

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 25 March 2014	Decision Taker: Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Wellbeing
Report title:		High Street Challenge – Round one	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Corporate Strategy	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Wellbeing allocates £161,750 of grants from the first round of The High Street Challenge. The projects recommended for allocation are set out in Appendix 1.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Wellbeing note the applicants listed in Appendix 2, who are being recommended for support from council officers in order to develop their applications further. An additional report for funding considerations with regards to these projects will be presented once the development is complete.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The aim of the High Street Challenge is to increase footfall and consumer spend in Southwark's High Streets and Town Centres as part of the delivery of Southwark's Economic Wellbeing Strategy. This will be achieved through the funding of a series of innovative, spatially-based projects over a two year period. Applications will be invited for funds to deliver new approaches to improving town centres as well as embedding and reinforcing more established activities.
4. Lessons learnt from the Community Restoration Fund (CRF) programme which was established to support Southwark businesses and communities affected by the 2011 London disturbances has helped to inform the development of this programme.
5. The first call for proposals was launched on the 3 of February 2014 and closed on the 7 of March 2014. Further calls will be made within the two year period; the next call is planned for August/September 2014.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The fund has been designed to respond to the range of challenges as well as the unique attributes of each of the town centres and high streets in Southwark. Applicants were required to demonstrate how their proposals met the following objectives:
 - Produce benefits beyond the funding period.

- Introduce new approaches/models that have not previously existed in town centres.
 - Add to and align with existing initiatives in the proposed area.
 - Build the capacity of the local businesses or groups to accelerate economic growth beyond the funding period.
 - Bring together different parts of the local community and promote inclusivity.
7. Under these objectives a set of four broad themes have been identified to define the scope of the activities that can be commissioned as part of the fund. It is expected that successful projects will fit with more than one of these themes:
- **Promotion:** Activities to promote and market the town centre/high street's offer in order to increase footfall and customer spend.
 - **Transformation:** Activities to attract new customers to the high street (or engage them for a longer period) through use of space and design.
 - **Diversification:** Activities to diversify the offer of the town centre / high street in a way that is likely to have an impact on footfall.
 - **Participation:** Activities to create new partnerships/networks or build the capacity of existing networks in a way that will strengthen the ability of the town centre/high street to create growth.
8. The funding allocation process is planned to comprise of three staged calls for proposals for the High Street Challenge, which may change subject to funding allocations or other circumstances. The recommendations for the first round prioritise applications that have presented well developed ideas and have the potential to start delivery quickly.
9. Officer support will be on offer for the applicants listed in Appendix 2 who have presented strong and innovative ideas in order to develop the practicality and management of those ideas before making recommendations for funding. These applicants will not be required to wait until the next round to resubmit their application unless the scope of the project changes. A separate IDM report will be submitted before the next round with funding recommendations for those who have been able to develop their ideas with officer support to the standard required for funding.
10. The funding allocation process has been designed to enable the staged funding of creative and innovative proposals to support development of new models which can then attract other sources of funding. Hence, some of the projects listed in Appendix 1 are recommended for the funding of specific phases of the proposal submitted to enable the viability of the idea to be tested. These applicants will be able to seek additional funding for their projects in subsequent rounds of the High Street Challenge.
11. 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, and an assessment of the likely impact of the project on local economic growth.

Consultation

12. A range of internal and external stakeholders were consulted on the purpose and scope of the fund. Internal stakeholders included Community Engagement,

Health, Markets, Libraries Culture, Crime Prevention, Regeneration, Planning Policy, and Public Realm.

13. Business networks were consulted and asked to identify the main challenges facing their town centres/high streets and to suggest the types of initiatives that they believe would help local businesses to thrive. Additionally, lessons from other local authorities such as Brent, Croydon, Lewisham and Hackney have been incorporated where they have shared innovative approaches to Town Centre support. The consultation responses have also been linked to key recommendations from an extensive policy review.
14. Key themes emerging from consultation included:
 - A need for promotional activities that would drive footfall.
 - Opportunities for creative uses and activities that would diversify the offer on the high street and catch the attention of residents and visitors.
 - A need for smaller scale, local initiatives to build on existing assets and link them to larger scale regeneration processes.
 - The importance of partnership approaches, building capacity and encouraging wide-ranging engagement in town centre initiatives.
15. The information and suggestions gathered through consultation, along with recommendations from the policy review were brought together and used to develop a framework for the fund to address the main challenges being faced by town centres and high streets in Southwark.
16. At the assessment stage, the evaluation panel also consulted with relevant colleagues such as those responsible for markets, events, and regeneration. Comments were taken into consideration in order to arrive at a final decision.

Policy implications

17. The Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2012-20 was adopted in November 2012 having secured Council-wide endorsements.

Support to businesses is central to two of its strategic objectives:

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

Ambition 3: Thriving town centres and high streets

18. The High Street Challenge will support the delivery of the Economic Wellbeing Strategy through the opportunities presented by the fund to harness the energy of business and other imaginative and enterprising people or groups in order to breathe new life and ideas into town centres. The desired outputs and outcomes for the High Street Challenge set out in the prospectus are in line with the strategy in that they are focused around the use of innovative approaches to stimulate footfall and customer spend, support self-sustaining business networks to flourish and engage with their local communities for mutual benefit, and deliver activities that will lead to high streets benefitting from fewer shops and a greater mix of uses.
19. Economic growth remains a high priority for the council. The activities of the successful projects are expected act as a catalyst for economic growth by attracting and leveraging funding from other sources for activities that will continue to redefine Southwark's high street offer to local residents and visitors.

This approach will lead to local jobs being safeguarded in the short term and job creation in the long term. Furthermore, it will represent the council's response to the recent decline of the traditional high street model.

Community impact statement

20. 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).
21. Care has been taken in development of the prospectus to ensure the accessibility of the fund for Southwark-based businesses, community groups, 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.

Resource implications

23. The full cost of the proposed allocations in Appendix 1 will be met by the Business Support Fund and High Street Innovation Fund. All other costs will be met within existing resources.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

24. The Director of Legal Services ("DLS", acting through the Corporate team) notes the content of this report which seeks approval of various grant awards recommended as part of the first round of the High Street Challenge initiative. The decision to approve the Recommendation is one which may be taken by the Cabinet Member in line with the council Constitution.
25. The proposed award of grant funding is consistent with corporate policy in this area and the report confirms the steps that have been taken to consult interested individuals and groups before launching the fund and inviting proposals. The report also describes that a planned and robust process has been carried out for the purpose of attracting proposals from interested groups and organisations and evaluating those proposals.
26. The DLS will advise and assist officers in connection with the drafting of appropriate legal terms and conditions for the purpose of regulating the proposed grant awards.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (CED/MD/13/53)

27. The resource implications in paragraph 23 above are noted. It is recognised that the cost of the projects in round one is £162k and that funding for this is available within the Business Support Fund and High Street Innovation Fund. Any further expenditure relating to this project will be covered by existing Strategy and Partnerships budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Economic Wellbeing Strategy	Strategy and Partnerships, Local Economy Team, 160 Tooley Street	Ann-Marie Soyinka 0207 5255531

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	High Street Challenge Round One – Funding Allocation Recommendations
Appendix 2	High Street Challenge Round One – Projects recommended for further development

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Graeme Gordon, Director of Corporate Strategy	
Report Author	Ann-Marie Soyinka, Senior Strategy Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	25 March 2014	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	25 March 2014	