

Briefing note

To: Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

From: Danny Edwards, Strategy & Partnerships Manager

Title: REVITALISATION OF HIGH STREETS AND TOWN CENTRES

Date: 20th October 2020

Context

The Covid-19 crisis will continue to exacerbate pre-existing problems faced by our high streets and town centres. A coherent and coordinated cross-council response to recovery and renewal is therefore being put in place, with emphasis on the role town centres and high streets play in supporting thriving neighbourhoods. Aligned to the council's Economic Renewal Plan, clear leadership for planning Southwark's response is now in place with responsibility for town centres in the portfolio of Cllr Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Culture & Skills.

We welcome the opportunity for the Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission to support the development of this critical strand of work.

Action plan

An overarching action plan for high streets and town centres will be developed and overseen by a cross-council working group, led by Cllr Cryan and comprised of representatives from across the council including Local Economy, Regeneration, Planning, Transport and Public Realm, Environment, Public Health, Communities, Culture and others. Working with external stakeholders, including the local business community and key networks such as the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) will be crucial.

Membership and terms of reference for the group are yet to be finalised, but, while the following is not intended to be an exhaustive list, key areas of focus are expected to include:

- Stakeholder identification, strategy and effective engagement
- Identity – how do the plans reflect the identity of individual town centres and high streets
- Planning and regeneration – How development can best stimulate renewal in town centres; examination of workspace issues; the impact of use class changes and other Government planning proposals
- The role of our local cultural and leisure offers
- Transport, public realm measures and infrastructure; how to maintain and improve accessibility, connectivity and environmental sustainability?
- Consideration of the “15 minute city” model for localities; would this work for Southwark?
- Data - How to make best use of available data on traffic, footfall, spending, etc.
- The role of licensing and enforcement – how do we maintain standards while increasing flexibility in support for our local businesses?
- Economic Renewal Plan – Aligning with broader economic renewal for a robust, equitable local economy, including Brexit planning

- Business Support – Reviewing our approach to supporting local business; business activity research and marketing to increase local footfall; working closely with local business networks
- Employment and skills – Equipping our residents with skills for local growth sectors
- An asset based approach - possible landlords charter, lettings strategy and a strong approach to minimising vacancies
- Developing a Community Wealth Building Framework – Keeping locally generated wealth local and increasing community ownership; the role of social enterprises and community business; examining procurement activity and local supply chains; empowering communities
- Southwark Stands Together – Ensuring that racial equity is at the heart of town centre planning
- Climate Strategy and Green New Deal – Sustainability and support for greener job creation
- Wellbeing; tackling health inequalities; alignment with and implementation of the Healthy High Streets Framework
- Community involvement – How we ensure planning for town centres is responsive to community and neighbourhood needs; close working with VCS
- Community Safety – Ensuring our town centres and high streets are safe places to visit

Next steps

- Regeneration to develop a baseline report outlining current state of play and existing programmes of work – Due November
- Working group membership to be finalised and Terms of Reference to be agreed - Next meeting due November
- Local Economy Team to develop skeleton draft action plan for dissemination to group and discussion at next meeting
- 1st draft proper of Town Centres and High Streets Action Plan to be agreed in New Year