

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 14 September 2015	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet Member for Employment, Business & Culture
<b>Report title:</b>		Further Award of Grants Under The High Street Challenge Round Three	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Head of Strategy and Partnerships	

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Employment and Business allocates £68,000 of grants from The High Street Challenge to Round Three applicants that have received support from the council to develop their applications further. The projects recommended for funding are set out in Appendix 1.

### **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 three 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.
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 – and previous rounds of the High Street Challenge, have helped to inform the development of this programme.
4. Round One of the High Street Challenge launched in February 2014, followed by Round Two in September 2014. Round Three of the High Street Challenge launched in March 2015 and closed on 29 May 2015 with 26 applications received. Two applications were awarded funding and a further 12 applicants who presented strong and innovative ideas were offered officer support to further develop the deliverability of those project ideas prior to final consideration for funding. 12 applicants were not awarded funding.
5. Of the 12 applicants who were offered further support in Round Three, three applicants are now being recommended for funding:
  - Basic Business Initiative UK intend to carry out a baseline survey which will lead to the creation of a business association for Peckham Park Road.
  - Peabody in conjunction with Canaval del Pueblo and Cool Tan Arts will establish a three unit enterprise hub in currently empty units on East Street.

- The Herne Hill forum will micro-manufacture and install modular shop front signage for shops on Norwood Road.

The total funding recommended for these projects is £68,000.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

6. The High Street Challenge 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 or more rounds for proposals for the High Street Challenge, which may change subject to funding allocations and other circumstances.
9. The funding allocation process has been designed to enable the staged funding of creative and innovative proposals to support the 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.
10. 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**

11. 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.
12. 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 believed 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. At the assessment stage, the evaluation panel also consulted relevant colleagues such as those responsible for markets, events, culture, and regeneration. Comments were taken into consideration in order to arrive at a final decision.

## **Policy implications**

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 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**

19. 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).
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 High Street Challenge, as the programme intends to improve and develop participation from all sections of the community (see paragraph 7) in a manner that will positively impact high streets and town centres. As part of the assessment process, applicants were asked to define how their projects would be inclusive and welcoming to all. 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, 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 funding recommendation for Basic Business Initiative UK, Peabody, and The Herne Hill Forum will be met by the Business Support Fund. All other costs will be met within existing resources.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Director of Legal Services**

24. This report seeks approval of three grant awards to voluntary organisations recommended as part of the third round of the High Street Challenge initiative. The decision to approve the recommendation is one which is expressly reserved to the Cabinet Member under Part 3D of the council Constitution.
25. The proposed award of grant funding is consistent with corporate policy in this area and the report explains the process involved and how funding allocations have been decided. The report further confirms the steps that have been taken to consult interested individuals and groups, both before launching the fund and inviting proposals and in connection with the proposed grant awards.
26. The intention of the High Street Challenge is to engage all individuals and groups within the local community by offering the opportunity to apply for funding and to benefit from the projects which arise from the funding allocations. This is consistent with the requirements of the council's statutory duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty) as prescribed by the Equality Act 2010.
27. The director of legal services (corporate team) will advise and assist officers in connection with the drafting of appropriate legal terms and conditions for the purpose of regulating the proposed grant award.

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services (CE/15/007)**

28. The resource implications in paragraph 23 are noted. It is observed that the funding for the projects recommended in this report will come from the Business Support Fund. Any further costs associated with the funding of these projects will be contained within existing divisional budgets.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Economic Wellbeing Strategy	Strategy and Partnerships, Local Economy Team, 160 Tooley Street	Nazmin Yeahia 0207 525 4474

## **APPENDICES**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	High Street Challenge Round Three – Projects recommended for funding.

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephen Gaskell, Head of Strategy and Partnerships	
<b>Report Author</b>	Nazmin Yeahia, Senior Strategy Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	14 September 2015	
<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	No
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team</b>	14 September 2015	