

APPENDIX 1

THE SOUTHWARK ECONOMIC WELLBEING STRATEGY 2012-20: WHAT THE COUNCIL WILL DO

Through this strategy we will work with partners to achieve the following ambitions:

- 1. Employment – narrowing the gap with the London employment rate**
- 2. Southwark – the place of choice to start and grow a business**
- 3. Thriving town centres and high streets**
- 4. Promoting financial wellbeing and independence**

1. Employment - narrowing the gap with the London employment rate

Despite the recession, London's labour market continues to generate a wealth of opportunities both at entry level and for more highly skilled applicants. But meanwhile, the employment rate in Southwark (66.4%) lags behind the rate for London as a whole (68.0%). We therefore aim to make better use of London's opportunities, and close this gap by supporting Southwark residents into work and off benefits, enabling people to stay in jobs and progress beyond entry level low-paid work. We remain committed to making support into employment inclusive.

This means in practice making our influence felt over the local provision of mainstream national employment services, working to secure the best possible support from national and local agencies supporting employment and welfare reform. This includes working with Jobcentre Plus, DWP and the Work Programme to ensure coherent support for people who are furthest from getting a job and getting the best from whatever resources are available to the Council.

We must also make the most of opportunities brought by development. The imminent opening of the Shard, the continued developments in Blackfriars and our own schemes at the Elephant & Castle for example bring a wealth of opportunities. We will maximise jobs and training opportunities from this growth, during construction and in the completed developments.

Young people are suffering disproportionately the effects of the recession; 18-24 year olds are more likely to struggle to find work than older, more experienced workers. It is critical that every young person is job-ready when they leave education or training and enter the labour market. Research demonstrates that widening horizons of young people through experience of work and engagement with employers has a powerful impact on their confidence, motivation and understanding of work and thus their employability. Employers report that many young people have little understanding of the reality of work and lack not only vocational or technical skills but also the necessary life skills sought in the jobs market. We will broker better conversations and foster relationships between employers and academies, schools and colleges about how to get young people ready for work.

We will also work to ensure better co-ordination of the many different efforts to help young people into work, increasing engagement with employers and skills providers and promoting a better understanding of how study and training leads to jobs. We will also respond to the changing nature of the economy and young people's increasing interest in self-employment and starting up their own business.

Our ambition is that:

- every young person will leave school or training ready for work and more aware of how to start and develop a business
- regeneration and development provide lasting jobs for residents in both construction and related industries and end-use job in developments, through training and skills programmes funded by section 106 contributions and CIL
- residents are supported into work through other council and externally funded programmes (e.g. Connexions, Southwark Works, DWP - Troubled Families)
- mainstream employment services (Jobcentreplus and the Work Programme) work effectively for Southwark residents
- we increase and improve employer engagement, making sure residents receive training relevant to the jobs market and to employer needs
- local skills provision and training is of the highest quality and backed by a local college of choice with strong employer and community links

To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- help residents find the right advice, support and skills to overcome barriers to work – ensuring the right access points and progressive pathways, which continue through age 19 and beyond
- get more employers engaged, helping more young people with work experience, tasters and getting the softer skills essential for the workplace, and mentoring towards careers and business ambitions
- promote and support opportunities for work-based learning, specifically working with schools, academies and colleges
- make the best use of apprenticeships and promote high standards of training for apprentices
- develop progression routes to skilled jobs, working with end-users in developments and regeneration schemes
- establish leadership, influence and support to drive improvement in standards of vocational learning & relevance to the jobs market, making skills provision more likely to have a job at the end of it
- get the best service for our residents from national/regional provision, working specifically with Jobcentreplus and the work programme
- work with our regional partners to improve dialogue with employers and access to jobs London-wide
- where we provide or commission services directly, we will ensure they are of the highest quality and relevant to the employment market and the needs of future entrepreneurs

2. Southwark – the place of choice to start and grow a business

Southwark is part of central London location, covering both the Central Activity Zone and a large slice of its hinterland. Our proximity to the huge markets of the West End and the City combine with our own strong cultural sector, unique attractions and iconic developments to make this a highly visible and desirable location for business. In addition, our own developments and regeneration stimulate growth and help businesses to spread and bring opportunity and regeneration away from the CAZ. And yet other businesses already have strong local roots here, providing services to these well established markets and local markets. For all, the Council has a significant influence over conditions for business - in start-ups, growth, day-to-day running and resilience. Land use policy, community engagement, “cleaner, greener, safer” services, enforcement and licensing can all remove barriers to business growth and help nurture the supply of local jobs. To understand how this works best, we need to engage with businesses effectively, be more pro-active in identifying business needs and more business-like in our dealings with them.

Land for business is a scarce resource, and often hard-pressed with proposals for alternative or additional uses (such as residential development). We need to protect land for business and maintain the right balance of business uses in our town centres, maintaining a vision for the mix of homes and employment, commercial and leisure opportunities. At the same time, much of our existing employment land is under-used and not sufficiently well-managed or attractive to start-ups or growing businesses. There are already successful schemes in Southwark, such as the opening up of railway arches at Spa Terminus and Maltby Street to encourage the spread of food producers. We need to tap this potential further, and make sure we have the right policies to optimise land use and use our influence to open up well-designed, well located and affordable business space, and to make sure our own regeneration schemes deliver the right mix of business and employment uses to provide jobs for local people.

The council itself can play an active role in business success. Our services and powers can be used to remove barriers to starting up and growing. The introduction of business rates retention will give businesses another reason to reflect on how the council responds to demands for better business services. And the way in which we invest and procure services means we have the potential to open up contract opportunities to local suppliers and corresponding local job opportunities.

Our ambition is that:

- business needs are better understood across the council and our services are more accessible
- council decision-making takes full account of business needs, interests and opportunities
- better quality, more flexible, better managed and affordable business space is available, for start-ups and businesses that are ready to grow
- more jobs and business growth opportunities are brought by regeneration, development and better use of employment land.

To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- put in place a programme of work across council departments in contact with businesses to foster mutual understanding and ensure that we deal fairly and appropriately with the sometimes conflicting requirements of different individual businesses and between businesses and communities
- consider the impact on and opportunities for business in council decision-making, investment and procurement, balancing the needs of differing businesses, their customers, local communities and residents more widely
- ensure regulation and enforcement keeps consumers, employees and the public safe, and enables businesses to enhance their competitive edge through best practice and reputation
- take a balanced view on the many different land use needs, including establishing expectations and principles for the amount, design, size, location and affordability of commercial space in new developments and regeneration schemes
- develop policy for better use, management and improvement of employment land, industrial locations and our own commercial property

3. Thriving town centres and high streets

Successful town centres depend on a huge range of components, and the Council and partners can do much to help, from markets and street scene management, parking, lettings policies, community safety, measures to reduce blight caused by closed shops all the way through to its own regeneration schemes such as Peckham Rye station. Our regeneration programmes do much to bring people into town centres and keep them there, including providing new commercial premises and attractive places to live and stimulating demand for more and better goods and services. We can also do much to promote a mix of activities and encourage particular types of town centre uses.

We also understand that town centres not only function as a commercial arena, but add hugely to the wider dimensions of community life and participation. Businesses have much to contribute, both in the routine operation of their business but also in the wider role they often play, giving of their time, knowledge and even cash to transform their community. To this end, we want to harness the energy of businesses and other imaginative and enterprising people in order to breathe new life and ideas into town centres, supported by strong relationships with businesses as both community stakeholders and employers.

Our ambition is that:

- self sustaining local business networks flourish, engaging with their local communities for mutual benefit and providing a voice for local businesses
- better engagement between the Council and businesses leads to improved service delivery to underpin high street and town centre success
- businesses are enabled to play a greater role in community life – investing in public realm, involved with schools, supporting and partnering with the voluntary and community sector
- high streets benefit from fewer empty shops and a greater mix of uses, with more visitors for shopping and leisure

To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- help businesses to develop their own networks and establish a voice in localities (through delivering Community Restoration Fund in Camberwell, Peckham, Walworth, Bermondsey, Rotherhithe)
- get the right mix of uses in our own development sites
- ensure full consideration of the differing needs for and expectations of Council services experienced by businesses, their customers, local communities and residents
- increase engagement between cabinet members and businesses at a local level in order to increase business participation in community engagement and representation
- use our own property to influence opportunities for business through regeneration (and helping to match available space with need)

4. Promoting financial wellbeing and independence

Many individuals and families in Southwark face particular challenges; welfare reforms and the ongoing recession are causing extreme difficulties for some. The challenges are often multifaceted, and can include health issues and gaps in employment history or limited exposure to the world of work, homelessness, and managing incomes and keeping out of debt.

Supporting individuals to understand and manage the impacts of welfare reform, to be more self-aware about the complex issues in their lives and the potential ways out, and to be free of debt are crucial first steps into sustainable employment. Signposting to advice and services on work readiness, new skills and accessing support programmes will be required, and for many, employment will be the main practical way of achieving financial wellbeing and independence. All of this, alongside additional financial advice and support will need to be aligned with other programmes for troubled families and the current commissioning of services to help with effective budgeting, household income management and debt reduction. We will also need to consider how we work with the main providers of advice in other agencies and the voluntary sector to greatest effect.

In response to the government's welfare reforms and the benefits cap, we will promote resilience and independence for families and vulnerable individuals who need help the most.

Our ambition is that:

- support for people with the most complex needs is improved, getting people to the point of readiness to access other services (including employment support)
- families in challenging circumstances and vulnerable residents are independently able to manage their money better
- credit unions and their services are more widely used, at the same time seeing a reduction in dependence on payday loans
- financial inclusion and debt advice services are more accessible and more widely used (including products to help low income households to manage their finances).

To achieve this, we will work with partners to:

- monitor the impact of welfare reforms in order to make sure we target the right people with the right support
- mitigate the impact on claimants facing a reduction in benefit with a programme of benefit maximisation undertaken via the Council's Rightfully Yours service
- ensure that staff employed by Council contractors and sub-contractors are paid no less than the London Living Wage and promote the LLW amongst other employers in the borough where possible
- promote financial inclusion and responsibility through provision of advice on budgeting, arrears and employment
- provide early advice and guidance to enable individuals and families to move forwards into training and employment support, and make sure options are clearly communicated and well signposted
- transform advice services for individuals and families with complex needs
- help the voluntary & community sector develop effective models for delivering support