

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2010

Present:

Councillor Julian Benington (Chairman)
Adrian Hollands, Chamber of Commerce (Vice-Chairman)
Robert Goddard, Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP
Marc Hume, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Mary Manuel, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Liz McNaughton, Treval Engineering
Kevin Munnely, Town Centre Development
Howard Oldstein, The Glades
Martin Pinnell, LBB Renewal and Recreation
Prathiba Ramsingh, Jobcentre Plus

Also Present:

Councillor Sarah Phillips, Chairman, Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Peter Jones – Bromley College.

The Chairman noted that Peter Jones would shortly be retiring and thanked him for the excellent contribution he had made to the Partnership.

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

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising

1. The public realm works in Orpington High Street had now been completed and the proposed survey around how the opening of Tesco's in Orpington had affected local businesses would go forward in Spring 2011. The Chairman was delighted to announce that Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex would be opening the Biggin Hill Memorial Library and Pool at 11.00am on 14th July 2010. Boris Johnson would be opening the improvements to Orpington High Street at 10.00am on 20th July 2010.
2. With regards to Item 10: Partnership Risk Management from the meeting of 7th December 2010, the Partnership agreed that the Chairman would work directly with Officers to ensure the Risk Register for the Partnership was updated as required.

3. In relation to Item 4: Update from Sub Groups, the Chairman confirmed that internet bookings had now opened for Bromley Adult Education College courses starting in September, and there was evidence of increased demand.
4. With regard to developments in Bromley Town Centre, the Chairman confirmed that a Bromley Town Centre Business Forum had been established since the last meeting of the Economic Partnership. The Inspector's report for the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan was also expected on 23rd July 2010.

RESOLVED the minutes be agreed.

3 IMPLEMENTING BROMLEY'S ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

A report on implementing Bromley's Economic Framework was considered by the Economic Partnership.

A Building a Better Bromley 2020 Vision had previously been developed and provided a comprehensive strategy to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing and health of people who live and work in Bromley. Within this were eight vision statements, including an aim to ensure Bromley was 'Prosperous and Thriving'.

The Economic Framework had been developed as a practical means to deliver the 'Prosperous and Thriving' vision statement, and three strategic priorities had been identified within it:

- Sustaining and growing business and investment
- Vibrant and thriving town centres
- Improving employment opportunities for residents

At its meeting on 21st April 2010, The Economic Partnership had endorsed the three Strategic Priorities and requested the Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub Group and the Skills and Employment Sub Group develop, manage and monitor Action Plans for Strategic Priorities 1 and 3 respectively. Since that meeting discussions between the Director of Renewal and Recreation, Howard Oldstein and other key business leaders agreed that a group bringing together town centre business forums and trader group chairmen on a regular basis would provide the steering group for Strategic Priority 2.

Mary Manuel asked that the three action plans for the Economic Framework be considered by the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the three action plans for the Economic Framework be considered.

4 BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS AND INVESTMENT SUB-GROUP

The Chairman, Howard Oldstein gave an update on the progress of the Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group. The Inward Investment brochure would be available from the end of July 2010. The content of the Bromley Council website business pages and e-bulletins was also under review. It was important that organisations and businesses worked together in providing information to businesses moving into the borough to ensure that the benefits of doing business in Bromley were well communicated.

The Economic Partnership considered the draft Action Plan for Strategic Priority 1: Sustaining and Growing Business and Investment. The importance of raising Bromley's profile as a place to invest and do business was emphasised, with a range of proposed actions including a programme of business lunches and other networking events. Howard Oldstein underlined the importance of promoting "good news stories" to attract businesses to the borough. In terms of encouraging provision of a wide range of premises to meet the needs of employers, the Commercial Property Database was highlighted as an example of best practice. The West Camp, Biggin Hill site and the former GlaxoSmithKline site were also emphasised as key opportunities for inward investment.

The need to encourage self-employment and business-start ups was underlined. The Chairman highlighted that the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio had recently expanded to include the property owned by the Council, and there was potential to encourage start-up businesses by utilising long term vacant properties and offering short term leases

In terms of encouraging provision of high quality accessible business support services to local businesses, a key action would be to increase awareness of support available. Business Link in London would take a lead in providing targeted business support to SMEs with high growth potential and those with over 10 employees. There was also a need to improve access to public sector procurement opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly for Council-tendered work.

The Chairman underlined the need to make representations to London-wide organisations such as the Greater London Authority and regional business support organisations to ensure that the needs of Bromley businesses were championed. There were also a number of 'green' actions, such as participation in the Green Business Awards within the draft Action Plan.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the action plan for Strategic Priority 1: Sustaining and Growing Business and Investment be noted;**

- 2) **any additional activities that partner organisations are planning or considering that could contribute to the action plan be identified;**
- 3) **that the Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group report progress against their action plan on a quarterly basis to the Economic Partnership;**
- 4) **that the timetable for implementation and the need for the Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group to manage and monitor their action plan on an ongoing basis be noted.**

5 VIBRANT AND THRIVING TOWN CENTRES

The Chairman, Howard Oldstein gave an update on the new Town Centres' Forum and underlined the importance of bringing together a range of representatives from town centre groups across the borough with Town Centre Managers to share best practice and expertise. There were currently three Town Centre Managers and the Council was in the process of recruiting a more senior Town Centre Manager who would have responsibility for Bromley Town Centre and manage the Town Centre Management Team.

The Economic Partnership considered the draft Action Plan for Strategic Priority 2: Vibrant and Thriving Town Centres. In terms of the aim to promote and facilitate the development Bromley town centres, Kevin Munnelly explained that the Bromley Area Action Plan was awaiting agreement. The first phase was likely to include the development of the Westmoreland Car Park site and improvements to Bromley South Station and Bromley North Village.

Concerning Orpington, £40m had been invested in a range of developments across the town centre over the past two years. Key areas for future development included the delivery of a new library, finalising options for a new museum and a possible development opportunity with the former police station. The Chairman noted that Penge was also an area of interest with potential for a smaller Masterplan incorporating the proposal to build a new library.

Operational elements of the new action plan included providing high quality town centre management, delivering Christmas lights displays and events programmes, and the relocation and re-launch of the Charter Market in Bromley Town Centre.

Kevin Munnelly highlighted the importance of ensuring the right data was collected to allow the impact of any investment to be evaluated. Howard Oldstein also underlined the need to deliver an offer to all customer profiles to maximise the use of all town centres.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) **the action plan for Strategic Priority 2: Vibrant and Thriving Town Centres be noted;**

- 2) **any additional activities that partner organisations are planning or considering that could contribute to the action plan be identified;**
- 3) **that the group of main and local town centre business forums and trader group chairman report progress against their action plan on a quarterly basis to the Economic Partnership;**
- 4) **that the timetable for implementation and the need for the group of main and local town centre business forums and trader group chairman to manage and monitor their action plan on an ongoing basis be noted.**

6 SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT SUB-GROUP

Mary Manuel gave an update on the progress of Skills and Employment Sub-Group. In April 2010 the sub-group agreed the Interim Work and Skills Plan for the borough which was required by the previous government with a full Work and Skills Plan to be submitted by April 2011. Changes to the Skills Funding Agency and the closure of the Learning and Skills Council would have an impact in the area of skills and employment, however a number of Learning and Skills Council officers were now employed by the Local Authority and had significant expertise. The Chairman asked how skills and training would be funded in the future. Prathiba Ramsingh confirmed that Jobcentre Plus was still waiting for details of new schemes but the Future Jobs Fund had ceased. A new single programme was likely to be introduced in Spring 2011 and would replace the New Deal.

The Economic Partnership considered the draft Action Plan for Strategic Priority 3: Improving Employment Opportunities for Residents. Mary Manuel gave an overview of the plan, highlighting the need to develop and maintain high quality progression into employment for residents through local employment projects. The need to improve the access of Bromley residents to opportunities in the local and wider labour market was noted, particularly amongst younger residents, who had limited work experience, and those who were over 50 who might face additional barriers into employment. An action had been identified around improving the economic performance and employment levels in the borough's more deprived communities and Mary Manuel highlighted the need for a range of different partners to work to engage residents in training and skills activities and to take advantage of the new borough-wide credit union service.

The aim to increase the proportion of businesses involved in training their employees was highlighted. Employment opportunities within the borough tended to generate a lower income than elsewhere in London. By encouraging businesses to train employees, the borough workforce would become better skilled and businesses would become more competitive. The types of training available should also be improved to meet the needs of businesses. There was an ongoing objective to increase the level of residents qualified to at least NVQ level 2, but there was also a new emphasis on higher

level skills, providing opportunities for adults to achieve higher level qualification and improving the recognition of the value of higher skills in the Bromley labour market.

The Chairman asked whether it would be possible to provide remote links to Jobcentre Plus vacancies in the Council's Cotmandene Centre, Mottingham Community and Learning Shop and local libraries. Prathiba Ramsingh confirmed that all Jobcentre Plus vacancies were accessible via the Jobcentre Plus website.

The proposal to carry out an employee survey to establish base line data around the number of businesses involved in training their employees was highlighted and it was suggested that it be linked to the business competitiveness survey.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the action plan for Strategic Priority 3: Improving Employment Opportunities for Residents be noted;**
- 2) any additional activities that partner organisations are planning or considering that could contribute to the action plan be identified;**
- 3) that the Skills and Employment Sub-Group report progress against their action plan on a quarterly basis to the Economic Partnership;**
- 4) that the timetable for implementation and the need for the Skills and Employment Sub-Group to manage and monitor their action plan on an ongoing basis be noted.**

7 UPDATE FROM DIRECTOR OF RENEWAL AND RECREATION

The Director of Renewal and Recreation gave an update on economic activity across the Council. The Government's Comprehensive Spending Review was due in October 2010 and it was expected that there would be a significant impact on public sector funding. There would be an emphasis on generating efficiencies and Members would have to make some tough decisions. There was a potential move towards localism, which would emphasise the need for partners to work closely together, sharing resources to maximise value. The Mayor for London was also considering whether a range of London-wide services, such as parks, might be managed centrally to generate economies of scale. There was also a need to make the strongest representations to ensure that Bromley and Orpington retained their status as opportunity areas and areas for intensification in the London Plan to attract future investment.

With regard to the Economic Framework, the Director noted that the agreement of the action plans was a crucial step in supporting increased prosperity across the borough, and underlined the importance of the working groups taking ownership of their plans to move forward effectively.

In terms of developments across the borough, the Town Centre Management team had now been brought together with the Business Support Services team which reflected the value placed on business support within the borough. The Orpington Public Realm works had also been completed. It was hoped that the recent improvements would increase footfall in the High Street. Bromley Mytime had recently agreed a scheme to refurbish the Pavilion Leisure Centre. Bromley Council had invested £5.5m in the scheme which would include additional facilities, such as ten-pin bowling and would be completed in 2012.

The Chairman noted that a fellow Bromley Councillor was working to identify a tourism offer for the borough. This would be further supported if Darwin was granted UNESCO status as a World Heritage Centre in Summer 2010.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

8 DATES OF MEETINGS FOR 2010/11

Meeting dates for the remainder of the municipal year were agreed as follows:

4.00pm, Thursday 14th October 2010
4.00pm, Monday 17th January 2011
4.00pm, Monday 18th April 2011

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Meeting ended at 5.45 pm

Chairman