

Southwark Council Night Time Plan

Introduction

Southwark committed in its last Council Plan to produce a Night Time Plan, and we are very happy to present this to you now.

During the unprecedented lockdown starting in March 2020, businesses that rely on night time opening hours, such as pubs, restaurants, and theatres, saw their operations curtailed and at points reduced to zero. Clearly this was a devastating time. Southwark supported over 2000 businesses with Additional Restriction Grants, alongside Local Restrictions Grants, delivering these with an enviable speed to our business community who were doing their bit to stem the effects of COVID-19 by closing and reopening at short notice and with uncertainty as to how long they could trade for. Southwark businesses and our residents deserve great credit for how they have dealt with the last two years.

Southwark's Night Time Plan is a statement of intent, building on the commitments in our Economic Recovery Plan. We will look to address how our night time economy can positively grow and evolve, and what aspects of the associated industries are there potential to have more of, and where in the borough.

Delivery will be through our partnerships and networks, both existing and new, co-ordinated by our Town Centre task forces and High Streets Action Plans. These were formed to deliver council commitments at a very local level, now through the lens of a post-lockdown borough that occupies a central place in Zones 1 and 2 of the nation's capital. Southwark is addressing activity at night as part of the long-term reopening of the borough, and acknowledges the useful work done on behalf of The Greater London Assembly in this area.

We have five themes in this plan:

- The economic and social benefits of the night time economy
- The role of and interface between governing bodies and communities
- The public realm and the built environment
- Public safety at night
- Transport

We anticipate this plan to be a living document, open to change as we resiliently and sensibly move forward. We are aware that the future is uncertain and there is no guarantee as to what any terms such as new normal, post lockdown, and post COVID-19 borough will finally mean.

This plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for Southwark's night time economy under the five themes, as we move forward as a borough and show Southwark is once again open for business, day and night.

The economic and social benefits of the night time economy

As a busy Zone 1 and 2 London Borough, Southwark has a large and thriving nightlife of pubs, restaurants and clubs and a vibrant evening-centred cultural scene, all of which combine to attract local and out of borough visitors. These businesses generate employment, earn money for their residents as staff and owners, and provide a significant contribution to local business rates. The enjoyment of the borough at exciting venues is a key part of living here.

However, no new strategy or action plan concerning our high streets can avoid discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions. Southwark Council was at the forefront of identifying extra money for grants for distressed businesses, and has been a leader in speed and efficiency in distributing them. However, there is much work still to be done to support the economy through the next phase of recovery.

COVID-19 has accelerated various trends that town centres and high streets were facing before 2020. Pubs, clubs, and restaurants remain a key part of the hospitality industry, and yet had been facing difficulties for a variety of economic and social reasons. Closures became a part of life for the industry and this affected the night time economy hugely, taking away a source of employment and provision for residents and visitors. Persistent vacancies in shop units can affect the vibrancy and diversity of any town centre offer, while ongoing moves towards online shopping and high streets as places for socialising and activities other than traditional spending will mean high streets need to adapt to changing uses.

COVID-19 has also disrupted the occupancy of high streets, the full effects of which are not known and may affect the make-up of high streets for years. Commercial areas within the Central Activities Zone, previously Southwark's busiest areas, have been hard hit by and slow to recover from COVID-19 lockdowns. The furlough scheme and other changes to employment, welcome and necessary as they were during lockdown, has changed the game for hospitality and service industry staff and owners who will undoubtedly consider their options and future work plans.

We have pledged in our Borough Plan to address the concerns of occupancy and employment in our town centres and high streets. We will support hard-working business owners with a full business support offer; financial advice and support where appropriate and help with navigating planning and licensing. In addition the council provides local businesses with a free employment and recruitment service at Southwark Works, and access to training where needed.

The council acknowledges the findings of the London at Night report presented to the Mayor, which raises concerns more than a third of night workers earn less than the London Living Wage, and that more than a third of Londoners say it is too expensive to take part in activities at night. While in the borough there has been a growth in night time hospitality and retail businesses between 2017 and 2021, this has not led to a substantial increase in jobs which may well indicate a continuing move to the gig economy. We seek to credit and acknowledge and support

businesses who pay London Living Wage which is a practical step towards this entrenched issue. Southwark Council itself is a London Living Wage employer and promotes the Wage through its supply chains

Southwark boasts some of London's most diverse and exciting town centres and our Economic Wellbeing Strategy sets out how we are ensuring that our high streets are smart and adaptive to changing retail behaviours, that retail space is well used, and demand remains high. A visit to a Southwark high street or town centre at any time of day or night should be a great experience, whether to shop, spend leisure time, work or do business.

We wish to promote an inclusive and safe borough at night. We activity support and promote safe LBGTQ+ venues. Bingo Halls are popular in the evening across a wide range of age groups. And our planning and licencing polices seek to protect pubs as community assets.

Through planning policies and regeneration activity we will protect and promote employment uses, including new workspaces, and continue to promote a vibrant mix of activities in our town centres. We recognise the contribution that arts and cultural businesses make to animate our town centres beyond 6pm, often acting as catalysts for additional economic activity in the retail and hospitality sectors, as well as the social benefits they bring, by creating safe spaces for all and focus points for community cohesion.

This mix of activities will ensure our town centres act as hubs for night time activity as well as daytime retail and we will use the creativity of our business hubs, interfacing with our town centre task forces, to meet the challenges of a post-lockdown world. Southwark will continue to grow its business base despite all the challenges ahead. It will be a borough where large and small businesses collaborate and thrive, a world-class place to do business, and the place of choice for entrepreneurs to start a new business.

We will:

1. Ensure Southwark responds in a timely manner to any future COVID-19 related restrictions, by prioritising small and local business support, including those affected by restrictions in the night time economy, on an emergency footing
2. Support businesses to adapt to the changing economy throughout the 24 hour city cycle by sympathetically considering changes to opening times and uses
3. Explore additional skills provision through a Hospitality Skills centre, enhancing opportunities for employers and employees for those jobs directly related to the night time economy
4. Support and promote venues that acknowledge and provide safe spaces for a diverse audience
5. Refresh our Workspace Provider list to include providers able to work with developers and run space that enhances the night time offer in Southwark,

support the London Living Wage, and show an emphasis on culture and inclusion

6. Work with each of our town centre task forces to embed these commitments into the town centre action plans as best works for each local area

The role of and interface between governing bodies and communities

Community involvement runs as a thread through all our council commitments. Economic initiatives such as shopping local and assisting local businesses applying for planning and licensing approval require our residents to be both participants and customers. More than this however is the importance of residents not being 'done to' in any plan or strategy and being a key stakeholder in all aspects of our plans.

The Council is forming town centre task forces to take a one council approach to delivery and planning on our strategic approach to town centres and high streets, including for the night time. These will allow for strategic clout to drive through changes to revitalise our town centres, but also promote and facilitate a business-led approach to ideas and place-making.

Officers at the council will attend a dedicated Lead member briefing every two weeks with our Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities and Neighbourhoods as the overall lead for town centres and high streets, with the Director of Response and Renewal as senior director lead for town centres and high streets and the Head of Economy as deputy lead.

Successful town centres depend on a large range of components, and the council and its partners, including BIDs, can do much to help. Council services, from markets and street scene management, parking and licensing, lettings policies, waste collection, community safety, measures to reduce blight caused by closed shops, parks, libraries and other cultural offers, all support town centres to function well. These are co-ordinated by dedicated teams within the council, in concert with our town centre teams.

BIDs, town centre partnerships, the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses provide valuable routes to engaging with SMEs. Our efforts during the pandemic have also significantly improved our ability to communicate with businesses directly. However, we recognise the ongoing need to continue to engage with businesses in our town centres, even more so in areas affected by redevelopment, such as at the Elephant and Castle and the Old Kent Road.

We will continue to facilitate effective BIDS and town centre networks, bringing together those with an interest in successful town centres.

We will:

1. Invite representatives from the local business community onto town centre task forces to give their opinion on issues of commerce, safety, and opportunities and challenges for the night time.
2. Continue to represent local businesses interests to our strategic partners and central government, ensuring Southwark is at the forefront of the economic recovery.
3. Bid for national and regional funding where this will leverage gains for our borough.
4. Keep local businesses informed of developments in the business community through a dedicated e-newsletter
5. Work with each of our town centre task forces to embed these commitments into the town centre action plans as best works for each local area.

The public realm, culture and the built environment

Town centres and high streets are places for people to come together; they should be attractive and pleasant to be around the clock.

Culture plays a unique role in creating lively and welcoming places to visit and spend time during the day and night. Accessing culture and arts is beneficial for health and wellbeing. It also provides a way of mitigating the expense of some night time activities by providing alternative venues and spaces in which to participate. We will continue to support responsible business operators who contribute towards a vibrant business and night time economy, while ensuring that the quality of life of those who live and work in the borough is protected and enhanced.

The built environment is an important area when considering the night time economy. Not only are there immediate measures to consider, such as lighting, this theme creates the space to consider civic and public life, and the aesthetics of the borough at night. We ask what the 'offer' of the borough is to those residents and visitors who simply want to be in a safe and beautiful place at night regardless of whether they are participating in the traditional economy.

Making our town centres pleasant and interesting places for everyone beyond conventional '9-to-5' opening hours also contributes to our wider economic objectives for growth in business and jobs. Businesses are increasingly choosing to locate in areas that can offer their employees the most stimulating and pleasant experience outside the workplace. Our regeneration programmes continue in the face of COVID-19, responsibly transforming and revitalising established centres through housing growth, investment in the public realm, libraries, leisure centres, culture and infrastructure.

These projects include the regeneration of Elephant and Castle, Canada Water and Bermondsey, Peckham Station and Peckham Square, Peckham Levels, improvements to East Street, Tower Bridge Road and Lower Road, and the Low Line railway viaduct improvements.

Through our Economic Renewal Plan, we will support a range of diverse cultural sector organisations across the borough with Culture Together Grants, support a range of community events across the borough, and implement business support for grassroots creative businesses.

We have also recently launched our High Street Recovery Fund, the successor to six years of investment through the High Street Challenge programme, which will directly support local groups and businesses to deliver their own ideas to improve high streets and town centres. These include market events for black and women-owned businesses within Canada Water to drive revenue and attract people to return to the high street, and a cross cultural festival of contemporary street culture that will use creative interventions to connect the old and new high streets of East Street, Walworth Road, Sayer Street, Elephant Park, Castle Square and London Road.

We will:

1. Identify funds where possible to draw on the skill of our residents and businesses to enhance our high streets and town centres, with straightforward grant processes and council support
2. Seek to refresh and renew our policies and planning documents to ensure they are fit to ensure developers provide for residents post the COVID-19 lockdowns
3. Continue to regenerate our town centres with an account of the needs of the night time economy, but also promote spaces and venues that are lower cost
4. Work with each of our town centre task forces to embed these commitments into the town centre action plans as best works for each local area

Public safety at night

Southwark remains largely safe for most of the time, for most people, including at night. This makes it an attractive destination for both residents and visitors.

Our licensing and enforcement teams work with the hospitality industry in Southwark to address concerns with anti-social behaviour at licensed premises. There are a range of sanctions that can be put in place, up to and including closing down venues. However, this is preceded by careful consideration of the balance of a town centre, and what the effect of new premises and opening hours will have on a street, and an area. As other boroughs are doing in central London, we will consider community safety in partnership with the Metropolitan Police and Pubwatch as well as considering options to improve the response to alcohol-related harm.

Well-lit, well used, signposted streets are safer at night. This is why we will look into opportunities to increase the number of businesses and services that are open at this time and review the street lighting in key areas. The council will seek to improve the wayfinding infrastructure, such as the Lowline to make it easier for visitors to find their way to key destinations.

Southwark's community warden service provides a visible reassuring patrol presence for the community. Our newly structured service consists of 40 uniformed officers providing a borough wide service, including the Better Bankside wardens, ring-fenced to the Bankside Business Improvement District and supported by a dedicated enforcement officer.

National and local news creates a perception that areas of London and Southwark are fundamentally unsafe. The fear of crime can be corrosive to an area that should be a vibrant and thriving centre. However, as a council we wish to be honest about real crime that occurs in our town centres and neighbourhoods. We do have crime which affects our resident and visitors, and like other areas, knife crime has been a real blight on the borough.

Therefore, the newly re-launched Local Community Safety Partnership, co-chaired by the Strategic Director of Environment and Leisure and the Police Borough Commander will be working hard to tackle violence in Southwark and our services work with traditional police services to provide a comprehensive political, strategic, and operational approach to the immediate protection of residents, and addressing the underlying issues. The Youth Offending Service work with young people with involvement in the criminal justice system or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Complementing this, our Young Advisors sit within our Community safety team and offer mentorship and guidance with the aspiration to create change in their local community.

In addition, the Community Harm Exploitation Hub Operations Group provides support for individuals aged 16 to 25 at risk from gang related activity or serious violence. They offer a range of interventions and clients are offered support in areas including education and training, substance misuse, finance and health.

Like all parts of London and the UK, we have been compelled to address problematic attitudes towards both women, and ethnic minorities, who collectively make up a majority of any population and have the right to enjoy the night peaceably, yet are disproportionately affected by crime at night. This area has raised important policy questions for central and local government which Southwark must continue to address.

The council's women's safety survey, conducted between May and June this year in order to research local opinion following the murder of Sarah Everard, achieved 568 responses. Just over half (52%) of those who responded felt 'unsafe', particularly at night, and, even more worrying, 92% cited their gender as a reason to feel unsafe. In response to this we have taken a number of actions to improve the safety of women in our borough at night. This includes increased CCTV coverage, work with local businesses to highlight issues of women's safety, giving them the tools to identify concerns and reduce harm, environmental audits to 'design out' crime and street-based peer to peer education and awareness with our young people. In addition, the Metropolitan Police have implemented Project Vigilant in Southwark. A team of undercover, plain clothes, and high visibility uniform officers working in unison to combat offences at night.

Following the tragic events at London Bridge and Westminster we have seen a significant local increase in hate crime that targets a person's faith, but we are certain that there are many other unrecorded incidents motivated by other forms of prejudice.

Southwark Stands Together is a new, proactive approach which will focus on ways we can identify, listen and learn, and then tackle racism, inequality and injustice within the council and our borough. Headed by the Leader of the Council and cross cutting the Council's priorities, it is a key part of any new strategic thinking in the borough.

We will:

1. Put the safety of all women at the forefront of our thinking and initiatives for all aspects of our night time economy
2. Work with the Metropolitan Police on community safety at night
3. Continue to address issues of protection of our residents and businesses from crime that are activity facing Southwark
4. Work with our licensing teams to ensure a balance of flexible opening hours and safety of those visiting venues in the borough at night
5. Ensure the work of Southwark Stands Together is reflected in future Night Time Plan actions
6. Work with each of our town centre task forces to embed these commitments into the town centre action plans as best works for each local area

Transport

Public and active transport provision continue to play significant roles in enabling business growth in town centres at night. We will use our strategic influencing role with partners to drive key infrastructure projects including building capacity at Elephant and Castle station, access improvements at Surrey Quays Station, and championing the Bakerloo Line Extension.

Southwark has excellent transport links to central London and the South East. Well served by Rail, Overground, buses and road links, the main train stations at London Bridge and Peckham Rye have high throughput and make travel easy and quick.

However we do not want to lose the sense of scale in our streets. Residents have also told us they want green, peaceful and calm places, infrastructure to support easy and safe walking and cycling, and a strong, reliable, and accessible transport offer. Making space for people to walk, stop and experience places and spaces adds to their positive experience and liveliness of our town centres.

In our Council Movement Plan, we are looking at the experience of transport as well as the transport assets we hold in trust for our residents and visitors, in partnership with TfL. We want to balance the status of our transport links such as the Old Kent Road which acts as an artery for creative and light industrial business with making movement to, within and from town centres is easy, safe, efficient and accessible for all.

This challenge is increased at night, but we have largely addressed personal movement in our town centres with designs such as wider pavements with fewer obstructions, improved street lighting and easy and safe crossings with pedestrian priority. We are prioritizing space in town centres and high streets to meet the needs of those using them, encouraging access by foot, cycle and public transport.

Southwark has a responsibility to manage a safe and efficient operation of the network for all, including freight. With growth projections pre COVID-19, TfL estimated that delivery and servicing movements by Light Goods Vehicles in our borough will grow over 20% by 2031. This was already taking into account changing consumer behaviour linked to a rise in e-commerce and home deliveries, activities which are now common-place even among previous sceptical users.

As all businesses grapple with the potential for hybrid working models, and the effects this will have on journey's taken, this will undoubtedly change the nature of transport during the day. If this is met with a change of the nature of high streets, as markets adapt to changes in the value of office space and the potential for innovative building uses in our neighbourhoods, this will invariably affect the kind of uses residents and visitors want to see at night.

We will:

1. Continue our role as a key strategic partner for transport infrastructure in London
2. Work with venues to maximize the safety of those visiting the borough after 6pm
3. Ensure our Council Movement Plan balances the experiential nature of transport as well as the practical
4. Make town centres and high streets safe, easy and accessible by foot, cycle and public transport
5. Continue to work with businesses as office, retail, and industrial employment move to hybrid models and monitor the effect this has on the high street and town centres
6. Work with each of our town centre task forces to embed these commitments into the town centre action plans as best works for each local area