

## Regeneration Committee site visit to Deptford town centre and Goldsmiths, 14 November 2013

### Attendees

Assembly Members	Gareth Bacon (Chairman), Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair), James Cleverly
Assembly staff	Richard Derecki, Jo Sloman, Sheena Craig, William Bradley, Martha Mingay, Duncan Maclean
Visiting	Gavin Plaskitt (Programme Manager, LB Lewisham) Sandra Plummer (Project Manager, LB Lewisham) (Claire Pritchard Renewal Manager, Director Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, GCDA) (Mel Taylor: Renewal Manager, Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency, GCDA) Thanh Uong (Two Hungry Bees) Paul Harper (South Area Manager, Regeneration, GLA) Erin Byrne (Senior Project Officer, Regeneration, GLA) Patrick Loughrey (Warden, Goldsmiths College) Liz Bromley (Registrar and Secretary, Goldsmiths College)

### Overview of visit

The Committee visited Deptford to learn about how the Outer London Fund has been used to support regeneration on the High street and surrounding area. The visit began with a briefing and discussion at Deptford Lounge, followed by a tour of the High Street, and a walk through Route 1 to New Cross. The Committee also visited Goldsmiths College to hear about the University's role in the area. This document provides a summary of the visit.

### Outer London Fund

#### *The OLF in Deptford*

- Deptford High Street was chosen for the OLF because it ties the area together. It is a successful trading street but there were negative public perceptions due to 2-way traffic, parking, and chaotic market stall arrangements. Footways were disintegrating and electrical bollards created clutter, producing an unattractive market environment. Surveys carried out prior to the OLF bid revealed that there was a 42% increase in footfall to the High Street on market days which highlighted the benefit that the market provides for the street.
- Other strands of work include:
  - Parking improvements – the introduction of a Restricted Parking Zone (RPZ) and simpler signage requirements associated with this type of parking regime will preserve the characteristics of the High Street by seeking to facilitate convenience shopping. Shops in the street are largely small independents who rely on shoppers who park for short periods to purchase specialist products in large quantities that are difficult and heavy to carry. Enforcers will explain changes to shopkeepers and customers.
  - Shop fronts – the Council will provide a limited number of shops with renewed fronts and display units to forecourt areas. Those chosen are either shops that have had to reduce their frontage to improve movement along the High Street or which have an historical interest.
  - GCDA carried out a questionnaire/ consultation of the High Street. This led to:
    - Plans to animate the street with art, and change previously segregated uses. Projects have included poets on the High Street.

- Food tours to bring a new audience to Deptford to celebrate the cuisine and ingredients used by local communities. Food fairs have received extensive media coverage, both locally and internationally (eg. Guadeloupe tour).
  - A new group for businesses; Deptford Society. It is now a legal body representing local businesses, and it is planning a Christmas event on 7 December that will correspond with the monthly food market: Giffin Square Food Fair
  - Work to integrate 2 high street websites (My Deptford High Street and Deptford High Street).
  - An apprenticeship programme, which in 2013 has involved training for people interested in starting up a business through market trading. The scheme was derived when Lewisham Council identified that most market traders are over 50 and aimed to entice a younger generation into market trading to help sustain the profession in the longer term; the second round was aimed primarily at food businesses. The training programme is about to become accredited and in total 14 candidates benefited from the scheme with a number still trading in the borough's markets. Some have even progressed to host Supper Clubs and pop up restaurants.
  - The Committee met Thanh who had not previously produced food commercially. Through the programme he gained positive publicity via Twitter and facebook and began to use this form of marketing himself. He recently extended his experience from a market stall sales to an event at the Catford Supper Club, a pop-up restaurant in Catford.
- The Committee heard that Lewisham would not have carried out these activities without the OLF. It had previously spent £26 million upgrading key infrastructure in the town centre, but financial pressures on the local authority meant there was no funding to address the issues on the High street. LB Lewisham commented that the OLF provides an opportunity to think about what works in regeneration.
  - Legacies of the project will include the 9-10 market trainees who are still trading (out of 20), culinary tours (which will continue on a fee-paying basis), and the new civic organisation – Deptford Society. While the OLF funding is proportionately small, it has 'punched above its weight'.
  - The Council's objective is for OLF funds to support works and initiatives that can become self-sustaining therefore creating long-term vibrancy.

#### *Wider regeneration in Deptford*

- LB Lewisham's Masterplan for North Lewisham included the upgrading of Route 1 – a pedestrian and cycling route – which connects Deptford High Street and New Cross via an attractive traffic free route. Route 1, including Douglas Way, Margaret McMillan and Fordham Parks, was previously under used due to fear of crime and reduced accessibility. Following consultation and renewal, it has now become a public destination. A new school has been amalgamated and rebuilt within Fordham Park and a previously unattractive underpass has been renewed, in partnership with local artist, Heather Burrell. The route also connects the Waldron Health Centre and major transport connections at New Cross and New Cross Gate stations that now provide a new Overground service.
- Several other regeneration projects have recently been completed or are underway, including: Upgraded leisure centre, with 25m metre pool and gym facilities; Deptford Lounge (combining a new library, community hub and school facilities); new housing (including housing of different sizes); Deptford Station, part-funded by the Council and Network Rail, as a key part of the town's infrastructure that will incorporate a private development adjacent to the station (by developers Cathedral Group & United House).

### *Other issues*

- Creative groups – Deptford has many creative communities and there is currently a shortage of creative space. Space may come at a higher premium as the area improves. The Council is keen to preserve space and as well as providing new space within Resolution Way which formed part of the New Deptford Lounge mixed use development (primary school/civic facilities/ new housing and studio space). It is looking at interim spaces under the railway arches and more permanent provision in the locality.
- Partnerships – the Council works closely with the Albany Theatre and is currently exploring opportunities for the Albany to animate public space around Route 1 in Douglas Way square.

### **Goldsmiths College**

- 70 per cent of the College's students have been from London, historically. Its student body is now more diverse, with more students applying from outside London.
- The College is looking at converting shops it owns on the High Street for use as incubator space for young businesses in the community. The College invites community groups and schools (Lewisham College prize-giving) to use its space, and share its vision for young people in the community.
- Goldsmiths has a long history in New Cross, and it seeks to use its estate to showcase how the area has changed. Its courses have developed in light of community interests; it provides performing arts and creative courses that resonate with young people, and the College has also developed its own record label.