

<b>MAYOR AND CABINET</b>		
<b>Report Title</b>	Matter referred by the Forest Hill Assembly – improving the high street	
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	Item No. 7
<b>Ward</b>	Forest Hill, Perry Vale	
<b>Contributors</b>	Executive Director for Regeneration	
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	Date: 20 October 2010

## 1. Summary

This Report provides the response to the Mayor and Cabinet from the Executive Director for Regeneration to the of the statement of community views of the Forest Hill assembly on the issue of improving Forest Hill high street and the issue of the number of empty shop units. It also proposes action to improve the subway under the railway.

## 2. Purpose of the Report

To inform Mayor and Cabinet of the response of the Director for Regeneration on the implications of referral by the Forest Hill assembly in relation to the high street and of works proposed to the station subway

## 3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Mayor agrees to:

- 3.1. Submit the response of the Executive Director as outlined in Paragraph 8 to the Forest Hill Assembly
- 3.2. Agree to the use of up to £104k of funding from the monies allocated to improve access to the East London Line stations in the Council's capital programme for works to improve Forest Hill subway and that a new agreement be negotiated with Network Rail for future maintenance to clarify responsibilities.

## 4. Introduction

- 4.1 The first Forest Hill assembly identified the issue of improving the high street and addressing the issue of the number of empty shops as one of the key five priorities. This priority was reaffirmed at subsequent meetings of the Assembly

and a street clutter report was commissioned by the assembly and undertaken by an independent consultant, funded by the Mayor's Fund. .

- 4.3 The street clutter report was discussed in detail at the meeting held on 1 February 2010 and in welcoming its recommendations the assembly voted unanimously to make a referral to Mayor and Cabinet asking for a formal response to the recommendations contained in the report.
- 4.4 The specific recommendations of the street clutter report were considered against the general context of the perceived decline of Forest Hill high street, the numbers of empty shops (15-25%) and the general view of local residents that the high street has been neglected and needs more support from the Council. The assembly noted that there was an important window of opportunity to make improvements to the high street with the opening of the East London Line and the work on Forest Hill Pools which are due to open at the start of 2012 and will bring new footfall to the area.
- 4.5 The assembly's statement of community views is as follows:
- (i) The Forest Hill town centre is in need of more support from the Council and that the shop vacancy rate, as we have calculated it, at 25%, is far too high and is of serious concern.
  - (ii) The arrival of the East London Line and the replacement of Forest Hill Pools both give cause for optimism but that the council needs to seize these opportunities and to make the most of them to attract new businesses and interests.
  - (iii) That the Coordinating Group should continue to work with officers to look for short and medium term improvements such as removing rubbish bins and extending parking times.
  - (iv) That if it were possible to implement the recommendations of the street clutter report that this would really help to restore pride, attract new businesses and would help to smarten up what is now a rather shabby and sad looking town centre.

The Ward assembly therefore calls for:

- (i) A formal response from the Mayor and Cabinet to the recommendations of the street clutter report and instruct officers to provide a formal response to the recommendations contained within the report, including the costs of the prescribed works.
- (ii) Consider preparing a bid to Transport for London for an area based scheme to include cost implications and an indicative timetable.
- (iii) For Mayor and Cabinet to encourage further cooperation between the assembly, the coordinating group and officers to explore what more can

be done in the short and medium term to bring improvements and to work together on the Action Plan to be prepared by the coordinating group. Consideration to be given to increasing parking times to one hour and working to get rubbish bins off the street.

- (iv) For the Council to consider how and what more it can do to make the most of the opportunities presented by the arrival of the East London Line and the opening of Forest Hill Pools and to report this back to and work with the local assembly on this plan of action.
- (v) For the Mayor to consider creating an Area Action Plan for Forest Hill town centre area, for inclusion within the Local Development Framework.

4.6 The subway at Forest Hill is not part of the station and is entirely unconnected with the station which is now leased to TfL London Rail and operated on its behalf by LOROL. Network Rail maintain the subway and Lewisham lights it, sweeps it and is responsible for painting it. This division of responsibility has meant that the subway remains in poor condition and to date only very limited progress has been made on improvement. The condition of the subway has been raised by local members and by the Forest Hill Society and there is local impatience at the lack of progress.

## **5. Content of the Street Clutter Report**

5.1 The Forest Hill Street Clutter study was carried out by Colin Davis Associates on behalf of the Forest Hill Assembly. It looked at the area of London Road from the junction with Dartmouth Road to 58 London Road (just west of Sainsbury's), along Dartmouth Road from the junction with London Road as far as Forest Hill Pool, along Devonshire Road and Waldram Crescent as far as the railway bridge.

5.2 The report is largely pictorial, but draws attention to:

- The history of Forest Hill
- Variable quality of footways but especially poor on the east side of Dartmouth Road
- Guardrailing and sign clutter around the junction of Dartmouth Road and London Road
- Intrusive banners, signs and wires, especially on London Road and Devonshire Road
- Clutter around bus stops including advertising phones and signage which could be integrated
- Bollards on London Road and Dartmouth Road
- Domestic and Commercial waste bins left out permanently and litter in planters
- Poor quality housing estate signage

5.3 Its conclusions are that a programme to reduce street clutter would improve the image of Forest Hill, but that specifically there are six locations where a longer term project would be worthwhile to create and improve public spaces:

- Station Forecourt – sign clutter, bollards and planters, cycle shed and service yard
- Longer term scheme to relocate parking to Perry Vale car park
- Junction of London Road and Dartmouth Road – sign clutter caused largely by pedestrian crossing arrangements
- Wetherspoons forecourt (London Road) - possible informal town square – remove clutter in front of it including bus stop
- Old Post Office forecourt (west side of Dartmouth Road) - possible public town square cleared of bollards and equipment
- Heron House forecourt (west side of Dartmouth Road) – another possible public space
- West side of Dartmouth Road – replace railings along housing site boundary and replace with low boundary wall set back to double width of footway

5.4 Specifically the report suggests that someone within Lewisham should co-ordinate all signs and new equipment installed by utility companies, Transport for London on main roads, starting with London Road, Dartmouth Road and Devonshire Road.

## 6. Background

6.1 In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the railway was built, the area was farmland. As a result the railway had to provide relatively few crossing points. Those that were provided became main roads and where there was a station an urban settlement grew up. Other roads were constructed and tended to focus on such crossing points. As traffic levels have grown these locations suffer from excessive traffic, conflicts between pedestrians and traffic, relatively high accident rates, congestion, rat running in residential streets and much street clutter because of the proliferation of services. Forest Hill is a prime example of this, located as it is on the A205 South Circular. The coming of the East London Line can be expected to make matters worse with a large increase in rail usage increasing the pedestrian flows.

6.2 The Council adopted the Forest Hill Urban Design Framework and Development Strategy, produced by Llewelyn-Davies Consultancy, as supplementary planning guidance in 2003. This set out a conceptual framework for the future:

- The station as a focus
- Links across the railway
- Public realm improvements (London Road and Dartmouth Road)
- The library, Pools etc as a new gateway community focus
- New public spaces (Dartmouth Road park, new public spaces either side of the station)
- Increased pedestrian permeability
- Maximising development potential
- Views and landmarks

- 6.3 The study set out an agenda for urban quality, covering the street landscape, decluttering, designing the spaces, consistent and co-ordinated signage, lighting, public art, frontages and shop fronts, a palette of materials and styles.
- 6.4 It set out guidance for priority areas:  
Improvements to the station area  
The route to the Horniman  
Dartmouth Road  
Perry Vale  
Major bus/rail interchange improvements including a new station square
- 6.5 It sets out a development strategy with the station as a new landmark building, aligned with London Road, new development flanking the new public space, with development principles set out for the Sainsbury's site (since redeveloped) the Library, Pools and Louise House (new Pool proposal being implemented now) and Perry Vale, Clyde Terrace, Clyde Vale and the rear of Dartmouth Road (significant sections of which have since been redeveloped)
- 6.6 The document was adopted as supplementary planning guidance. The principles in this study have guided the form of subsequent developments, but it has not, to date been possible to achieve the fundamental redevelopment of the station square as envisaged at that time. This remains an aspiration.
- 6.7 The core problem at Forest Hill is the statutory division of responsibility. London Road, the junction with Dartmouth Road and Devonshire Road/Waldram Crescent are the responsibility of Transport for London. Lewisham is not the highway authority and carries out no highway functions on these roads. On these roads and the Lewisham roads (Dartmouth Road south of the junction) various utilities and other parts of Transport for London have the right to site equipment, to place bus stops and to provide bus shelters. There are also agreements for advertising displays that do not expire for several years yet.
- 6.8 The station, including the forecourt (but not the subway) was owned by Railtrack which became Network Rail and is leased to the train operating company. Railtrack had no rail development brief and Network Rail has acquired this function relatively recently. The train operating company has changed three times since 2003. It was originally Connex. That was replaced by Southern, owned by GOVIA, and at the latest franchise change it was given under a long lease to Transport for London (Rail for London) who have given a concession to London Overground Rail Operations Limited (LOROL) to run it. As such it has been very difficult to engage with the rail industry on the future of this key site. Officers understand that Network Rail and only two other private owners are the landowners for the land required for the new square and the land to the north.
- 6.9 The subway at Forest Hill was constructed by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) and is the subject of an 1880 agreement between that railway and the local authority. Network Rail are the successors to the LBSCR and have inherited its liabilities. The subway is no longer part of the station

complex but remains an important shared pedestrian and train passenger link between Perry Vale and the station's ticket office and the other facilities in London Road/Dartmouth Road which avoids the alternative lengthy detour around Waldram Park Crescent. The station itself is now leased to TfL London Rail and operated on its behalf by LOROL. Network Rail maintain the subway and Lewisham lights it, sweeps it and is responsible for painting it..

- 6.10 When the Berkeley Homes development took place, on the corner of Perry Vale and Hindsleys Place, a sum was included in the S106 agreement for transport works. These were principally the scheme to realign Perry Vale to create a wider footway on the western side to increase flexibility for future station enhancements. A sum was set aside to improve the subway. This was about £21,000 and it was originally envisaged that it would be used to clean, repaint, replace lighting and replace handrails. This was to be done by the developer in agreement with Network Rail. In the event it proved very difficult for the developer to liaise with Network Rail and the money has now been passed over to Lewisham.
- 6.11 Network Rail have carried out some works already to the subway. These have been funded as part of the Access for All bridge scheme on the station and the Council was not made aware of them prior to them being carried out. The section of the subway under the main railway tracks has been painted and lighting units replaced with some additional ones installed. New CCTV linked to the station CCTV has also been put in.

## 7. Policy

- 7.1 The contents of this report are consistent with the Council's policy framework. The Lewisham (Transport) Local Implementation Plan (LIP), which is part of the Policy Framework, sets objectives for this type of Town Centre Area Based Scheme in general:

**LIP Policy 3A.2 Town Centres** In preparing designs and improvements for town centre streets, the Council will acknowledge the complex nature of streets, in particular that –

- The appearance and consequently people's enjoyment of the street is influenced by the vertical plane (the 'walls' of the street) as well as by the horizontal plane (the 'floor' of the street).
- Both 'residing' and 'moving' are roles for the street. Designing for 'passage' must be balanced with designing as a 'place'. The role of 'Destination' will be balanced against that of 'Drive-Through'.
- The town centres and their streets have a multitude of transport (e.g. public transport interchange) roles and non-transport roles. The balance of 'Accessibility', 'Amenity' and 'Attraction', should be optimised to foster the health of the centres.

- 7.2 Proposals for the centre of Forest Hill support the achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy policy priorities:
- Safer – where people feel safe and live free from crime, antisocial behaviour and abuse.
  - Clean, green and liveable – where people live in high quality housing and can care for and enjoy their environment.

- Dynamic and prosperous – where people are part of vibrant communities and town centres, well connected to London and beyond.

7.3 TfL also set a variety of objectives for such Area Based Schemes including:

- Improve the physical and living environment
- Reduce vehicle dominance and create attractive outdoor living spaces
- Improve personal security, reduce the fear of crime, particularly for travel during the hours of darkness
- Increase the opportunities for local people to use streets as social spaces
- Reduce the adverse effects of traffic
- Improve conditions for cyclists, pedestrians and bus users to encourage more journeys by these modes
- Improve accessibility of the public transport network for everyone

7.4 TfL has now changed 'Area Based Scheme' funding to what it calls 'Major Scheme' funding, expecting to fund fewer but larger projects. Whilst Major Scheme funding still has to be bid for, much of the other funding (primarily 'Corridor and Neighbourhood' funding) provided by TfL to local authorities is now allocated on the basis of 'need' rather than requiring bids. In October, local authorities must inform TfL of the following year's proposed Corridor and Neighbourhood projects in order to release that funding,

7.5 To be able to make a bid for Area Based / Major Scheme funding, the proposal must be included within the LIP. There is no proposal for Dartmouth Road to be included in the current LIP. However, the London Mayor published his Transport Strategy on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, along with guidance to local authorities on the preparation of their new LIPs. The new LIPs should include:

- a 20011/12 – 20013/14 delivery plan setting out projects and proposals justified and prioritised in the light of Transport Strategy objectives and local objectives; and
- a prioritised list of Major Schemes for which the local authority might consider bidding to TfL for funding during the life of the LIP.

The London Mayor's Transport Strategy has an emphasis on 'Better Streets' setting out a five point scale of intervention:

1. Tidy up
2. Declutter
3. Relocate/merge functions
4. Rethink traffic management options
5. Recreate the street

## **8. Response of the Executive Director for Regeneration.**

8.1 The suggestions made in the report commissioned by the Assembly are consistent with the Council's policies and indeed restate in similar terms what the earlier 2003 strategy proposed. Although there has been progress on town

and local centre schemes elsewhere in Lewisham, most notably at Blackheath, Lee Green, in progress at Deptford and about to commence in Sydenham, it has been more difficult to make progress at Forest Hill. This is because the main road through Forest Hill is the responsibility of TfL and the somewhat complicated and evolving structure of the railway assets.

- 8.2 Nevertheless, there has been significant change secured in Forest Hill, including:
- the Hindsley's Place and Clyde Vale developments, realignment of Perry Vale, the extension of Sainsbury's, the provision of a new DDA compliant bridge at the station and the rebuilding of Forest Hill Pools.
- 8.3 The Assembly asks for a number of actions. It has not been possible to cost the measures proposed in the report as they are general comments and not detailed schemes. Some of the actions are for other bodies and their costing methodology is not known. However, the scale of the changes proposed, taken together would approach the costs incurred for the scheme at Sydenham.
- 8.4 There are requests for short term action, for example in enforcing removal of bins from the footway and in extending half hour on street parking to one hour. Lewisham's Environment Division introduced a pilot scheme, High Street Services, in the summer of 2007. Following the success of that pilot, which ran between Catford and Lewisham, the initiative was rolled out to other areas of the borough, including parts of Forest Hill. The High Street Services initiative changes the collection patterns of waste, including the removal of bins off streets, by working collaboratively with other departments and stakeholders so that waste can only be placed out and collected at specific time bands in that area.
- 8.5 Although these new time band collections have been a success where they have been implemented, the increase in the varying collection schedules has put a strain on the operational services ability to deliver a quality service throughout the day. The more schemes that were added, the more difficult it has been to deliver the services in terms of the time slots allocated to the different areas (crews need to be able to collect from locations within stated times).
- 8.6 Any further areas to be added to the initiative will need extra resources to roll the initiative out into those areas. Resources would have to directly fit in with the time bands that are agreed borough wide, which with the present resources would present operational problems as the operational services would have to ensure that all vehicles were in the specific areas at the specific times throughout each day. This is especially important for any enforcement action that may be carried out.
- 8.7 Currently parking in Forest Hill on street ,outside the controlled parking zone, is for 30 minutes in the Dartmouth Road area and the limited time was



provided to maximise the use of limited parking space. Free parking time at the Sainsbury's car park has recently been extended to two hours.

Discussions with the Forest Hill Traders have also indicated that the thirty minute bays are being abused and not being used for the purposes that they were intended for. On street bays with a one hour wait time are difficult to enforce and it would be unlikely that compliance with a one hour limit could be achieved. This would make it more difficult to find a parking place as any extension to average parking times reduces the number of cars that can park by a corresponding amount. Prior to any changes a consultation would be required and funding for this together with any necessary changes to the traffic order identified. There is currently no funding available and it is not a change that could be funded by prudential borrowing as it would not generate any income to pay for the cost. Indeed it could increase enforcement costs.

- 8.8 However officers are preparing a future CPZ consultation programme which will be the subject of consideration and agreement by Mayor and Cabinet later in the year. It is likely that one of the proposed consultation areas will include Dartmouth Road between the A205 and Thorpewood Avenue. This will incorporate some of the existing free 30 minute bays. Any CPZ design would almost certainly retain the free 30 minute facility but may also link it to allow paid for parking beyond the 30 min free time limit. However it should be noted that we would not increase the free time above 30mins, for the reasons above.
- 8.9 It is recognised that the public realm within Dartmouth Road is poor and any proposals for improvement to Dartmouth Road from the end of the red route markings as far as the pools, would make the road a more pedestrian friendly place and provide pleasant public space. The Forest Hill Urban Design Framework proposed a number of improvements for Dartmouth Road and as the Assembly suggest this would be a project for TfL to fund. Whether it would be a candidate for Major Scheme funding for which it would have to compete with other projects across London, or for corridor or neighbourhood funding, in which case it would be Lewisham's choice from its formula allocation remains to be worked out.
- 8.10 It is likely that there will be less money from TfL in future years. Nevertheless, improvements to the public realm in Dartmouth Road would complement the new pool and would it be a worthwhile project. Consideration will be given to the scope of such a scheme and its inclusion in the TfL programme. If required (and subject to the CPZ proposals discussed in paragraph 8.8) a review of parking on Dartmouth Road may form part of this scheme. Further work would be required to investigate this and at the Mayor and Cabinet held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October it was proposed to include in the 2011 /12 a sum of £50k as part of the Corridors and Neighbourhoods allocation from TfL for 2011/12 to undertake feasibility and carry out some preliminary design with a view to develop proposals which could complement the new swimming pool.
- 8.11 No funding is proposed for construction in later years as emerging proposals may form the basis of a bid to TfL for major scheme funding. This is dependent on future years funding from TfL and this will need to be

considered in the light of objectives within the emerging second Local Implementation Plan and against demands and needs for investment within other parts of the Borough

- 8.12 Proposals for radical changes to the South Circular Road, footways along it and the pedestrian crossing and junction with Dartmouth Road are for TfL to progress. They would be expensive to build and before embarking on such a scheme the future of the station building, its location and of the new square in line with London Road proposed in the 2003 report needs to be resolved. Given the current financial restrictions on Network Rail and TfL any redevelopment would be dependent on a development proposal. The road scheme would have to take its place in TfL list of schemes and is unlikely to be receive funding in the near future.
- 8.13 At the Council meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, the Local Development Framework : Local Development Scheme was adopted and brought into effect. The Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is a project plan that outlines the planning documents the Council is preparing and the timelines for their preparation and adoption in relation to available resources. The LDS does not include proposals for preparing an Area Action Plan for Forest Hill and there are no resources to carry out such work. However, as set out above, the Council already has adopted supplementary planning guidance for Forest Hill in the form of the 2003 Forest Hill Urban Design Framework and Development Strategy. Whilst this was prepared some years ago its objectives and guidance remain relevant and it is consistent with the recent Assembly work.
- 8.14 As regards the subway, a site meeting was held in September 2009 with Network Rail. Matters discussed included Network Rail's liabilities as to the length of the subway they are responsible for and other duties. The issue of making it watertight was considered, as with sections open to the elements and water running into gutters the subway had never been watertight in the purest sense of the word.
- 8.15 It was agreed to build on what Network Rail had done by the money from the development S106 being used in the first instance to replace the guttering and to provide infill to prevent drink cans and other debris being left in the gutters, blocking them. It would also greatly improve the appearance. Network Rail would clean out and resolve any problems with the drainage and renew the floor surface. Subject to establishment of liability Network Rail would renew step surfaces and repair/renew handrails. Such works to the subway would require its closure for a period and therefore could not be programmed until it was certain that the new station footbridge would be open
- 8.16 Now that the Access for All footbridge works are complete, we are discussing with Network Rail for the works they promised to undertake and how best to clad the subway. It is hoped that a white enamel finish as used in the subways by Network Rail at Lewisham station can be installed. The possibility of CCTV camera connection to Lewisham's system, needs to be investigated. Lewisham's street lighting PFI is likely to commence next year and officers will discuss with the preferred bidder when they are selected how replacement

of the subway lighting under the PFI can be carried out in conjunction with the installation of interior cladding, perhaps as an advance work to the PFI. The contractor would then maintain the lights for 25 years. The remaining walls of the subway would be repainted by Lewisham and treated with anti-graffiti finish . It is estimated that these works will cost £104k

## 9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 A capital budget of £730k was included in the Directorates Capital programme in 2005/06 to provide funding to enhance station access to the extended East London Line that now forms part of the London Overground Network. This funding was obtained as part of the reward system in relation a Transport Local Public Service Agreement.
- 9.2 On the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 , Mayor and Cabinet approved the report outlining the emerging strategy on how the funding was intended to be spent on some of the stations along the line to complement the work carried out by London Overground and other industry partners
- 9.3 Funding of £146k was used to complete the works adjacent to Brockley station, known as Brockley Common and funding of £310k is also proposed to improve Sydenham station approach , subject to agreement with the railway authorities .
- 9.4 It is proposed to use £104k for works to improve Forest Hill Subway and a new agreement will be negotiated with Network Rail for future maintenance to clarify responsibilities. This is an increase of £4k from the amount allocated as part of the September 2008 report.
- 9.5 The budget, referred to in paragraph 9.1, was the total capital budget allocated to the East London Line extension programme. This is now recommended to be allocated to projects as follows:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Funding £'000s)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Brockley Station	146	Spent 08/09 & 09/10
Forest Hill Subway	104	This Report
Sydenham Station	353	310 from 2008 Report revised estimate shown
New Cross Station	50	From 2008 Report
Honor Oak park	50	From 2008 Report
Unallocated/contingency	27	
<b>Total</b>	<b>730</b>	

## **10. Legal Implications**

- 10.1 Executive Procedure Rule 19 in the Constitution outlines that each local assembly may place up to one item on Mayor and Cabinet agenda in any twelve month period, unless the Mayor agrees to contrary, restricted to a maximum of any two such items on any agenda.

## **11. Equalities implications**

The proposals in this report will make it easier for disabled users to navigate the town centre and get to the new pools. It is not possible at this stage to provide a DDA complaint route to the subway but this will be borne fully in mind when the medium term scheme is designed. Improved lighting will assist those with visual impairment.

## **12. Environmental implications**

The prime objective of the proposals is to enhance the public realm. The proposals in this report aim to create a more pleasant, more traffic civilised environment through which to walk and cycle. By improving the pedestrian environment, the project also seeks to help sustain or improve the vitality of the town centre which provides a variety of services within walking distance of much of the Forest Hill community. The project also aims to support the growth in rail use predicted with the opening of East London Line Extension, and to improve the bus passenger waiting and informal interchange environment.

## **13. Crime and disorder implications**

Removal of unnecessary street clutter will reduce the opportunity for antisocial behaviour and improve the sense of security. Changes to the subway including CCTV will reduce the risk of crime

## **14. Conclusion**

The work carried out for the assembly confirms the conclusions of the earlier 2003 study and the Supplementary Planning Guidance issued at that time. Despite considerable progress in bringing forward developments in Forest Hill there has been disappointingly slow progress on matters such as the street scene and the subway. This report sets out a clear strategy to move forward with achievable projects which will, subject to availability of resources, realise that vision.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Forest Hill Urban Design Framework and Development Strategy –  
Supplementary Planning Guidance March 2003**

**Forest Hill street clutter report, January 2010.**

**Mayor and Cabinet 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 -Report Matter referred by the Forest Hill Assembly**

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Paul Stewart on 020 8314 2269 or Malcolm F Smith on 020 8314 2590 .