

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 18 September 2014	<b>Decision Taker:</b> Cabinet Member for Communities, Employment and Business
<b>Report title:</b>		The High Street Challenge Round One – Additional Funding Recommendations for the Round One Further Development Group	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Director of Corporate Strategy	

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Employment and Business allocates £15,000 of grant funding from The High Street Challenge to Carnival del Pueblo Association for the development of a Latin American 'Plaza Latina' market.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. 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. Local businesses, business groups and community groups can apply for funds to deliver new approaches to improving town centres as well as embedding and reinforcing more established activities.
3. 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.
4. The first call for proposals was launched on 3 February 2014 and closed on 7 March 2014. A total of 42 applications were received and £161,750 was awarded to eleven applicants in April 2014. A further ten applicants<sup>1</sup> who presented strong and innovative ideas were offered support from council officers to develop the practicality and management of those ideas prior to final consideration for funding.
5. Nine applicants accepted the support offered by the council; they were given extensive feedback on their applications and a steer on which elements were best suited to the objectives of the fund so that applicants could develop these further. Officers continued to review drafts of the application to provide additional feedback (where they were given the opportunity). The revised applications were then submitted on 26 May 2014 and these were assessed against the original

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<sup>1</sup> One applicant had submitted two applications; therefore eleven applications in total were offered support.

criteria published in the Round One prospectus; three applications were awarded funding in August 2014 and an additional application is being recommended for funding at this time.

6. The project being recommended for funding will implement a Latin American themed market and cultural event – ‘Plaza Latina’ – to be held weekly in the run up to Christmas 2014. The Plaza Latina will be connected to East Street market and will aim to draw additional footfall and introduce new traders and customers to the market.
7. Round Two of The High Street Challenge is currently open for applications<sup>2</sup>, and a further funding round is planned for spring 2015.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. 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.
9. Under these objectives a set of four broad themes define the scope of the activities that can be commissioned as part of the fund. Successful projects are expected to 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.
10. 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.
11. The funding allocation process has been designed to enable the staged funding of creative and innovative proposals to support development of new ideas to be tested so that they can then attract other sources of funding. Applicants that have been awarded funding in this round will have the opportunity to seek additional funding for their projects in subsequent rounds of the High Street Challenge.

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<sup>2</sup> Closing on 15 of October 2014

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, and an assessment of the likely impact of the project on local economic growth.

### **Consultation**

13. A range of internal and external stakeholders were consulted on the purpose and scope of the fund. Internal stakeholders included teams such as community engagement, health, markets, libraries culture, crime prevention, regeneration, planning policy, and public realm.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. At the assessment stage, the evaluation panel consulted further with relevant colleagues such as those responsible for markets, events, and regeneration. Ward members for Faraday, East Walworth and Newington wards were also consulted on the Carnaval del Pueblo Association proposal and comments were taken into consideration in order to arrive at a final decision.

### **Policy implications**

18. 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.
19. 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.

20. Economic growth remains a high priority for the council. The activities of the successful projects are expected to 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 appeal 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**

21. 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, underused or empty spaces brought back into use, retail spaces improved, young entrepreneurs engaged, match funding secured and new jobs created).
22. 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.
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 and enable it 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**

24. The full cost of the funding recommendation for Carnival del Pueblo Association 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**

25. The Director of Legal Services (DLS) notes the content of this report which seeks approval of a grant award 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's constitution.
26. 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.

27. 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/14/24)**

28. The resource implications in paragraph 24 above are noted. It is recognised that the cost of the additional Round One project is £15,000 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 corporate strategy budgets.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Economic Wellbeing Strategy	Strategy and Partnerships, Local Economy Team, 160 Tooley Street, SE1 2QH	Ann-Marie Soyinka 0207 5255531

**APPENDICES**

No.	Title
Appendix 1	High Street Challenge Round One – Further Development Group Funding Recommendations

**AUDIT TRAIL**

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Graeme Gordon, Director of Corporate Strategy	
<b>Report Author</b>	Ann-Marie Soyinka, Senior Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	18 September 2014	
<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>
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	18 September 2014	