

Cabinet 4 April 2017	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Aman Dalvi, Corporate Director of Place	Classification: Unrestricted
Update on the Town Centre Strategy	

Lead Member	Councillor Joshua Peck, Cabinet Member for Work and Economic Growth
Originating Officer(s)	Andy Scott, Interim Divisional Director, Growth and Economic Development Melanie Aust, Business and Town Centre Manager
Wards affected	All wards
Key Decision?	Yes
Community Plan Theme	A prosperous community

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report updates on progress in developing the Town Centre Strategy for Tower Hamlets setting out the Council's approach to manage the borough's town centres, attract investment, exploit the success of street markets, support enterprise and effectively manage the evening economy.
- 1.2 ATCM with their partner organisation The Retail Group was procured to develop the Strategy in early September 2016. This work will now be completed by the end of February 2017. Their successful bid for the work was in the sum of £48,800, against the forecast budget of £50,000 contained within the Thriving High Streets programme.
- 1.3 The strategy development activity has comprised, working closely with the Town Centres team, the development of an Officers Working Group from a range of service areas, local stakeholders and residents; development of a vision and action plan for each District Centre aimed at improving its rating against identified performance indicators; and the incorporation of development plans for the borough's street markets to improve their performance against national street market standards.
- 1.4 The draft Town Centre Strategy is now available and is appended to this report as Appendix 1. The performance indicators showing District Centres' ranking is included as Appendix 2.

Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made to date in developing the Town Centre Strategy for Tower Hamlets.
2. Provide comments on the draft Town Centre Strategy included as Appendix 1 to this report.
3. Note the outcomes of the application of the ATCM indicators of a successful town centre across the 10 District Centres as shown at Appendix 2.
4. Agree to undertake formal consultation with regard to the adoption of the Town Centre Strategy.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 A draft Town Centre Strategy has been completed and is now available for consultation purposes.
- 1.2 This report seeks agreement to undertake a formal consultation process with regard to the adoption of a Town Centre Strategy for Tower Hamlets.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 Development of a Town Centre Strategy was a key objective in the Forward Plan for 2016/17. No alternative options have, therefore, been considered.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 On 6th December 2016, Cabinet considered and agreed the following:
 - Noted the contents of the draft Area Profiles and key findings and agreed that performance matrices for all town centres would be made available for consideration when available.
Progress update: The performance review has now been completed for all 9 District Centres against the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) indicators of a successful Town Centre. This is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
 - Authority was delegated to the Corporate Director Place to oversee the completion of these profiles including the matrices and digital maps.
Progress update: These Area Profiles are nearing completion and a report will be submitted to Place DMT at the end of February 2017.

- Agreed that local partnerships would be developed in Bethnal Green, Roman Road West, Watney Market and Whitechapel (undertaken by Town Centre team).
Progress update: This work is being programmed into the Town Centres team's work plans for 2017/18.
- The pilot proposals for the expenditure of the approved Thriving High Streets funding were agreed and approval given to procure any elements of the work identified.
Progress update: A work programme is under development to ensure that the necessary resource allocation, procurement activity and collaborative work is undertaken to ensure delivery in accordance with the approved funding.
- Finally, officers were requested to identify and align any complementary projects such as improving wi fi access in town centres and developing cultural trails.
Progress update: The wi fi access in Town Centres project is progressing well and discussions are being undertaken to incorporate this as part of the Mayoral priority to provide free wi fi for all residents.

3.2 Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose is identified as follows:

- Set out the Council's approach to managing its Town Centres to:
 - Attract investment
 - Tackle vacant units
 - Exploit the success of street markets
 - Support enterprise
 - Manage the night time economy
 - Influence the make-up of the High Street
- Inform the Council's approach to targeting its collaborative resources to improving the competitiveness of Town Centres by improving performance against the ATCM indicators of a successful town centre.

3.3 Methodology used to develop the Strategy

1. Document review (Local Plan, Retail Capacity Study, Town Centre audits, Area Profiles, Street Market BiiPs, Project reports and Project evaluations).
2. Officer Working Group and 1-2-1 meetings with internal partners.
3. Local stakeholders and business network consultation.
4. Operator surveys undertaken in all 9 District Centres.
5. Consumer surveys undertaken.
6. Visits undertaken to all District Centres.

7. Area Profiles and Area Action Plans developed for all 9 District Centres.
8. Ranking given to all 20 ATCM performance indicators in respect of all District Centres (see Appendix 1 for detailed analysis and explanation of key indicators).

3.4 **Key objectives and actions identified**

The objectives identified below are as agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 6th December 2016. All actions identified will be SMART and funded either by Brick Lane Regeneration, Thriving High Streets approved funding streams or other approved and appropriate funding streams.

1. **Develop partnerships to improve the management of Town Centres**

Proposed actions:

- Support the development of partnerships with businesses, residents and market traders to – share information, consult on and plan improvements, support planning events and develop place promotion activities.
- Deliver co-produced events and activities in Town Centres to improve footfall, enhance the visitor experience and involve young people in the delivery including multi-media place promotion campaigns (e.g. #Shoptowerhamlets).

2. **Deliver public realm improvements and shopfront improvements to promote footfall and invest in the vitality of the Town Centre**

Proposed actions:

- Undertake shopfront improvements in pilot areas e.g. Brick Lane, Roman Road East.
- Improve lighting in key destination areas, including festive lighting e.g. Brick Lane
- Improve wayfinding to generate footfall e.g. Brick Lane
- Address tagging and graffiti issues and clean pavements in all Town Centres
- Improve storage and parking issues e.g. Watney Market
- Review and improve waste collection and disposal in all Town Centres
- Identify opportunities for clustering market stalls (e.g. hot food stalls) e.g. Roman Road East and West.
- Promote take up of branded vintage canopies for stalls

3. **Establish effective governance and management practices in Town Centres**

Proposed actions:

- Explore different governance arrangements for Town Centres e.g. BID, Trust, Forum structures.
 - Pilot enforcement action in Town Centres e.g. markets, licensing, environmental health.
 - Pilot removal of for sale/to let signs in Brick Lane.
4. **Improve the sustainability of the Council's street markets**
Proposed actions:
- Revitalise the street markets aimed at improving footfall and offer e.g. market trader recruitment, business support, pilot youth enterprise and test trading stalls.
 - Focus on markets and days of the week with low occupancy e.g. Roman Road West (4 to 18% occupancy)
5. **Deliver business advice and support to improve performance and sustainability**
Proposed actions:
- Marketing and promotion, social media, display training and support.
 - Promote participation in initiatives e.g. Best Bar None.
 - Encourage improvements in food hygiene ratings.
6. **Deliver place promotion and marketing activities to generate footfall and support inward investment**
Proposed actions:
- Multi-media promotion of Town Centres
 - Inward investment information on each Centre (e.g. welcome packs)
 - Programme of events in Town Centres

3.5 Progress to date on developing the Strategy

- Detailed work is now underway with departments across the Council as identified below:
 - Business rates – obtaining and updating information;
 - CCTV – tackling crime issues and plans for Wi Fi concession project;
 - Community Safety – reported crime and links to partnership networks;
 - Enforcement – food hygiene, pest control, Best Bar None;
 - Enterprise – business advice offers, referral arrangements;
 - Highways – street and festive lighting, LED switchover;
 - Housing – reducing residential voids in Town Centres;
 - Ideas Stores – supporting social media training;
 - Leisure and Culture – events and assets in Town Centres;
 - Market Services – developing Business Development plans for markets;

- Planning Enforcement – change of use and removal of signage;
 - Planning Policy – supporting development of Local Plan, linking with Neighbourhood Forums;
 - Public Health – food for health initiative;
 - Research – data on household profiles;
 - Sustainability – waste oil collection, recycling business waste, advice to businesses on energy saving and reducing overheads;
 - Waste Management – addressing issues around waste collection;
 - Youth Services – creating volunteering opportunities for young people.
- Two Officer working group meetings have been held to support the development of the strategy and action plans.
 - Discussions have taken place with regard to the Summary Strategy report to agree the key findings and content to be incorporated into this first section in the Town Centre Strategy.
 - Place Directorate DMT has received a presentation on the key findings of the Town Centre Strategy at their meeting held on Monday 30th January 2017.
 - A draft Strategy document has now been received which will be reviewed and circulated for comment and consultation purposes by end of February 2017.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Regular updates provided to Lead Member for Growth and Economic Development.
- 4.2 Member engagement programme needs to be agreed to provide briefings for Lead Members and Ward Councillors in wards affected by the Town Centre Strategy.
- 4.3 Internal approvals obtained:
CMT approval obtained on 8th March 2017
MAB approval obtained on 14th March 2017
Cabinet to consider on 4th April 2017
- 4.4 Town Centre Strategy draft document has been circulated for comment and consultation internally. This includes uploading the document onto the Council's intranet. Comments received considered and the document amended as required.

- 4.5 Final draft document will be prepared and a formal consultation process undertaken to adopt the Town Centre Strategy including consultation with external partners on receipt of Cabinet approval on 4th April 2017.

5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 5.1 This report provides an update for the Mayor in Cabinet on the progress that has been made in developing the council's Town Centre Strategy.
- 5.2 Along with the appointment of a Town Centre Team (completed in June 2016) and the development of Area Profiles (considered by Cabinet in December 2016), the delivery of a Town Centre Strategy is one of the major deliverables within the 'Thriving High Streets' project that was approved by the Greater London Authority (GLA). This project is fully funded from within the £7.021 million that the council was awarded to finance Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities within the borough.
- 5.3 In conjunction with other council strategies, the Town Centre Strategy will assist in the prioritisation of activities within programmes which are designed to encourage local enterprise, support local businesses and improve employment opportunities for residents. Included within the GLA funding is a specific allocation for a 'Healthy High Streets' pilot programme which has a total budget allocation of £2.29 million of which £1.0 million is earmarked for capital projects. In accordance with Financial Regulations, this element of the project is included within the capital programme that was approved by Council on 22nd February 2017.

6. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 6.1 This report updates on progress in developing the Town Centre Strategy and presents a draft Strategy for consideration.
- 6.2 The next step in the preparation of the strategy is a formal consultation process. There is no statutory requirement to consult but if the Council does then it should aim to involve all sections of the community in the development of this Strategy and therefore the common law duty to consult arises. This common law duty imposes a general duty of procedural fairness upon public authorities exercising a wide range of functions which affects the interests of individuals. Such consultation must however comply with the following common law criteria:
- it should be at a time when proposals are still at a formative stage;
 - the Council must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and response;
 - adequate time must be given for consideration and response; and
 - the product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.
- 6.3 With regard to the above, the Mayor in Cabinet will be required to consider whether the consultation was appropriate and must conscientiously take into

account the consultation responses before approving the Town Centre Strategy.

- 6.4 If consultation is to take place then sufficient time will have to be built in to allow for adequate consultation as well as consideration of the responses.

7. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Town Centre Strategy is focused on District Centres in the borough. Work has been undertaken to assess their performance against key indicators including user and visitor perception of the area.

8. BEST VALUE (BV) IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications attaching to the Town Centre Strategy. All proposals have been developed based on approved funding e.g. Brick Lane Regeneration, Thriving High Streets funding. Any project or activity funded by this route will be subject to the Council's normal procurement routes and subject to best value considerations.

9. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 9.1 The Town Centre Strategy addresses issues such as improving the public realm in District Centres and improving the user experience in areas, e.g. reducing litter, reducing anti-social behaviour.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Any risks associated with delivering the Town Centre Strategy will be assessed and mitigated when the Town Centre Strategy is adopted and implemented.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Local partnerships will be brought together as part of delivering the Town Centre Strategy which will include representation from the local Ward Panels. Crime and disorder – particularly around anti-social behaviour – will be a key part of improving Town Centres and improving footfall.

12. SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no specific safeguarding risks or benefits from the development of the Town Centre Strategy.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- NONE

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Draft Town Centre Strategy
- Appendix 2: Rankings of Town Centre against the ATCM key performance indicators for a successful Town Centre

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- NONE.

Officer contact details for documents:

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