality, night-time and cultural economy while also recognising and addressing health and community safety concerns.
  - Promote safer high streets and encourage businesses to sign up to good practice such as the Women's Night Safety Charter.
  - Encourage businesses to switch to zero-pollution delivery vehicles, especially in town centres with poor air quality.
16. The THSF supports the delivery of the Economic Strategy 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.
17. 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.

18. 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 five key themes and the only theme for which alignment was a mandatory requirement for applicants.

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

### **Community impact statement**

### **Equalities (including socio-economic) impact statement**

### **Health impact statement**

19. 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, female/black entrepreneurs engaged, match funding secured and potentially new jobs created).
20. 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.
21. Southwark Stands Together was included as one of the fund's five 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.
22. 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.
23. 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.

24. Healthy and Safe High Streets was one of the five themes that proposals were asked to address. The Fund sought proposals that alleviate health inequalities through their activity.

#### **Further guidance**

25. Not applicable.

#### **Climate change implications**

26. 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**

27. The vast majority of the funding recommendation for this project will be met by £460,878 funding secured as part of the UKSPF.
28. A total of £244,684 was awarded in Round 1 (see background papers) and design and communications costs for THSF total £1,175. The recommendations in this report are £240,019, making a final THSF total of £485,878. This is £25k above the UKSPF funds and this additional amount will be met from LET reserves.
29. All other costs will be met within existing resources.

#### **Note: Legal/Financial implications**

30. See Resource implications.

#### **Consultation**

31. A range of internal 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.
32. 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. Governance arrangements are in place, through which the work is reported to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business.
33. 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.

34. 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.
35. 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**

### **Head of Procurement**

36. Not applicable.

### **Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and Assurance (Ref Con/CD/20240502)**

37. This report seeks the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business to the award of £240,019 of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund to the ten projects highlighted in Appendix 1 of this report. The establishment of the fund and processes for making grants were the subject of a Cabinet report at its meeting on 6 December 2022. This decision made it clear that the Cabinet member would then make decisions about proposed awards. Part 3D of the council's constitution reserves to individual cabinet members the approval of grants to voluntary organisations over £2,500.
38. The council has the statutory authority to establish this fund and policy in accordance with the powers of general competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.
39. The Cabinet member will need to ensure that the public sector equality duty in section 149 Equality Act 2010 is considered i.e. 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. In this regard, the cabinet member is specifically referred to the "Community, equalities (including socio-economic) and health impacts" section above which sets out consideration that has been given when approving the recommendation in this report.
40. All successful applicants will need to enter into grant agreements with the council which will set out the respective responsibilities and obligations in relation to the making of the grant.
41. 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, Finance (FIN24/11)

42. The report is requesting Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business to agree of £240,019 of grant funding from the Thriving High Streets Fund. The projects recommended for award are set out in Appendix 1.
43. 38. The strategic director of finance notes that vast majority of the funding recommendation for this project (i.e. £215,019) will be met by £460,878 funding secured as part of the UKSPF and remaining allocation of £25,000 will be funded from LET reserves, as detailed in financial implications.

Staffing and any other costs to be funded from departmental revenue budgets.

### Other officers

44. Not applicable.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Council Delivery Plan <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>	Strategy and Communities, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>
The Thriving High Streets Fund (Cabinet Report) <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=65213">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=65213</a>	Local Economy Team, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Thriving High Streets Fund – Round 1 (Part 1) <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7909">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7909</a>	Local Economy Team, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Thriving High Streets Fund Round 1 (Part 2) <a href="https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7945">https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7945</a>	Local Economy Team, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>



Thriving High Streets Prospectus – Round 2 <a href="https://www.southwark.gov.uk/business/support-for-high-streets?chapter=2">https://www.southwark.gov.uk/business/support-for-high-streets?chapter=2</a>	Local Economy Team, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>
Developing Southwark’s new Borough Plan <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>	Local Economy Team, Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	<a href="mailto:localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk">localeconomy@southwark.gov.uk</a>

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Thriving High Streets Fund Round 2 – Projects recommended for funding.

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephen Platts, Director of Planning & Growth	
<b>Report Author</b>	Ope Aromona, Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	13 May 2024	
<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, Finance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here	N/A	N/A
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	13 May 2024	

## Appendix 1 – Thriving High Streets Fund – Projects recommended for funding

Project	Summary	Award	Location
<b>Alexandre Rose Charity</b>	<i>£20,000 in Rose Vouchers, supporting approximately 80 families over six months. £5,000 towards project costs, e.g. staff to support community partners and local businesses.</i>	£25,000	Peckham, Elephant Castle/Walworth and Borough
<b>Balamii</b>	<i>“The "Balamii: Local Works Project" aims to revitalise Peckham's high streets by fostering a vibrant, inclusive community space through cultural and economic rejuvenation.” Specifically, the project seeks to increase footfall and promote local businesses via a series of live music events showcasing local talent.</i>	£23,600	Peckham
<b>Big Local Works</b>	<i>Support for a minimum of 24 entrepreneurs and start-up businesses at the Blue Market including advantageous 'Market Trading' support and an active and immersive 'Business Skills' Training programme.</i>	£25,000	Bermondsey
<b>East St Community</b>	<i>To revitalise East Street Market to create a welcoming and inclusive environment that attracts increased footfall and trade. By promoting cultural events, empowering traders' self-governance, customer service and understanding of equality and diversity.</i>	£24,529	Walworth
<b>Elephant and Castle Business Forum</b>	<i>Building on the successes for local businesses from the last 2 years of the Urban Elephant Festival.</i>	£24,980	Elephant and Castle
<b>In Good Company</b>	<i>Tech-for-good company dedicated to driving growth for small, ethical, and sustainable 'good' businesses within hospitality, retail, and entertainment. We define good businesses as those driven by purpose and delivering positive impact for people, planet and local communities.</i>	£24,900	Bermondsey, Elephant and Castle, Peckham
<b>London College of Communication</b>	<i>A digital skills programme which has been co-designed with local businesses to provide SMEs in Elephant &amp; Castle/Walworth with access to no-cost expert digital support.</i>	£24,637.84	Elephant & Castle and Walworth
<b>Lost Text Found Space</b>	<i>Peckham-based theatre company focused on making immersive, site-specific performances and community projects in re-discovered spaces.</i>	£17,372	Peckham
<b>Peckham Business Forum</b>	<i>Ongoing development of the Peckham Business Forum (PBF) as it transitions to become self-sustaining.</i>	£25,000	Peckham

<b>Tree Shepherd</b>	<i>The project aims to support BAME and women-owned businesses in Southwark by providing comprehensive training, mentoring, and mental health support.</i>	£25,000	Borough wide (focus on Camberwell and Canada Water)
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