

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30 pm on 13 April 2011

Present:

Councillor Julian Benington (Chairman)
Robert Cundy, Federation of Small Businesses
Marc Hume, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Liz McNaughton, Treval Engineering
Simon Norton, Orpington College
Howard Oldstein, The Glades
Martin Pinnell, LBB Renewal & Recreation

Also Present:

Mandi Grice, Jobcentre Plus
Councillor Sarah Phillips, Chairman, Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee
Jennifer Whyte, Communications Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Robert Goddard – Thackray Williams, Alena Harvey – South London Business, Adrian Hollands – Chamber of Commerce, David Keogh – Jobcentre Plus, Mary Manuel – Head of Planning Strategy and Projects, Ruth Nightingale – Business Link in London, Sam Parrett – Bromley College, Peter Pledger – South London Business, Dene Stuart – Newsquest and Michael Wheeler – Bromley Adult Education College.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2nd FEBRUARY 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting were agreed subject to the first sentence of Item 3: Review of Terms of Reference and Changes to Structure of the Partnership (including Top 5 Priorities for the Partnership) being amended to read:

“Members of the Partnership considered the need to amend the existing Terms of Reference of the Bromley Economic Partnership, as the Local Strategic Partnership Executive was no longer meeting.”

There were no Matters Arising.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2011 be agreed, subject to the above amendment.

3 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND KEY PRIORITIES

Members of the Partnership considered an amended Terms of Reference and a list of proposed key priorities for the Bromley Economic Partnership.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The amended Terms of Reference be agreed;**
- 2) The key priorities for the Partnership in 2011/12 be agreed as:**
 - **Sustaining and growing business and investment**
 - **Maintaining vibrant and thriving town centres**
 - **Improving employment opportunities for residents**

4 UPDATES ON MAIN PARTNERSHIP THEMES:

Members of the Partnership gave an update around progress across the main themes of the Partnership.

A) TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The Director of Renewal and Recreation gave an update around Town Centre Development across the Borough.

Progress was continuing across the sites that made up the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan, and the Council had appointed CBRE as a Development Adviser to support the Council in procuring development partners and ensure sites were configured correctly to attract developers.

With regard to the other sites across Bromley Town Centre, the Land Group had been selected as the Council's development partner in relation to Site C: the Old Town Hall site, with authority given to enter into a 6 month exclusivity agreement. A contractor had been appointed to undertake the refurbishment of Site E: Pavilion Leisure Centre and work would start shortly.

The Council was currently in discussions with Network Rail around the refurbishment of Site J: Bromley South, with agreement sought for a longer term mixed-use development scheme to fund station improvements. The Cathedral Group had been selected as the Council's development partner in respect of Site K: Westmoreland Car Park and it was hoped that a planning application would be submitted to Bromley Council by the end of 2011. A scheme outline for a mixed use, hotel-led development had been submitted by agents in respect of Site L: Former DHSS and was being reviewed by Officers.

In terms of development across the Borough, two key opportunity sites had been identified in the Walnuts shopping complex. The 'topping out' ceremony for the new library would be held on 15th April 2011, and the library would be

officially opened in May 2011. Simon Norton noted that representatives of the College and Orpington Library were meeting to support closer cross-working between the Library and College staff and students. Work was also being undertaken to build a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the development of a new museum.

The Director of Renewal and Recreation announced that a major event would be held on 16th June 2011 to promote opportunities available through the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan to investors and developers. It was hoped that a development partner would be in place by Autumn 2011 in respect of Site G.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

B) TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT / BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave an update around progress across the main Partnership themes of Town Centre Development and Business Support in Quarter 4.

During January and February 2011, the Town Centre Managers had consulted with around 2000 businesses across the 4 main town centres regarding a move to increased business contributions to the cost of Christmas light displays. Howard Oldstein noted the importance of having a rolling programme to ensure there were sufficient funds in place to order light displays in good time for the Christmas period. It was also important to promote the benefits of contributing to a Christmas light display to businesses, including increased sales and opportunities for sponsorship. Rob Cundy requested that figures showing the current level of contributions by businesses to Christmas light displays in Bromley be provided to the Partnership.

A telephone survey of businesses in Orpington had taken place with 122 out of 315 businesses being interviewed. 87% of businesses considered they had been affected by the economic downturn (mostly negatively), but 75% still rated Orpington as a good place to do business. Representatives of the Business Support Service had attended a meeting of the Orpington Business Forum on 12th April 2011 around introducing a potential Business Improvement District in Orpington. A range of issues had been identified, including the size of the BID, and a special meeting of the Orpington Business Forum would be held to consider the proposals in more detail.

The Council's Business Support service had delivered a wide range of activities including the successful delivery of the fourth annual Borough-wide Boost Your Business event on 30th March 2011, which had attracted over 160 people. Initial feedback had been positive, and a follow up telephone survey would be undertaken to determine the medium to long term impacts for the businesses taking part. The Business Support service had also promoted and supported two joint 'South East Business Growth Expo' events in partnership

with Business Link and the London Boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham, and had worked with the Society of London Manufacturers (Soloman) to engage with manufacturing and industrial businesses based on the St Mary Cray industrial estate. Liz McNaughton confirmed that these businesses had now formed a committee, and would meet on 27th April 2011 to identify issues impacting businesses in the area including those relating to the environment, crime, traffic and parking.

Future activities of the Business Support service included the promotion and distribution of the new Bromley Business Guide and Directory and the publication of an e-guide to local services and businesses which would be hosted on the News Shopper website. The new Bromley Council website had been launched on 13th April 2011 and the business pages would be reviewed to improve content and navigation.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 4th Quarter of 2010/11 be noted;**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 1st Quarter of 2011/12 be noted.**

C) SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT

The Principal and Chief Executive of Orpington College gave an update on the progress of the Skills and Employment Sub-Group. Unemployment in the Borough had remained at 2.7% in February 2011, however this would be impacted as people moved from Income Support and Incapacity Benefit onto Jobseekers Allowance under the new Work Programme (to replace the New Deal) which would commence in June 2011. Mandi Grice confirmed that the three successful bidders for the Bromley area were A4e, the Careers Development Group and Seetec, with the Bromley Field Studies Centre acting as a sub-contractor.

Self-employment had been identified as an effective response to the current labour market, and the Sub-Group was currently researching the availability of business start-up courses across the Borough. Developments across the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan would provide opportunities in the hospitality and catering industry, and a feasibility study was needed to support the development of appropriate training opportunities.

The final merger proposal between Bromley and Orpington Colleges had been agreed in March 2011 by the two College Corporations and provided to the Skills Funding Agency. The results of the public consultation had been broadly supportive of the merger proposals, and it was hoped that the merger would be approved by the Secretary of State by May 2011, with a view to the merged college being in operation on 1st August, 2011.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**D) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND POLICY ISSUES
(VERBAL UPDATE)**

The Director of Renewal and Recreation provided an update on the development of the Local Development Framework. The consultation on the draft Core Strategy would be conducted in May/June 2011, and the Director requested that the Economic Partnership consider the draft Core Strategy at the next meeting of the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

**5 LOCALISM BILL AND PLANNING IMPACTS OF THE BUDGET
(VERBAL UPDATE)**

The impact of the Localism Bill and how it would affect the budget was noted.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

6 PARTNER UPDATES (VERBAL UPDATE)

Members of the Partnership had undertaken a range of activities since the last meeting.

The Chairman highlighted the Bromley North Village Consultation event which would be held between 10.00am and 3.00pm on 15th April 2011 at Bromley United Reformed Church. The 'drop-in' event would give local businesses and residents an opportunity to view and comment on the proposed design concepts.

Howard Oldstein noted that the number of people using The Glades had fallen since last year, but highlighted that the first months of the year were traditionally a quiet time for retailers. The level of spend remained good, particularly in the 16-45 years demographic, and there had been an increase in usage of public transport in Bromley Town Centre. Fast growing retailers 'Superdry' would shortly be opening a store in The Glades as part of a wider strategy of Capital Shopping Centres to increase the fashion focus within the upper mall south section of The Glades.

Mandi Grice noted that Greg Harrison was the new District Manager for Jobcentre Plus. David Keogh was the District Operations Manager and would attend future meetings of the Partnership.

The Director of Renewal and Recreation informed the Partnership of work being undertaken by local businesses in Biggin Hill to promote investment opportunities at Biggin Hill Airport and across the wider Biggin Hill area. Councillors would also shortly be visiting the former GlaxoSmithKline site to speak with landowners around options for the site.

Rob Cundy noted that the Federation of Small Businesses had identified a recent reduction in the number of insolvencies. However HMRC was now taking a more rigid approach to collecting unpaid taxes, which might impact businesses across the Borough. The Federation of Small Businesses was seeking to introduce 'drop in' surgeries for local businesses.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

7 COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES (VERBAL UPDATE)

Jennifer Whyte highlighted the successful launch of the monthly 'Talking Business' supplement in the Bromley News Shopper on 6th April 2011. The supplement offered local stories, business initiatives and news and information from the commercial property market place, as well as promotional opportunities for Bromley-based businesses.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An item had been circulated around the enhanced apprenticeship agency offer by South London Business for consideration by members of the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the issues raised be noted.

9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 12th July 2011
4.00pm, Tuesday 18th October 2011
4.00pm, Tuesday 10th January 2012
4.00pm, Tuesday 24th April 2012

The Meeting ended at 5.54 pm

Chairman