Town Centres Strategy
Draft for Public Consultation - Abridged for Erith

Town Centres Team
12/4/2019
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Glossary

- **Acorn CACI** - Acorn is a segmentation tool which categorises the UK’s population into demographic types. Acorn provides a general understanding of the attributes of a neighbourhood by classifying postcodes into a category, group or type. For definitions of the particular classifications, please refer to [https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf](https://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf)

- **Business Improvement District (BID)** – A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area within which businesses are required to pay an additional tax in order to fund projects within the district’s boundaries. The BID is often funded primarily through the levy but can also draw on other public and private funding streams.

- **Culture and Leisure** – Used in this document to refer to a broad offer of services related to leisure, socialising and culture – which includes food and beverage (pubs, clubs and bars), recreation and active leisure (e.g. gyms, bowling, leisure centres, etc.) and cultural venues (e.g. art galleries, performance spaces, libraries and cinemas). See also **Evening Leisure**.

- **Comparison Retail** - This is the range of goods which consumers purchase relatively infrequently and so they usually evaluate prices, features and quality levels before making a purchase. Examples of comparison retail include fashion, electronics, and major appliances

- **Convenience Retail** – This is the range of goods that consumers tend to buy relatively frequently. This is broadly defined as food, drinks, tobacco, newspapers, magazines, cleaning materials and toilet articles.

- **Evening Leisure** – used in this document to denote the provision of venues for socialising and recreation from 6pm onwards, including eating and drinking establishments, cinemas, music venues, theatres, etc.

- **Gross Value Added (GVA)** – gross value added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

- **Healthy Streets** – this refers to the Healthy Streets Approach which was first included in Transport for London (TfL) policy in 2014. The Healthy Streets Approach is a system of policies and strategies to deliver a healthier, more inclusive city where people choose to walk, cycle and use public transport. More details can be found here: [http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-explained.pdf](http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-explained.pdf)

- **Javelin Venue Score** - The Javelin Value Score evaluates each shopping venue in terms of its provision of multiple retailers – including anchor stores, fashion operators and non-fashion multiples.

- **National Multiple** – An outlet of a national brand, in other words a chain store

- **Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL)** - a method used to assess the access level of geographical areas to public transport. The scale ranges from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest).

- **Purple Pound** - The 'purple pound' is a term used to describe the spending power of disabled people and their families.

- **Unhealthy Businesses** – terminology developed in 2015 by the Royal Society for Public Health ([www.rsph.org.uk](http://www.rsph.org.uk)) to describe a variety of outlets on the high street considered to have a cumulative negative impact on the health of the local population. This includes tanning shops, off licences, fast food outlets, bookmakers and high cost credit outlets (e.g. cheque cashing).
Note: this is a condensed version of the Town Centre Strategy focusing on Erith. Please see the full version for detail about other town centres and greater detail on the background and next steps.

Introduction
Town Centres are a key part of the Council’s overall strategy for delivering good growth in the borough. Town centres provide identity and personality and are places for residents to live, work, shop and socialise.

Bexley has a hierarchy of town centres, ranging from Major Centre to Neighbourhood Parades. In the London Plan, Bexley has five main town centres – Bexleyheath is defined as a Major Centre and Crayford, Erith, Sidcup and Welling as Districts. Bexleyheath has a diverse offering that include retail, offices, leisure and entertainment facilities, while the District Centres tend to meet a more local need.

Town centres nationally are seeing rapid and significant change, driven by a combination of economic pressures, technological change and consumer behaviour. This has resulted in a net loss of over 1100 stores from Britain’s top 500 high streets during just the first half of 2018, with the trend forecast to continue. From observed local data Bexley’s town centres are not immune from the change sweeping through high streets across the UK.

National research shows that people increasingly come to town centres for the experience, whether it is to shop, eat or socialise. It is quality of customer experience which is a major driver of footfall, dwell time and spend in successful town centres. Many competing town centres are already heavily investing in improving their town centres – without concerted effort to help them adapt, Bexley’s town centres could be left behind. These trends will be explored further in the ‘Changing Town Centres’ section.

The character of a town centre feeds into residents’ sense of place and pride in their area. The reputation of a town centre as an attractive and profitable place to do business will boost inward investment, whilst a poor or declining reputation will have the opposite effect – feeding into a negative spiral of under-investment and decline.

Purpose
This Strategy is designed to provide an overarching framework for the development of Bexley’s main town centres over the next five years. It is targeted to Council stakeholders and key partners, who will play a significant role in enhancing the towns’ vibrancy and economic success. It has a primary focus on unlocking barriers to growth and promoting economic development – so that both new and existing businesses in town centres can be successful in generating new wealth and employment – which in turn will have a beneficial effect on the Council’s sustainability.

The purpose of the Strategy is not to provide a detailed, fully costed action plan, but rather – based on the research - suggest a direction of travel for how the Council and its partners (including business groups (e.g. BIDs), landlords and leaseholders of town centre premises and community organisations) might best work together to safeguard and enhance the borough’s town centres. This involves setting out some key priorities for action, for the Council and its partners to agree to. Following this commitment, the actions suggested will then need to be tested, costed and funded before the Strategy programme can be fully rolled out in a collaborative way over the coming 5 years.

A key part of the Strategy will be to define ways in which the Council can work with other town centre stakeholders (especially business occupiers) to increase the attractiveness and functionality of town centres, and in doing so tap into a wider range of resources to effect change. This will include working closely with the existing Business Improvement Districts
(BIDs), but also working with businesses in other locations to build their collective capacity, potentially exploring the feasibility of developing further BIDs, whilst being open-minded about other partnership and funding models.

This is an evidence-based Strategy and has been developed following extensive research - both statistical and anecdotal to build a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our town centres and understand what are the opportunities and threats they face in realising each town’s potential. In setting out the evidence within the Strategy some of the words or phrases used may be unfamiliar to readers, and so a Glossary has been provided.
Common themes

There are a number of issues and themes which are common to most of Bexley’s town centres. These are explored in more detail below.

Business health and inward investment

Despite the national retail pressures, Bexley’s town centres have been relatively resilient so far, with all of the town centres having vacancy rates (as at Spring 2018) that are below the national average, but above the equivalent London averages (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Vacancy rates in Bexley’s town centres

However the national trends are starting to be felt in the borough, with vacancies occurring in various town centres due to national retail failures and contractions. Sidcup is at a particular risk from the national trend of bank closures due to having eight banks within 300m on the High Street. This is in the context of the loss of 3000 bank branches nationally between 2015 and June 2018.

When comparing the survey results for business performance over the previous three years for four categories (revenue, profit, footfall and employment numbers) to a similar survey in 2013, all the town centres had improved business performance, with localised exceptions of decreased footfall in Bexleyheath and Welling and decreased reported employment numbers in Crayford.

Potential actions to improve business health include targeted inward investment, meanwhile use and start-up support - which are key aspects of any approach to sustaining healthy high streets.

Digital economy

Having a strong digital presence is important for businesses to draw customers into the high street. Google reports that 76% of people who search on their smartphone for something nearby will then visit a related business or retailer within a day, and 28% of those searches result in a purchase. Additionally, 88% of shoppers carry out smartphone research before making a purchase.ii

Bexley’s town centre businesses vary in their digital presence – three quarters of surveyed town centre businesses have a website and similar numbers also have a social media presence. Just over half of the town centre businesses responded that they have social media strategies and online marketing strategies.

76% of town centre businesses have a website
56% of businesses have a social media strategy

Of the surveyed businesses worried about loss of business to online competitors – 90% of them have websites, 85% have a social media presence and 70% of them have a social media strategy.

This online presence of businesses does not seem to be effectively linking to customers – Crayford has the highest level of town centre website users at 64% and Sidcup had the highest Facebook uptake at 42%. Welling was the lowest with 44% website and 25% Facebook uptake with town centre users.

Bexley is currently ranked 10th out the London Boroughs in terms of percentage of the population who use the internet at 94%iii.

i Google trends 2018
ii Google Consumer Survey 2017
iii ONS

London Borough of Bexley
Town Centres Strategy - Erith Summary (Draft)
Bexley adopted its digital strategy ‘Delivering a Step Change in Bexley’s Digital Infrastructure’ in 2017. It aims to ensure that the Borough has high quality fixed line, mobile and wireless connectivity, which is a core aspect underpinning Bexley’s Growth agenda. Key elements of this digital strategy include:

- Creating the right environment for the rollout of more fibre delivering ultrafast, gigabit services to premises;
- Making public Wi-Fi services more widely available across the borough and;
- Putting the right foundations in place to enable mobile operators to roll out high speed 4G and 5G mobile services in a speedy and cost effective manner.

Town Centre Experience

As national trends show, increasingly people are using town centres more as places to socialise and spend their leisure time than purely for shopping. Therefore the quality of the culture and leisure offer and overall experience in town centre locations is becoming a key factor in their success. When surveyed, Bexley’s town centre users had low levels of satisfaction with their experience and this is on a negative trend in all of our town centres in comparison to town centre users’ views in 2013.

The town centre experience can be broken down into a number of elements, as follows.

Diversifying the retail and leisure offer

As can be seen from Figure 2, Bexleyheath had the highest level of satisfaction, with just over 40% satisfied with the culture and leisure. Sidcup had only 15% satisfaction, while Welling, Crayford and Erith all had over 70% of respondents reporting dissatisfaction.

Figure 2 Town centre user satisfaction levels with the culture and leisure offering

Probing further into the culture and leisure offering, people were happiest with the café and restaurant offering, where in Bexleyheath, Sidcup and Welling there was over 50% positive satisfaction, while in Crayford and Erith, these were still low at 35% and 25% respectively.

A lack of diversity and quality in the town centre offer (for retail, leisure and community infrastructure) reduces the attractiveness of a town centre and is a barrier to its success. The evidence points to reduced levels of satisfaction with the offer in all of our town centres, compared to five years ago. The graph in Figure 3 shows an example drawn from research on Bexleyheath users, which shows deterioration in the

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1 The culture and leisure offering includes food and beverage, active leisure and recreational activities (e.g. gyms, bowling), art and performance spaces and cinemas.
satisfaction in each area of the town’s offerings apart from in respect of Personal Services.

**Figure 3 Town centre user’s satisfaction with Bexleyheath’s offering**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2013 Score</th>
<th>2018 Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food shops</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening leisure (e.g. bars, pubs, clubs)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other retail (e.g. clothing, electronics, books)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal services (e.g. salon, travel, bank)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants, cafes, and take aways</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and recreation (e.g. cinema, gym)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Place making and public realm**

With increasingly fierce competition for Bexley residents’ time and disposable income from the internet and out-of-town shopping centres, people need a compelling reason to visit the borough’s town centres. In some centres the predominance of national chain stores, whilst often an attraction, can present a ‘clone town’ look which reduces the apparent uniqueness of the offer, and in other locations the lack of distinctive and attractive civic spaces or difficult access can reduce the draw for potential visitors and shoppers.

Simply put, place making in the context of town centres is the art of creating, through a variety of disciplines a sustainable, healthy, distinctive and attractive place for people to live, work, shop and socialise. A well designed and maintained public realm can encourage people to adopt active and healthier lifestyles and remain socially active. This links closely with the Council’s emerging Prevention Strategy.

When comparing perceptions for all of the town centres between 2013 and 2018, only Sidcup had a positive change in the perception of the attractiveness and the public realm with over 50% of positive responses. The cleanliness of the public realm has a significant role to play – CACI found that in town centres that had high attractiveness ratings by users, had higher levels of spend, for example town centres with a cleanliness rating of 5 (out of 5) rather than a 1-3, had shoppers spending 36% more and similarly a public amenity rating of 5 resulted in 16% more spend than a 1-3 score.

**Accessibility and Wayfinding**

User research has shown that in most of Bexley’s towns the car dominates as a means of transportation into each centre – which can have consequences with regards to congestion, pressure on car parking spaces and reduced air quality. Based on research, improvements to wayfinding, bike parking facilities, safer and more attractive cycle and walking routes into and out of the town centres, and improved bus offer would increase the uptake of active transport. This in turn could have a beneficial effect on the vitality of high streets. Recent research commissioned by TfL suggests that people walking, cycling and using public transport spend most in their local shops – in fact 40% more than car users. Nevertheless, it is expected that for the majority of town centre users the car will remain as the main means of access and therefore good car parking management will continue to play an important role.

A number of Bexley’s towns suffer from poor linkages with railway stations and adjacent residential areas. Inadequate wayfinding to assist town centre visitors find their way around is compounded in some of our towns by poor legibility and barriers to easy pedestrian circulation, especially by people with reduced mobility. A number of interventions – from improved bus access and interchange facilities and full public realm schemes through to improvement to wayfinding, shop-mobility schemes and bike parking – should be considered.
Events, markets and meanwhile use

Across the five town centres, there were low levels of satisfaction with the frequency of special events and markets and with the nature of those that were held. Regular special events and markets, especially if community based, provide a distinctive flavour to a location and can be an effective driver of footfall.

Public events are also a good way to develop more active links between the businesses and wider community. They can provide a test trading environment for new businesses, and as trailblazers for new culture and leisure concepts.

Where possible, the Council and its partners in each town centre should develop a year-round coordinated programme of varied and high quality events and markets – and also seek to introduce more suitable event spaces in town centres where this is limited.

Evening and Night Time Economy

Part of town centre experience is the evening and night time economy – this consists primarily of the culture and leisure offer (including food and beverage venues) and covers both evening (6-10pm) and late-night (10pm onwards). Across all the towns there are low levels of satisfaction with the Evening and Night Time Economy offering.

Bexleyheath is the hub of Bexley’s evening and late-night economy, concentrated in the western end of the Broadway. It has restaurants and bars, along with more family friendly activities of Bexley’s only cinema and bowling alley. Despite its large NTE economy footprint and being the Borough’s NTE hub, only 30% of people were satisfied with the offering and in Erith there were no satisfied responses, with over half (52%) classified as very unsatisfied.

Associated with a successful evening and night-time economy is a perception of safety and security. Based on reported crime statistics, Bexley’s town centres are safe compared with similar size centres across Greater London. However the survey data shows that there is a mismatch between the reality and people’s perceptions, and this may be a barrier to the development of a healthy and diverse evening and night-time economy. In all of five town centres, town centre users reported decreased safety levels in comparison with 2013 responses.

Place marketing

Each of Bexley’s town centres has unique selling points (USPs) – such as Erith, which enjoys the proximity of the River Thames, or Sidcup with its winding High Street and proximity of arts colleges. However, the borough’s town centres have limited brand recognition in their potential catchment areas across SE London and Kent. Whilst individual organisations and businesses in the town centres undertake marketing activities across a spectrum of media – there is no overall coordination of
either message or approach across the various partners. There is therefore a need for each town’s USPs to be fully understood by all partners and for efforts to promote town centre benefits to be properly coordinated to achieve maximum impact.

Alongside the identification and dissemination of USPs there also needs to be consideration for developing a brand in respect of each town centre (or revamping existing branding) which celebrates and links to the location’s unique ‘hero assets’. For example in Crayford, this could be the Cray Gardens.

Linked with the Digital Economy agenda, town centre marketing and branding strategies should incorporate the use of all digital communication channels, including social media. Place marketing should not only focus on raising awareness of each town’s benefits to residents and potential visitors, but also contribute to an inward investment programme, highlighting business advantages to potential new occupiers.

Success stories in Bexley to build on

Bexley has previously invested in its town centres in various ways and some of the approaches suggested in this Strategy have been piloted before in the borough. For example, Sidcup had a total of £3.4m (£1.2m of which was from the GLA) invested in a comprehensive programme designed to reverse a cycle of decline which had seen vacancy rates on the High Street reach record levels. A public realm scheme was successful in significantly improving user perception of the attractiveness of Sidcup - and this aspect of the town centre is still appreciated by users according to the 2018 survey.

The business support part of the scheme included inward investment incentive grants, shop front improvements, expert advice for existing business owners and the set up and hosting of a pop-up shop ‘Sidcup & Co’ which incubated at least 48 new businesses, and was the genesis of four independent businesses still trading on Sidcup High Street in 2018.

The scheme also helped to encourage the location of 8 new businesses onto the High Street including anchor tenants such as Little Waitrose and Better Gym – and significantly reduced vacancy levels by the end of the programme.

More recently Bexley Council has also been investing in Erith town centre – over £10m (£2.3m of which is Council spending) has been spent or allocated since 2016 – to start to unlock the potential of the town and work with the community to create a thriving riverside community. This will be by rejuvenating existing spaces, enabling new developments and nurturing innovation.

The programme encompasses a number of key projects including improvements to the road network and public realm to enable walking and cycling through the Erith Links project, and the renovation and reopening of the town’s Carnegie Library building as an arts space and cultural hub. A programme of ‘meanwhile’ pop-up food and social events have energised the town centre and provided much needed leisure activities as well as testing key ideas for Erith’s future.

This included the Erith Lighthouse, a ‘pop up’ café and restaurant, in the Riverside Gardens and the base of the pier in summer 2017. Pier Road hosted the Erith Kitchen food events and the first Erith Pier Festival was held on the pier. The events have been increasingly popular and supported by an enthusiastic social media following for the programme as well as starting conversations about the town and encouraging people to make the most of one of Erith’s key assets – the River Thames.
Examples from other town centres in the UK

There are many UK town centres that have implemented successful measures to improve their town centre performance across these common themes. A selection of case studies have been detailed below to provide examples of potential interventions.

Deptford – Improving experience and supporting businesses
With thousands of new homes planned for Deptford, the GLA invested £1.5m, matched by £732,000 from the Council, for a series of projects to prepare Deptford’s high street for the future. Despite being at the centre of a vibrant music and arts scene, the high street was rundown with poor pavements and a market not fulfilling its potential.

High street improvements were focussed on making the street more appealing and able to cope with increased footfall. The main project themes were as follows:
- Animating spaces - through special events – especially linked to food and cooking
- Public spaces – high street improvements including improved lighting, shared surfaces, and a new open space to provide a setting for themed markets and seasonal events.
- Building frontages - Six shops were paired with local designers and artists to introduce improvements to shop fronts and window displays
- Supporting businesses - Council set up a free training scheme to offer opportunities to get into market trading
- Preparing for change - A number of feasibility studies are helping Lewisham Council make plans for the future of Deptford – including a review of requirements for parking and loading

The regeneration project has delivered major improvements for residents, visitors and shoppers. Deptford now offers better educational and leisure facilities and the Deptford Lounge provides a new focal point for community activities. The town centre’s image has been further enhanced by its contemporary new station building with its steel framework and glass facades.

Rotherham – Supporting businesses
Rotherham Borough Council from 2009 onwards developed an approach to its town centre – which had been suffering from a high level of vacancies. It focussed on supporting small and distinctive retailers. The Council scheme included:
- Establishing Rotherham Investment and Development Office (RiDO) (started with £100k match funds) as a separate arm of the Council (www.rido.org.uk) – providing free business support to start up and established businesses.
- Business Vitality Grants – grants for eligible niche retailers – providing 50% towards rental costs in the first year and 25% in the second, plus help towards retail fit-out costs
• Test-trade in the makers’ emporium – offering space to local makers, designers, artists and craftspeople.

As a result of the programme:
• Vacancy rate decreased from 20% to 14% (2015)
• Footfall increased by 13%
• Makers emporium – has incubated at least 12 new high street businesses\[vi\]

Bromley – Improving visual experience
Over the period 2012-2015, a series of capital and revenue interventions were delivered in Bromley North Village as part of a programme to enhance the vitality and vibrancy. The scheme included:

• public realm upgrade and shop front improvement programme,
• wayfinding and signage enhancements
• programme of business support
• town centre marketing and events programme.

There was investment of £6.5m in total: £2.0 million Mayor’s Outer London Fund; £3.0m TfL; £1.5m Borough contribution and £50k private sector match.

Outcomes for the scheme were as follows:
• Improving footfall to and through the area – evidence suggests a strong increase in footfall in Bromley North Village since 2011.
• Diversifying town centre uses - The evidence points to success: there is a large and growing cluster of food and drink businesses.
• Improving the appearance and perceptions of the area – evaluation found that improvements have had ‘transformational’ impact on the quality of the environment.
• Inward investment and jobs: 92 full time equivalent jobs are supported within the 11 businesses that have opened in Bromley North Village over the 2 years since the scheme was completed.\[vii\]

Stockton-on-Tees
In response to declining footfall and high (and increasing) vacancies on the High Street, Stockton Council embarked on a multi-year and multi-million pound programme involving the following elements:
• Major investment and improvement to public realm, incorporating better walking links and introduction of public art
• Refurbishment of the Georgian Theatre and construction of new ARC Arts Centre
• Creation of new business space for digital and creative companies and provision of subsidised incubator space
• Hosting of year round specialist markets
• New housing developments around the town centre to increase the resident population
• Business support including 50% reduction in rates for 1st year and shop front improvement scheme
• Investment in an event support team, who have organised around 90 events, including the Stockton International Riverside Festival.

As a result of the programme:
• Stockton was the only town centre in the North East to see a positive net change of shops opening in 2017\(^8\)
• The amount of Commercial Floorspace in the Borough is increasing significantly faster than nationally.
• Enterprise Arcade has hosted 59 businesses since 2011, of which 32 continue to trade independently.\(^9\)
• Stockton won the Rising Star category in the Great British High Street Award 2016, in the words of the judges “The extraordinary transformation from its industrial past to visitor destination means it now pulls in crowds of up to 65,000”.

**Leeds – Night Time Economy for All**

Leeds City Council has run its annual Light Night since 2005 – which is a festival of light projections, exhibitions, installations, film, dance, music, theatre and street performances across several venues in the city centre. The festival is a collection of independently organised events, arranged by charities, community groups and others, who can bid for a small grant to cover their costs.

The festival opens up the city centre to a diverse range of people, including children, who would usually not feel welcome in the evening. It attracts visitors from outside the region and raises Leeds’ profile as a vibrant, cultural city.
Common themes – Suggested actions for all towns

Based on the identified needs of Bexley’s town centres and successful interventions in other town centres, a collection of potential short and medium term actions have been developed and are presented in Table 1. These are suggested actions which in many cases are dependent upon securing additional resources before they can be implemented.

Table 1 Potential actions for all town centres for the common themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Potential Short Term Actions (within 1 year)</th>
<th>Potential Medium to Long Term Action (2 years +)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Business Health      | - Assist independent businesses with their joint marketing and social media (through training, workshops and mentoring)  
- Enhance linkage between Bexley for Business programme and town centre businesses  
- Develop a responsive town centre-relevant business support programme  
- Improve signposting for new and existing businesses about Council and (where relevant) BID services  
- Support the set up or re-invigoration of local business groups / trader associations in town centres without BIDs | - Explore options for targeted discretionary business rate relief programme to help attract investment to town centres – especially locations with high vacancy rates  
- Develop more town centre workspace, including co-working spaces  
- Provide start-up support including provision of test trading spaces  
- Develop peer-to-peer support network to help foster cross-selling between businesses  
- Extend the Business Improvement District (BID) model to non-BID town centres  
- Develop investment angels/mentoring programme for new businesses |
| Digital Economy      | - Assist independent businesses to increase and exploit their online visibility – through training and mentoring  
- Implement smart data capture systems across Bexley’s town centres  
- Roll out free public Wi-Fi in Bexley’s town centres | - Develop or adopt and promote online digital tools to assist smaller independents to compete in digital marketplace  
- Explore how Bexley’s digital transformation can help create town centre jobs and opportunities - e.g. enabling new co-working spaces and 5G pilots. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Centre Experience</th>
<th>Night Time Economy</th>
<th>Place Marketing</th>
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</table>
| - Review Council processes to help facilitate more 'café culture'  
  - Review the frequency/quality of the cleansing and litter prevention measures;  
  - Develop a tool kit of incentives to help agents/landlords to adopt meanwhile use in under-used spaces  
  - Encourage business owners to take more responsibility of own forecourts  
  - Build stronger relationships with agents and landlords  
  - Increase linkages between events and business benefit – measure the economic impact assessment of events  
  - Encourage more healthy eating options – for new and existing F&B operators, especially takeaways through, for example, promoting the Healthier Catering Commitment.  
  - Promote Bexley's town centres as being safe locations and incorporate Healthy Streets principles  
  - Review of cycle parking provision and where possible, upgrade or enhance existing cycle parking | - Undertake evening and NTE audits and develop a NTE action plan for all town centres  
 - Support initiatives to improve safety in the evening and night time economy – for example upgrade of CCTV system through pan-London framework  
 - Support promotion of anti-drink driving messages and take up of Responsible Retailers scheme | - See town centre specific action tables (below) |
| - Develop improved culture and leisure offering (detailed in individual town centre tables below)  
 - Implement accessibility improvement schemes including improved linkages to/from and within town centres | - Implement NTE action plans  
 - Expand the range of evening leisure activities, especially non-alcohol based | - See town centre specific action tables (below) |
Erith

The following section contains a profile on Erith, summarising the key research findings on each, including results from surveys of businesses and town centre users, followed by a vision statement and key themes for action based on analysis of the research.

Geography
Erith town centre is located in the north-east of Bexley borough – with frontage directly on the River Thames opposite Rainham Marshes. Belvedere lies to the west of the Town Centre whilst Slade Green is to the east. The main draw for residents and visitors are Morrison’s, the Riverside Shopping Centre and the Energie Fitness gym.

Erith has some fantastic assets that are currently underused, including the old Carnegie Library, Erith Pier (the longest in London) and the lovely riverside gardens. Key assets in Erith are mapped in Figure 5.

History
Erith has strong heritage connections to the River Thames – operating historically as a small port and industrial location, and in the 19th century also as a leisure and recreational destination, with a large ‘pleasure garden’ built alongside the river. In the 1960s, the town was extensively redeveloped following Modernist town planning ideas, including pedestrian/traffic separation, multilevel commercial environments and residential tower blocks. This dramatically altered the layout of the town, and many crucial routes and public spaces were radically altered. The town also saw the construction of flood defences, vital in protecting the area from flooding, but which sever much of the town from a connection to the river.

Demography
ACORN demographic statistics show there is an economic divide in the town. The more prosperous residents live in the south western area of Erith, severed from the town centre – whilst more of those ‘financially stretched’ are clustered to the southeast and northwest of the centre. Erith is also the most ethnically diverse of Bexley’s main town centres. The town centre is one of the borough’s major growth locations, based on the Bexley Growth Strategy, and is expected to see up to 6000 new homes in or within short distance of the town centre during the next 30 years. Therefore the population is expected to expand and change significantly.

Perceptions of Erith
Businesses and town centre users were asked about their perceptions across a range of factors. Business respondents were significantly more satisfied about the town centre than town centre users responding to the survey.

Businesses scored the walking and cycling provision and signage very highly, whilst the only categories where businesses show dissatisfaction were with the quantity of events and attractiveness of the town centre. Contrastingly, users were moderately satisfied with only two elements – the parking provision and the level of noise. The comprehensiveness of the offer and the quantity of events received very low scores - although the town has seen more frequent special events (e.g. Erith Pier Festival) in recent years, thanks to the Council’s Greater Erith regeneration programme.

Five of the aspects asked about in the survey were designed to match those asked as part of a 2013 survey. The comparison between this and the 2018 survey shows a marked decrease in satisfaction between 2013 and 2018 across all aspects, except attractiveness of place, which remained at the same low level.
Figure 5 Key assets in Erith

1. Erith Railway Station
2. The Exchange
3. Fish Roundabout
4. London South-East College Bexley
5. Christ Church
6. Old Town Hall
7. Pedestrianised Pier Road
8. Erith Library
9. Riverside Shopping Centre
10. Erith Rowing Club
11. Riverside Gardens
12. Thames Path and National Cycle Route 1
13. Erith Playhouse
14. Erith Pier
15. Morrison’s Superstore
**Offering**

Erith acts as a retail and limited leisure destination for residents in the North of the Borough, primarily in Erith and Northumberland Heath. The most popular reason for visiting the town centre are for convenience shopping – e.g. groceries, and household goods – which is to be expected given the presence of a large Morrison’s store and a Wilkinson’s in the Riverside Shopping Centre.

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the town centre offering, town centre users generally scored it low. Satisfaction with the offering has decreased across all categories since 2013, with the evening leisure offering showing the largest decline. This can be attributed to the very limited number of evening venues. The opening of the Exchange is expected to help this aspect, but there is scope for significant improvement to the overall culture and leisure offering in Erith – especially in the evenings. However, users have concerns about safety especially in the evening and night times. This could be a potential barrier to the further development of the culture and leisure offer.

**Accessibility**

The car is used by 77% of respondents as one of their main modes of transport to access the town. While the primary parking provision is private, both residents and businesses were generally positive about it. Based on the user survey, Erith has the highest level of car usage of all of our town centres and the lowest level of cycling to reach the town centre, which fits with a pattern of very low levels of active transport by non-residents.

The Bronze Age Way (A2016/A206) divides Erith in half and reduces permeability into the town centre, especially for pedestrians. Erith has an average Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) score of 3. The train station is a 7 minute walk from the town centre – on the opposite side of the A2106 – but has direct connections to London Cannon Street and Kent, and there are 7 bus routes that start or pass through the town centre. The rail station suffers from lack of step free access on the London-bound side, which should be a priority in any planned future upgrades to facilities.

To increase pedestrian and cycling usage – 50% of town centre users surveyed wanted the safety and attractiveness of routes to be improved. It is expected that the on-going Erith Links project will bring improvements to this aspect of the town – and improve linkages with the station.

**Erith’s businesses**

Within Erith town centre there were 142 businesses with two or more employees (as at October 2018) and these provided employment to 2,921 people. These values have grown by 3% and 8% respectively since 2013.

The key sectors of employment in Erith town centre are:

- Comparison retail – 13%
- Convenience retails – 11%
- Freight transport by road and removal services – 11%
- Demolition and site preparation services – 9%
- Business support service activities n.e.c. – 6%

The GVA of Erith’s jobs is estimated at £196 million.

Erith is made up of 62% independent retailer and 38% national multiples. Most of the national multiples are housed within the Riverside Shopping

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2 As many town centre businesses, extend beyond the official town centre boundary, the effective town centre has been expanded to include all additional businesses within 250m of the official town centre boundary. These numbers are based on the businesses recorded by the Office of National in October 2018.
Centre and most occupiers outside the Centre are independents. Erith’s Javelin (National multiple offering) rating has declined from 1,118th in 2014 to 1,276th in 2017.

Currently 36% of the commercial floor space is for convenience retail. This is significantly higher than the UK average (15%). As would be expected from user perceptions, leisure service provision is well below the UK average (25%) at 16%. Erith is also below the UK average for Financial and Business Services at 4% (UK Average 8%). Between 2011 and 2018 floor space for this sector has decreased by 29%. Loss of business space in the town centre will inevitably reduce potential footfall and spend – especially for the lunchtime and evening trade.

Erith’s town centre businesses were surveyed about their performance over the past three years. When comparing the performance against the previous three years from 2013, this was stronger for all categories. Business turnover, profit and employment in the business are relatively strong.

Erith vacancy rates were 7% in spring 2018 – made up of a 4% core rate and 10% non-core rate. Over the past two years, Erith has seen a reduction in vacancy rates, primarily due to the reduction in non-core vacancies.

The decrease in vacancy rates is correlated with an increase in footfall. Riverside Shopping Centre, the primary place footfall is measured in Erith, has recorded a dramatic increase in footfall and as of August 2018, which was up 25% year-on-year.

Business optimism in Erith has improved and had an average of 66% of business expecting positive results across all four categories. There is 80+% confidence for profit and turnover, while employment numbers are expected to remain constant.

Businesses in Erith were asked which factors they thought might be barriers to the growth or reasons for their decline. The high costs of rent and rates were the most commonly cited, but overall there was a wide range of responses. When focusing in on the comparison retail offering, the businesses were predominantly worried about the high cost of raw materials.

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3 Javelin ranks the top 3,500 retail centres in the UK
## Analysis of Erith’s strengths and weaknesses

**What is great about Erith?** Based on feedback from businesses, consumers and local stakeholders these are the main strengths and opportunities for Erith:

- The River Thames, Riverside Gardens, Erith Marshes, plus walking and cycling routes
- Riverside Shopping Centre – low vacancies and proactive management
- Morrison’s - as an employer and a footfall magnet
- Leisure offer – including Kassiopi Cove, Leisure Centre, Library, gyms, Erith Playhouse and Erith FC
- LSEC college campus
- Heritage assets – especially Erith Pier
- Community groups and services – and strong community will to improve Erith
- Diverse residents – many of whom live within walking distance
- New developments and potential new town centre customers
- Rowing and Yacht Clubs could help provide more links to Thames
- Good quality public realm and public art in places
- The opening of refurbished Carnegie by the Exchange
- Ongoing Greater Erith regeneration programme – bringing events such as the Erith Kitchen and potential for future investment.
- Plenty of future development opportunities – Opportunity Area
- Future Crossrail connectivity – including potential C2E extension

**What is not so good?** Users, stakeholders and businesses have identified the following issues and threats:

- Traffic congestion, noise and air pollution and segregation caused by roads
- Visual amenity poor in places – e.g. overgrown planting and public realm
- Wayfinding and legibility of public spaces – poor connectivity with station, the river and wider residential area
- High obesity and diabetes rates in residential population
- Limited choice of food and beverage – and lots of fast food
- Lack of things to do – especially evenings and night time
- Anti-social behaviour, street drinking and perceptions of high crime
- Limited business / commercial space in the centre
- No business organisation or BID
- Lack of a sense of arrival or a central focus
Vision and emerging themes for action

Erith vision statement:
In next 5 years, the Council will work with the community to develop Erith as a vibrant, safe, attractive and fun destination for people from all walks of life to live, work and socialise - enjoying a diverse offer, both day and night, built on the town’s unique heritage and riverside setting.

Town centre users, business and stakeholders were asked about their ideas and priorities for improvement. Improving the retail offering topped the list (30%), followed by public realm improvements (28%), enhancing the connection with the riverside and regeneration (both 20%); and improving the culture and leisure offering (including restaurant and cafés). This feedback, combined with the wider evidence has led to the selection of the below key themes and suggested actions.

The key themes for action arising from this vision are set out below:

1) **Place marketing** – Erith currently has limited place recognition and many people are unaware of its many strengths, including its interesting heritage and riverside assets. The Council, using its Greater Erith brand has been working to change this – and this brand is becoming associated with positive regeneration projects such as the Carnegie Building refurbishment and community events such as the Pier Festival. There are also a number of businesses and organisations operating locally which have an interest in marketing Erith to residents and visitors. However, there is a need for coordination of marketing efforts to ensure consistency of message and more efficient use of available resources. Part of place marketing is also to develop an inward investment pack to proactively market Erith to potential new occupiers to help deliver the improved offering demanded by town centre users.

2) **Accessibility and wayfinding** – Linked to place marketing, the first view that many people have of Erith is from the A206 (Fish) Roundabout, which is not perceived by stakeholders to create a welcoming and attractive feel. Perceptions around wayfinding and signage have deteriorated since 2013. This needs to be addressed through both a review and rationalisation of the signage and improving the legibility for those who want to access the town centre by foot, bicycle and car. Work has already started on this aspect through the Erith Links project – which will improve linkages between the station and the town centre.

3) **Leisure and evening economy** – In the town centre user survey Erith did not have any positive scores for the evening economy offer – and in fact the offer is extremely limited at present. Footfall data shows that there are very few visits to the town centre after the shopping centre closes at 5.30 (weekdays and Saturday). Whilst there are a number of takeaway outlets, a pub and a couple of restaurants, there is a distinct lack of diversity in the evening economy and the leisure offer more generally. Therefore there need to be short and long term measures to encourage a wider range of appropriate food and beverage and other leisure operators to locate in Erith – to build a more sustainable evening economy.

4) **Events and markets** – Linked to the Leisure and Evening Economy theme is the need to build a regular programme of special events to attract a diverse audience. These events can be used as a test trading environment for new businesses, and as trailblazers for new concepts, such as the...
Erith Lighthouse and Erith Kitchen events, which have demonstrated that there is a demand for evening food options in Erith. The first Erith Pier Festival was held in September 2018 and it is believed that this, and other events, could be developed in future to have a London-wide draw. Responses show that people miss the Erith Market and work needs to be done to investigate the feasibility of reintroducing a 21st century version into the town centre.

5) **Public realm** – Erith scored the lowest of all of Bexley’s town centres with only 16% of respondents agreeing that it is an attractive place to spend time and only 20% thinking it had good quality public realm. The quality of the public realm needs to be improved and stakeholders want a greener town centre that has visibly improved connections to the river.

6) **Supporting businesses** – There is a town centre forum that represents the views of businesses, residents and community organisations. However, participation by businesses in the forum is limited and the existing business community is small and relatively fragmented. There is also a limited offer in terms of workspace. In addition to provision of a retailer-relevant business support programme – which is a borough-wide requirement – Erith would benefit from work to help kick start a business association, and the introduction of appropriate workspace in and around the town centre.

**Suggested actions**

Table 2 presents potential actions which could be followed up by the Council and its partners for each theme that would help Erith achieve its vision. The stakeholder engagement process provided a collection of potential ideas and projects which could deliver economic stimulus to Erith. Note that only actions which are specific to Erith are included here. These are suggested actions which in many cases are dependent upon securing additional resources before they can be implemented. Additional interventions which contribute to common themes and which could be applied in all town centres are summarised in Table 1.

The identified potential actions for each town have been divided into three implementation phases:

- **Short-term actions** are to be potentially implemented by the Council and its partners over the first year of the strategy. These are a collection of quick wins, along with some pilot projects and preparatory studies needed to progress medium-term actions. Many of these are implementable within existing resources and budget by the Council or partner organisations.

- **Medium-term actions** are to be potentially implemented – subject to securing sufficient additional resources - by the Council and its partners over the second and third years of the strategy. In this phase, based on the previous preparatory studies, larger projects will start to be implemented.

- **Long-term actions** are to be potentially implemented by the Council and its partners in year four and beyond – subject to sufficient additional funding being secured. These include the implementation of larger and longer-term projects and development of the next phase of the medium-term projects. It is expected that there will be a review and refresh of the Strategy in 2021/22 that will more clearly develop the long-term action.
<p>| Theme                  | Potential Short Term Actions (completed in 1 year)                                                                 | Potential Medium Term Actions (completed in years 2-3)                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Potential Long Term Actions (completed in 4+ years)                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Place marketing        | - Utilise and promote the Greater Erith brand                                                                      | - Promote Erith within Bexley and wider London/north Kent – to capitalise on ‘seaside’ town feel                                                                                                           | - Review and potential rebrand Greater Erith and sub-brands                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                        | - Develop a unified marketing approach between partners – establish a regular Promoting Erith Group to ensure collaboration and cross-promotion of events | - Develop and implement coherent annual marketing and social media strategy with key stakeholders                                                                                                                                                                                 | - Expand marketing focus to increase greater market share for retail and leisure spend from amongst borough residents.                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                        | - Develop an inward investment prospectus                                                                        | - Proactively market occupiers of potential voids to agents                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        | - Improve the physical place branding to enhance the sense of identity – especially the riverside element           | - Develop educational links – ‘what does Erith mean to you’ and history of Erith curriculum.                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                               | - Develop new commercial space to cater for a broader range of retailers and service providers extending the Erith offer.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Accessibility and wayfinding | - Audit signage and implement improvements identify and publicise cycling Quiet Routes                          | - Improve visual trails through town – e.g. festoon lighting, community art trails                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | - Implement traffic reduction measures as identified by feasibility work                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                        | - Implement on-going Erith Links programme                                                                        | - Improve sense of arrival – from roundabouts, bus stops and the station                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                               | - Investigate options to improve step free accessibility at the railway station.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                               | - Improve cycling facilities and links with other towns (e.g. Abbey Wood)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                               | - Undertake feasibility work on traffic management measures to improve pedestrian access and experience                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                        |                                                                                                                                                                               | - Improve the visibility of the walking and cycling routes in Erith                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Potential Short Term Actions (completed in 1 year)</th>
<th>Potential Medium Term Actions (completed in years 2-3)</th>
<th>Potential Long Term Actions (completed in 4+ years)</th>
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| Leisure and night time economy | - Develop vacant Pier Rd units into a pop up activity area  
- Introduce a pop up food offering near the pier – Increase awareness of existing leisure offering  
- Where possible, promote ‘healthy’ businesses and restrict the expansion of ‘unhealthy businesses’. | - Encourage family friendly activities – play areas  
- Provide community learning spaces and opportunities that link to maker aspirations  
- Build on cultural diversity in food and beverage offering | - Improve links with Erith Marshes as a leisure asset |
| Events and markets   | - Develop regular programme of events such as Erith Kitchen and annual Pier Festival  
- Increase the presence of music and arts  
- Increase linkages between town centre businesses and community actors, such as the Exchange, Erith Rotary Club and Erith FC  
- Reflect Erith’s diverse community in events. | - Grow Erith Pier Festival into an event with a sub-regional or regional reach  
- Develop a regular market – possibly building on the upcycling/fixing theme  
- Review and develop a programme for under 25’s activities and engagement | - Develop events space(s) connected to the River |
| Public realm          | - Improve the greenery in town centre, with more community gardening space and maintenance of existing planting  
- Identify targeted domestic waste management actions  
- Introduce more lighting to bring excitement to the public realm  
- Implement selected public realm enhancements as part of on-going regeneration programmes. | - Improve connection with the river – ‘Peer on the pier’ telescope, Webcam, Photo point  
- Re-design the shopping centre exterior to introduce more visual interest  
- Improve waste management – including promotion of Freecycle, community clean-up days, household waste management education, community litter pickers  
- Develop a public realm improvement programme including the creation of a central focal point  
- Introduce more art into the public realm | - Implement the public realm improvement programme  
- Develop Erith Pier to be suitable for Thames Clipper and other boat services |
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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Potential Short Term Actions (completed in 1 year)</th>
<th>Potential Medium Term Actions (completed in years 2-3)</th>
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</table>
| Supporting businesses | - Develop more work space (e.g. Engine House at the Riverside Centre)  
- Reach out to local businesses to understand their needs and issues with a view to forming a business forum.  
- Implement a range of other business support activities linked to the common themes section. | - Build a sustainable business association or forum  
- Provide a broader range of employment space within or on the edge of town to attract a greater diversity of business types (including maker enterprises).  
- Support business relocation into and around Erith | - Expand workspace offer  
- Explore feasibility of Erith Business Improvement District (BID) |
Implementation and Next Steps

The previous chapters looked at the health of Bexley's town centres and their current deficiencies, suggesting measures that could be put in place to safeguard and enhance them. This chapter will look at the following:

- What the Council can do within its own organisation
- Why other key stakeholders need to step up
- How the strategy will be delivered and reviewed
- How actions will be prioritised and agreed within town centre task group
- What external and internal resources are available
- Monitoring and evaluation of strategy

What the Council can do within its own organisation

It is proposed that the Council will maintain the overarching leadership and responsibility for the delivery of the Strategy. This is because the Council is able to coordinate and arbitrate between partners, maintain a unique overview of town centres and make appropriate connections - bringing people together to achieve common aims.

In order to successfully deliver the strategy the Council will need to use all of its relevant departments to lever in change. The various Council sections can effect positive change to deliver the visions for Bexley's town centres in the following ways:

Shape and implement

- Use of planning and highway functions to help shape and plan future developments.
- Plan new infrastructure, including transport, to serve growing town centres.
- Encourage new investment – both public and private sector.

Enable

- Apply planning powers to foster good growth and an enhanced retail and leisure offer.
- Guard against inappropriate development in town centres or out-of-town developments that threaten town centre viability.
- Manage the street scene to encourage positive use of forecourts and street trading, and maintain a clean and attractive environment.
- License and regulate provision of alcohol, entertainment and other leisure uses, to foster a diverse, safe and profitable evening / night time economy.
- Monitor and enforce food safety standards to help maintain a healthy food and beverage offer in town centres.

Support

- Respond to community safety issues arising in town centres – in partnership with Police and business stakeholders
- Engage with, and provide support to, business and community organisations to help them deliver positive projects and initiative.
- Coordinate efforts to provide support, advice and mentoring for town centre businesses – especially independents.

Promote

- Communicate the unique positives of each town centre to a wide audience including residents, visitors and potential investors.
- Articulate the vision and potential for each town centre location to help attract new inward investment.
- Publicise initiatives to businesses and town centre users – to foster positive behavioural change (e.g. healthier eating options).
Why other key stakeholders need to step up

The successful delivery of the Strategy will require the active participation of a range of town centre stakeholders – a number of which have already been consulted during the development of this Strategy. Many of the benefits of the Strategy will accrue to these stakeholders – especially businesses, developers and landlords. These will be derived from improved town centre performance – for example increased profitability, property values and rental yields.

A key element of implementation therefore is to influence and convince key stakeholders to invest money and resources in support of the identified actions. This could be achieved through creating a collective working group, including both public and private sector actors who will choose and agree prioritised actions for each town centre. In Bexleyheath this could potentially be based on the existing Master planning Board. The Council will play the catalysing role in identifying the stakeholders and initiating the process.

Each stakeholder will have a clearly defined reason for being involved and the benefits the Strategy will bring to their organisation. It is expected that each member of the group will contribute to help deliver these prioritised actions, both through financial and/or in-kind means proportional to the respective benefits to their organisations.

It is imperative that all partners see a return on investment, all agreed significant actions need to be rigorously scrutinised to ensure they deliver the right outcomes for all stakeholders.

The delivery and review process for the Town Centres Strategy

A schematic representation of the stages involved in delivery and ongoing review of the Strategy is shown in Figure 6. The initial meetings with town centre stakeholders will be focussed on aligning the Strategy to the priorities of the various stakeholders and collectively agreeing the priority actions for the Strategy. At this first stage of delivery (during first 3 months after adoption) the Council - working with partner organisations - would also look to deliver some high priority quick wins that are deliverable within existing resources.

For the more substantial elements, all stakeholders will wish to know that their investment will deliver the desired outcomes. This assurance can be achieved through running both feasibility studies and practical pilot projects to test the practicality and potential effectiveness of proposed projects in a relatively low-cost, low-risk manner. This would be the focus of activity during the second stage of delivery (during the first 12 months).

As emphasised above, this Strategy can only deliver tangible benefits if the Council can work in partnership with a range of local and regional stakeholders – including commercial businesses. The reality of the situation with regards to Council budgets is that there is very little financial headroom for launching new initiatives or programmes. The Council’s Town Centres team – which will lead on the delivery of the Strategy – comprises three posts, with no funding and the role includes an ongoing remit to monitor and support the Bexleyheath and Sidcup BIDs. These privately funded not-for-profit organisations are expected to play a key role in setting the priorities and delivering initiatives in their respective towns. However, their own resources are necessarily limited. Therefore, in collaboration with key stakeholders, the Council will seek additional funding.

In each of the stages of delivery it is necessary to review progress, monitor delivery and re-prioritise the actions in the Strategy. Medium and longer term projects – contingent on the successful securing of additional funding – would be scheduled during stages 3 and 4 – i.e. from year 2 onwards. In the 4th year of the strategy timeline there would be a full review and refresh of the overall Town Centre Strategy to set the course of action over the subsequent five years.
Funding
This strategy does not try and set out full details and funding requirements for every identified action. Development of the details and identifying the source(s) of funding is a key next step.

As discussed above, significant resources will be required in order to deliver the full strategy. The Council and key partners can deliver some actions identified in this Strategy by adjusting and aligning existing resources. However, the delivery of larger projects will involve seeking additional external funding.

At this stage, a variety of potential funding streams have been identified, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Months 1-3</th>
<th>Stage 2: Months 3-12</th>
<th>Stage 3: Years 2-3</th>
<th>Stage 4: Years 4+</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Convene key stakeholder working groups</td>
<td>• Deliver quick wins and pilot projects</td>
<td>• Deliver Medium term projects</td>
<td>• Deliver Longer term projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collectively agree prioritised actions and commit resources</td>
<td>• Undertake feasibility studies</td>
<td>• Periodic review and reprioritisation</td>
<td>• Review and refresh the Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Plan and prepare to deliver priority quick wins / pilots</td>
<td>• Apply for additional funding</td>
<td>• Apply for additional funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Periodic review of progress</td>
<td>• Prepare for larger longer term projects</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Council and partner resources:

- London Borough of Bexley’s Resources – In the past the Council Town Centres team has successfully regenerated towns by committing Council match funding to unlock significant investment from other parties such as the GLA;
- BIDs – The BIDs are key delivery partners and have access to both their own funds and are able to apply to some additional funding streams not accessible to Local Government;
- Additionally, partners such as the BIDs and other stakeholders can strengthen joint bids for external funding by offering additional contributions alongside the Council’s funding as match.
External funding sources:

- **GLA** – The GLA is one of the main sources of regeneration and development funding for town centres across London. Current funding opportunities include the Good Growth Fund, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Healthy Streets;

- **TfL** – TfL is another major source of funding and is currently funding a large portion Bexley’s on-going regeneration and transport improvements;

- **Central Government** - Some central government departments allocate funding to encourage economic growth across the regions – for example the MHCLG has funded several rounds of the Local Growth Fund through Growth Deals with Local Enterprise Partnerships. These pots of money are usually devolved to and managed by the GLA in the Greater London context. Another recently announced potential central government funding source is the £675m Future High Streets fund – and expressions of interest for this were submitted in March 2019.

- **Additional grants** - There are a number of foundations, large and small (e.g. The Heritage Lottery Fund), from which funding for specific projects can be sought;

- **Private sector development in town centres** can either directly or indirectly fund and implement some of the necessary town centre actions (e.g. through Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements).

- **Community funding models** – The Council is exploring funding options for community-led solutions in Bexley including the Bexley Community Fund, raised through the Bexley Community Lottery and investing in a civic crowdfunding platform which could be used for projects and events that seek to bring people together and revitalise shared spaces and local town centres.

- **Commercial sponsorship and income generation** – This will be explored and could be through rental of commercial space or co-working space.

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**Monitoring and Evaluation**

The impact and effectiveness of the Strategy will be monitored in a number of ways as it is implemented. Ongoing measurement of the health of each town centre will be done by using a basket of different indicators such as footfall, vacancies, spending patterns, business performance and confidence. This ongoing monitoring programme will help to track the progress of town centres against the overall Strategy objective which is to improve the vibrancy, competitiveness and economic vitality of Bexley’s Town Centres.

Each programme or project which is commissioned as a result of the Strategy will also have an element of evaluation built into the project plan. Key Performance Indicators will be devised for each project which will measure its success and contribution to the overarching Strategy outcomes.

The monitoring information from regular town centre health checks and project evaluation data will be reported to the relevant town centre partners.

Whilst there will be a commitment to continuously monitor the overall health of town centres, and the outcomes of individual projects, the overall Strategy will be reviewed at least 4 years after its adoption – and it is expected that the Strategy would require some refreshing at this stage taking account of both local and national trends.

2 https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/marketing-resources/micro-moments/purchase-decision-mobile-growth/

3 https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/internet-use-borough-and-population-sub-groups

4 CACI, 2018. Retail Landscape 2018

5 'Street Appeal: The value of street improvements', summary report. UCL (commissioned by Transport for London) 2018

6 John Thompson, Martyn Benson, Peter McDonagh, The social and economic impact of improving a town centre: The case of Rotherham, February, 2015

7 Regeneris Consulting, Bromley North Village Improvement Scheme Impact Review A Final Report

8 LDC annual report 2017

9 Local Economic Assessment 2017, Stockton on Tees Council

x Experian GOAD Category Reports (2011 and 2018)