

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2009

Present:

Councillor Julian Benington (Chairman)
Kevin Dewick, Local Businessman
Neil Hawkins, LBB Renewal and Recreation
Adrian Hollands, Chamber of Commerce
Marc Hume, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Peter Jones, Bromley College
Mary Manuel, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Liz McNaughton, Treval Engineering
Laurie Taylor, The Glades
Ailsa Whitmarsh, Jobcentre Plus

Also Present:

Andrew Favell, LB Bromley

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Howard Oldstein – The Glades, Malcolm Brabon – Business Link London and John Hayes – Chamber of Commerce.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21st SEPTEMBER 2009 AND MATTERS ARISING

Peter Jones asked that the minutes be amended at 3(A) to reflect that Bromley College had bid for a range of other businesses and redundancy/unemployment support programmes and that they would be delivered in partnership with other agencies.

Ailsa Whitmarsh confirmed that the Jobcentre Plus 'Top Ten' vacancy lists would be circulated to all members of the Economic Partnership shortly.

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising

1. The Chairman reported that the Managing Partner of Thackray Williams Solicitors had expressed interest in joining the Economic Partnership.
2. Adrian Hollands agreed that representatives of the Chamber of Commerce would volunteer to take on the position of Vice Chairman of the Economic Partnership.

RESOLVED that the minutes be agreed.

3 UPDATE FROM SUB GROUPS

3.1 SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

The Chairman, Peter Jones, reported that the Sub-group had not had a further meeting since the last meeting of the Economic Partnership, but that the key areas of focus around business and redundancy support programmes and closer working with Jobcentre Plus were developing well.

3.2 INWARD INVESTMENT AND MARKETING

There was no update provided on the Inward Investment and Marketing Sub Group.

3.3 BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS AND INVESTMENT

Mary Manuel reported on behalf of the Chairman, that the latest meeting of the Sub Group had been held in Orpington, and additional businesses had been invited. A key area for discussion was around how the opening of the Tesco's in Orpington had affected local businesses. It was considered that a survey of local businesses might be effective in measuring the impact of the new supermarket, but that this would require consideration as the programme of public realm improvements to Orpington High Street would start (subject to Members approval) in January 2010 and this would also affect local trade.

The Chairman suggested that an initial survey of local businesses be repeated when public realm improvements had been completed to identify how the improvements to the High Street had benefited local traders.

Mary Manuel reported that a large scale business event was planned for March 2010 to provide a range of information and support to businesses across the Borough.

RESOLVED that progress be noted.

4 UPDATE FROM DIRECTOR OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION

The Director of Renewal and Recreation gave an update on economic activity across the Council.

The Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan had recently been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. Progress had been seen across a number of sites in the Area Action Plan. Site K, the Westmoreland Road Car Park was likely to be the first site to be developed. Consideration had also been given to the future development of the Pavilion Leisure Centre in partnership with Bromley Mytime, and Bromley North.

Final approval for the proposed investment in Orpington public realm improvements would shortly be considered by Executive, and support would be subject to additional funding from Transport for London. The proposed

relocation of Orpington library and other town centre improvements were also being considered.

Recent staff absence had impacted the Town Centre Management team. However a planned restructure would support the delivery of Town Centre Management in town centres across the Borough.

Following a meeting with key employers within the Borough, the Director reported that key issues for larger employers were parking and transport connections and the availability of local hotel and conferencing facilities. Bernie Ecclestone had also been approached regarding the potential development of the West Camp site in Biggin Hill to support business usage.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

5 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT: PROGRESS TOWARDS WORKLESSNESS TARGET

Mary Manuel provided an update on progress towards achieving the worklessness target in the Local Area Agreement. As of November 2009, 67 clients of the People into Employment project had completed 13 weeks of sustained employment of more than 16 hours per week against a target of 100 to be achieved by 31st March 2010.

The Chairman noted the strong partnership working across the project and highlighted the importance of continuing to support people who had experienced long term unemployment back into work. Mary Manuel confirmed that research from London Councils had highlighted Bromley's People into Employment Project as an example of best practice.

The future sustainability of the project was considered. Peter Jones suggested that a mapping exercise around other support into employment provision across Bromley be undertaken to identify any alternative support for people experiencing long term unemployment.

RESOLVED that progress be noted.

6 LONDON PLAN AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Economic Partnership considered an overview of the draft London Plan and proposed Mayor's Transport Strategy to 2031. These strategies identified Outer London as a key growth area for the economy and projected growth of 4% in Bromley's population and 4.5% in employment within the Borough by 2031.

The Economic Partnership welcomed the emphasis on Outer London within the London Plan and supported the recognition of the inclusion of Bromley Town Centre as an Opportunity or Intensification Area and the identification of Biggin Hill as a Strategic Outer London Development Centre.

The Economic Partnership also supported the proposed strategic transport policies which included the potential extension of the Bakerloo Line to Hayes and Tramlink to Bromley. The Director highlighted the importance of identifying Bromley's own strategic priorities to support the case for future developments within the Borough.

The availability of office space across Bromley was considered. The Economic Partnership discussed what requirements Bromley businesses might have in future years and emphasised the importance of identifying the needs of both small and medium-sized enterprises and larger businesses. A key element of providing high demand office space was to ensure strong transport links were provided and the Economic Partnership discussed the need to consider transport provision across the Borough in more detail. The Chairman would liaise with the Portfolio Holder for the Environment to ensure the strong links between transport and the local economy were recognised.

RESOLVED that response be noted.

7 RISING TO THE CHALLENGE: THE MAYOR'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR GREATER LONDON

A report reviewing the Mayor's draft Economic Development Strategy was considered by the Economic Partnership. This strategy provided a range of general objectives to strengthen London's economic productivity and competitiveness into the future.

The Chairman was pleased to note that the strategy identified economic development as central to the future growth of London.

Members of the Economic Partnership emphasised that the Economic Development Strategy, London Plan and Transport Strategy should be joined-up. Mary Manuel highlighted the importance of Bromley promoting its own requirements and asked that partners share their responses to the Economic Development Strategy consultation with her.

RESOLVED that the draft Economic Development Strategy be noted.

8 BROMLEY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Mary Manuel informed the Economic Partnership that Bromley's draft Economic Development Strategy was now out for consultation and asked members of the Economic Partnership to provide feedback and promote the e-questionnaire to other businesses they worked with. The closing date for the consultation was 14th December 2009.

RESOLVED that the consultation be noted.

9 ECONOMIC RECESSION OVERVIEW AND ACTIVITY

The Economic Partnership considered a report providing an overview and activity report on the economic recession. The Business Competitiveness Sub-Group had particularly identified a range of activities that the Council and partners could undertake to support local business and employment, including a reference leaflet around business support measures, 'Boost your Business' events and the promotion of Small Businesses Rate Relief, which was now claimed by nearly 100% of eligible businesses across the Borough. An Enterprise Expo around starting a new business had also been held, giving advice and guidance to 90 local residents. Finally a bi-monthly e-bulletin had been introduced in January 2009 to provide information about local initiatives, events and opportunities and now reached over 2,500 businesses.

Mary Manuel confirmed that the Local Economy Service had seen a significant increase in access to business web pages and in businesses contacting the service for support. Indicators showed that unemployment and shop vacancies had increased across Bromley. The Economic Partnership discussed the importance of ensuring people accessed the range of services offered by Jobcentre Plus. Ailsa Whitmarsh confirmed that Jobcentre Plus was developing an Executive Plus Group to support professional people back into work. This group had suffered high unemployment during the economic downturn and the pilot scheme would offer seminars and linkages to other agencies around routes back into work.

The Economic Partnership discussed the importance of ensuring businesses were undertaking robust planning for coming out of the recession, as this was often a more challenging time for businesses than during the recession due to diminished resources. Adrian Hollands also highlighted the importance of understanding the needs of larger employers and identifying the issues they faced.

RESOLVED that the range of economic activity be noted.

10 PARTNERSHIP RISK MANAGEMENT

Andrew Favell advised the Economic Partnership on the need to identify a range of risks and risk management strategies that impacted the Economic Partnership. The Local Strategic Partnership Executive would consider a central Risk Register around joint and common risks across the Thematic Partnership, and each Partnership would then hold a Risk Register identifying their own particular risks. Risks would be those held by the Economic Partnership as a whole, not by individual partners.

Mary Manuel agreed to circulate notes from a workshop around risk management held in July 2009.

RESOLVED that the risks impacting the Partnership be considered.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman noted that the work streams of the Inward Investment and Marketing and Business Competitiveness Sub Groups had been considering similar themes, and suggested that these two Sub Groups be combined to drive forward a joint agenda. This was generally agreed by the Economic Partnership.

The amended Terms of Reference were considered by the Economic Partnership and the changes noted. Andrew Favell confirmed that an information sharing protocol was being developed to ensure that the information needs of the Economic Partnership were supported.

RESOLVED that amendments to the Terms of Reference be noted and the Terms of Reference be agreed by the Economic Partnership.

12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman noted the next meeting was 4.30pm on Monday 8th March 2010.

The Meeting ended at 6.30 pm

Chairman