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DATE: 5 April 2011

To: Members of the  
**BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

Councillor Julian Benington (Chairman)

London Borough of Bromley

Adrian Hollands (Vice-Chairman)

Chamber of Commerce

Robert Cundy

Federation of Small Businesses

Stuart Dene

NewsQuest

Kevin Dewick

Local Businessman

Robert Goddard

Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP

John Hayes

Chamber of Commerce

Marc Hume

LBB Renewal & Recreation

Mary Manuel

LBB Renewal & Recreation

Liz McNaughton

Treval Engineering

Kevin Munnelly

LBB Renewal & Recreation

Ruth Nightingale

Business Link in London

Howard Oldstein

The Glades

Sam Parrett

Bromley College

Martin Pinnell

LBB Renewal & Recreation

Peter Pledger

South London Business

Steve Price

Bromley Mytime

Prathiba Ramsingh

Jobcentre Plus

A meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership will be held at Bromley Civic Centre  
on **WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2011 AT 4.30 PM** \*

**\*PLEASE NOTE STARTING TIME**

*Copies of the documents referred to below can be obtained from*  
[www.bromley.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/meetings)

## A G E N D A

- 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2ND FEBRUARY 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING** (Pages 3 - 8)

**3 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND KEY PRIORITIES**

To Follow

**4 UPDATES ON MAIN PARTNERSHIP THEMES:**

**a TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT**

To Follow

**b TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT / BUSINESS SUPPORT (Pages 9 - 14)**

**c SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT (Pages 15 - 16)**

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

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

**6 PARTNER UPDATES (VERBAL UPDATE)**

**7 COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES (VERBAL UPDATE)**

**8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

4.00pm, Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2011

4.00pm, Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011

4.00pm, Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012

4.00pm, Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012

# Agenda Item 2

## **BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 2 February 2011

### **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  
Ruth Nightingale, Business Link in London  
Martin Pinnell, LBB Renewal & Recreation  
Prathiba Ramsingh, Jobcentre Plus

### **Also Present:**

Stuart Dene, NewsQuest  
Simon Norton, Orpington College  
Peter Pledger, South London Business  
Jennifer Whyte, Communications Team

## **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies had been received from John Hayes – Chamber of Commerce, Liz McNaughton – Treval Engineering, Kevin Munnely - Head of Town Centre Planning Projects, Howard Oldstein – The Glades, Sam Parrett – Bromley College of Further and Higher Education, Brian Turpin – Bromley Mytime and Michael Wheeler – Bromley Adult Education College.

## **2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH NOVEMBER 2010 AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising:

1. With regard to Item 3: National and Regional Changes: Update from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Chairman confirmed that the development of a pan-London Enterprise Partnership had been agreed. The Expression of Interest submitted by the South London Partnership to develop an Enterprise Partnership for the South London region would not be taken forward.
2. With regard to Item 4: Partner Updates from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Principal and Chief Executive of Orpington College confirmed that the the Corporations of Bromley College of Further and Higher Education and Orpington College had announced a public consultation to consider the proposed merger of the two colleges. The consultation period would run from 26th January to 4th

March 2011, and partners were invited to express their views. The Chairman would provide a response to the consultation on behalf of the Bromley Economic Partnership.

3. With regard to Item 5: Update from Director of Renewal and Recreation from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Chairman confirmed that Biggin Hill Airport had recently won the 'Best Business Aviation Airport' award in a nationwide annual awards scheme. Work continued around the development of the proposed Biggin Hill Heritage Centre.
4. With regard to Item 8: Business Competitiveness and Investment and Town Centres Sub Groups – Update and Progress against Delivery Plans from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Chairman confirmed that the Federation of Small Businesses would deliver a high profile trade event at Oakley House in June 2011.
5. With regard to Item 10: Any Other Business from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010, the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support confirmed that Officers were liaising with London BIDS to explore the potential for establishing a Business Improvement District in the Borough.

**RESOLVED that the minutes be agreed.**

**3 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CHANGES TO STRUCTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP (INCLUDING TOP 5 PRIORITIES FOR THE PARTNERSHIP)**

Members of the Partnership considered the need to amend the existing Terms of Reference for the Bromley Economic Partnership, as the Local Strategic Partnership was no longer in operation.

It was agreed the Chairman would meet with representatives of the Renewal and Recreation Department to consider the existing guidance, and an amended Terms of Reference would then be circulated to all members of the Partnership for their consideration and agreement.

**RESOLVED that an amended Terms of Reference be developed by the Chairman in consultation with Officers and be circulated to all members of the Partnership for their consideration and agreement.**

**4 UPDATE REPORTS 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 was in the process of appointing a Development Adviser to support the Council in procuring development partners and ensure sites were configured correctly to attract developers. A challenge had been lodged by Linden Homes and Network Rail to the adoption of the Area Action Plan with regard to the number of units that could be accommodated at Site A: Bromley North, and the Council was considering its response. Bromley North Village had been selected for inclusion in the Mayor's Great Spaces Initiative and had been allocated a grant of £300,000 for detailed design and development of a range of proposals for public realm improvement which would be considered by Members shortly. In addition, a Member Working Group for Bromley North Village had been established to consider issues surrounding the area and its future development, and work was being undertaken on a Wayfinding strategy to improve signage.

With regard to the other sites across Bromley Town Centre, planning guidance for developers was currently being prepared for Site B: Tweedy Road, and seven expressions of interest had been received around Site C: the Old Town Hall site. A contractor had been appointed to undertake the refurbishment of Site E: Pavilion Leisure Centre and work would start shortly. With regard to Site F: Civic Centre, the Council would remain on the Civic Centre site until at least 2015, giving time to consider potential relocation options which could be undertaken as part of the implementation of Opportunity Sites identified in the Area Action Plan.

The Council was currently in discussions with Network Rail around the development of Site J: Bromley South with a view to seeking expressions of interest from developers around a mixed use development scheme. The Cathedral Group had been selected as the Council's development partner in respect of Site K: Westmoreland Car Park and was currently working on a detailed development programme. 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 and consideration was being given to the future of the library and museum site. Orpington had been nominated in the Excellence in Walking and Public Realm category of the London Transport Awards 2011 for public realm improvements across Orpington High Street. The Chief Executive of South London Business highlighted the opportunity for providing a 'touch down' centre for those running small businesses in the Borough which would provide access to meeting space. The development of the Penge Masterplan was also underway, and included the potential development of a new library for Penge and Anerley.

**RESOLVED that the update be noted.**

## **B) TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND 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. The main priorities for Town Centre Management in Quarter 3 included the delivery of Christmas lights schemes and events and the development of action plans for the 2011/12 financial year. In addition a programme of environmental monitoring and improvement had been ongoing, particularly across Bromley town centre. The four town centres that were monitored across the Borough had shown a decrease in the number of vacant units over the past year, although footfall had been adversely affected by wintry weather around the time of the counts.

The Council's Business Support service had delivered the Borough's first Commercial Property Expo in partnership with local property agents. A Boost Your Business event had also been delivered which focused on businesses based in Bromley North and highlighted plans and ideas arising out of the Bromley North Village Improvement strategy, including potential plans for public realm improvements, marketing and branding the area. The Business E-Bulletin was also re-launched and a review was undertaken of content on the Business Section of the Council website. The Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group had met for a final meeting in December 2010 and had highlighted the need to promote 'good news stories' about the Borough as a place to do business.

Future work of the Town Centre Management team would include delivering a programme of Spring events, including 'Love Bromley', a Valentine-themed event on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2011. The Town Centre Management action plans for 2011/12 would be finalised, as would funding for the future events programme. Feasibility work would be undertaken on the possible introduction of a Business Improvement District in the Borough. The Business Support service would undertake a wide range of activities including the delivery of a major Boost Your Business event on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011, improving welcome packs and the delivery of an early morning Olympic workshop. The Chairman noted the Inward Investment event to be held in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2011/12, and underlined the importance of encouraging inward investment in the Borough.

The Regional Sales Director at Newsquest announced that the Bromley News Shopper was seeking to launch a monthly business section from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011. He highlighted the potential to provide support to small businesses around working with Banks through a government-backed scheme called 'Doing Business Together' first piloted by Richmond Council.

### **RESOLVED that:**

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2010/11 be noted;**

- 2) **The minute of the final Business Competitiveness and Investment Sub-Group meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010 be noted;**
- 3) **The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity during the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter of 2010/11 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, underlining the importance of ensuring appropriate skills training was being offered to meet the needs of Bromley employers. The planned developments across the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan would have implications for future skills programmes, with the potential to increase skills training in the catering and hospitality industry. Prathiba Ramsingh noted that Jobcentre Plus was now required to work with local colleges to support the progression of jobseekers into employment with appropriate skills training.

**RESOLVED that the update be noted.**

### **D) PLANNING, CORE STRATEGY AND LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

The Head of Planning Strategy and Projects provided an update on planning, the core strategy, which would be the overarching policy document for the Borough, and the Local Economic Assessment. Future employment growth across London was projected to be driven primarily by the business services sector, however there was also expected to be growth across other sectors including the catering and hospitality industry.

The Bromley Economic Partnership was invited to comment on how the business community might be best engaged in consultation on the draft Core Strategy in May/June 2011, in addition to ongoing engagement with the Partnership and other partners. It was anticipated that key elements to support the consultation process would include the Business E-Bulletin, the Council's redesigned website and by providing advance notice to partner and umbrella organisations to publicise consultation opportunities in their newsletters and bulletins, including any exhibitions or meetings.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1) **The Indicative timescale for the preparation of Bromley's Core Strategy be noted;**
- 2) **The Greater London Authority's headline economic forecasts for Bromley and the structure of the Local Economic Assessment be noted;**
- 3) **Comments on the suggested broad approach to consultation with local businesses with regard to the preparation of the Core**

**Strategy and to raising awareness of the Local Economic Assessment be noted.**

**5 PARTNER UPDATES (VERBAL UPDATE)**

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

**RESOLVED that the update be noted.**

**6 COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES (VERBAL UPDATE)**

Jennifer Whyte attended the meeting as a representative of the Council's Communications Team, and would be working to support the increased emphasis on communications across the Partnership.

**RESOLVED that the update be noted.**

**7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman informed the Partnership of proposals for Bromley to host the London Kilomathon on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011. The Kilomathon would offer routes of 26.2 km (16.3 miles), a Half Kilomathon of 13.1 km (8.1 miles) and a mini Kilomathon of 2.62 km (1.6 miles), with the proposed route starting from Crystal Palace Park, and the Chairman underlined the opportunities for local businesses to get involved in the event.

Members of the Economic Partnership considered figures showing the level of business start-ups by Bank across five London boroughs. 18.4% more businesses started up in Bromley in 2010 compared with the previous year, however 21.8% more businesses started up in London during the same period and the number of start ups in Bromley was the lowest of the five boroughs surveyed. Members of the Partnership noted that this information did not include how many businesses had closed across the Borough during the same period.

**RESOLVED that the issues raised be noted.**

**8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

4.00pm, Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2011

The Meeting ended at 5.31 pm

Chairman



## **BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Meeting:</b> | Economic Partnership  |
| <b>Date:</b>    | 13 April 2011   |
| <b>Subject:</b> | Update report on activities for Town Centre Management and Business Support   |
| <b>Author:</b>  | Martin Pinnell, Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support. Tel: 020 8313 4457. Email: martin.pinnell@bromley.gov.uk |

### **1. Recommendations.**

The Partnership is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 4th quarter 2010/11
- 1.2 Note and endorse the plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity during the next quarter.

### **2. Town Centre Management**

2.1 For Town Centre Management the main priorities have been:

- Delivery of spring events
- Finalising event and project budget and action plans for 2011/12
- Consulting with businesses to help develop a Christmas lights policy for 2011
- Continue environmental monitoring and improvements
- Undertaking a business survey and BIDs feasibility study for Orpington town centre.

In addition the TCM team have maintained regular communications with businesses through newsletters and email updates and have contributed to projects led by other sections of the Council, for example the Bromley North Village improvement strategy.

2.2 Events successfully delivered during the quarter include 'Love Bromley', a Valentines themed event which showcased a range of local businesses in the pedestrianised area of the High Street, an Alice in Wonderland themed

event with fireworks in Penge and a spring fair in Beckenham, alongside occasional specialist French and Italian markets adding a continental flavour to Bromley, Beckenham and Orpington during the period.

- 2.3 The events programme for 2011/12 was developed and refined during this quarter and a report was provided to the Council's Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee to request funding to assist delivery of the programme which will include a combined Easter / Royal Wedding event in Bromley, a Summer Slam Sports festival in Bromley, Orpington Town Fete, Autumn Market and Music. Council funding was agreed, including a budget to cover the advanced costs for a very high profile event to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in spring 2012, however the successful delivery of the events programme does rely on financial contributions from other partners including businesses. In addition TCMs met with a representative of Sainsbury's to present the Bromley approach to Town Centre Management and the TCM action plans for the main towns, with a view to requests for core funding which will be prepared and submitted during the first quarter of 2011/12.
- 2.4 During January and February the Town Centre Managers wrote to around 2000 businesses across the 4 main town centres to elicit views on whether they would be willing to contribute to the cost of Christmas lights in 2011. TCMs also made direct approaches to a number of larger occupiers and key stakeholders in these town centres. Overall, the level of response was disappointing, both in terms of number of replies and promises of support. However, the information from the consultation has been fed into a review of Christmas lights funding which is being reported to Councillors on the Renewal & Recreation PDS Committee in April – providing Members with a range of options ranging from zero Council funding for lights through to maintaining funding at 2010 levels.
- 2.5 Environmental monitoring continues to be a key role of the TCMs, with Bromley town centre coming under particular scrutiny in recent months. As a result a number of improvements have taken place including new bins (with a consistent design throughout the town), improved signage near the Hill Car Park, a facelift for the 'Bromley Zoo' mural at Naval Walk and the introduction of additional lighting in Market Square and Walters Yard (installation expected in April).
- 2.6 During the quarter a telephone survey of businesses in Orpington took place with 122 out of 315 businesses being interviewed. The results are still to be fully analysed, but although 87% of businesses had been affected by the economic downturn (most negatively) 75% still rate Orpington as a good place to do business. A number of suggestions were made through the survey as to how the local business environment could be improved. These were included as one of a number of inputs into a feasibility study on the potential for the establishment of Business Improvement District for Orpington which took place during March – the results of which will be with us shortly.

- 2.7 Town Centre Managers continue to monitor the vitality of the Town Centres primarily through footfall counts and vacancy rates. The following table summarises the Q4 results for the main town centres which shows that the vacancy rates have improved for Bromley and Orpington – comparing year on year. As a comparator the latest vacancy rates for the UK as a whole is 14.4% (Source: Local Data Company).
- 2.8 This is the first time we have commissioned a footfall count in quarter 4 (in February) so there is no comparative figure for previous year.

| Town      | Vacancy rate Q4 2010/11 | Vacancy rate in Q4 2009/10 | Footfall count Q4 2010/11 |
|-----------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bromley   | 3.6%                    | 4%                         | 140,406                   |
| Orpington | 8%                      | 9%                         | 33,840                    |
| Beckenham | 5%                      | NA                         | 22, 200                   |
| Penge     | 10%                     | NA                         | NA                        |

### 3. Business Support

- 3.1 For the Council's Business Support team the focus of the fourth quarter has been on:
- Delivery of the borough-wide Boost Your Business event in March
  - Commissioning of High Growth Coaching Scheme and procurement support events and workshops
  - Working with Business Link and economic / business sections in Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley on joint 'Business Growth Expo' events taking place in March (with one planned for early April).
  - Editing and production of Bromley Business Guide and Directory
  - Preparation of new online visitor map and guide for the borough
  - Publication of a new electronic 'A to Z Guide to Local Services for Business' publication in partnership with News Shopper

In addition the Business Support team have contributed to the delivery of projects led by other Council sections, for example the Local Economic Assessment and the planned Invest Bromley event and brochure.

- 3.2 The 4<sup>th</sup> annual borough wide Boost Your Business event took place on 30 March. Over 160 people attended the event, 89 of which were delegates and the remainder were exhibitor staff. Although advance bookings were lower than in 2010, the drop out rate was very low in comparison, which is likely to be related to the introduction of an entrance fee of £20. We also found that most of the delegates stayed for the whole day and as a consequence may have derived more overall benefit from the event. At time of writing the feedback forms have yet to be analysed but initial verbal feedback received from delegates has been very positive. The event will be evaluated on the basis of both feedback forms from the day but also a follow up telephone survey which will help to ascertain the medium to long term impacts for the businesses taking part. In addition to

our home grown business support event, we have promoted and supported two joint 'South East Business Growth Expo' events – working in partnership with Business Link and neighbouring South East London boroughs of Bexley, Lewisham and Greenwich. The first event in Lewisham on 16 March drew 60 business people from across the sub-region.

- 3.3 The Council has been working with external partners to deliver its agenda for business support in terms of encouraging growth businesses and supporting those wishing to do business with the public sector. We have therefore launched the High Growth Coaching project with Bromley College – which provides subsidised one to one and workshop support for businesses to develop and implement their own growth strategies. With Council support the College has also been delivering workshops to help businesses tackle the paperwork involved in tendering for public sector contracts, including completing pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs). We also sponsored a special breakfast event, run by the South East London Chamber of Commerce at Bromley Football Club in February, to alert businesses to the opportunities still available from supplying to the 2012 Olympic Games.
- 3.4 Using the Society of London Manufacturers (Soloman) as an intermediary the Council engaged with manufacturing and industrial businesses based on the St Mary Cray industrial estate (Cray Avenue and adjacent roads). The engagement consisted of one to one interviews with the management of around 30 businesses, in order to understand issues facing the businesses. All these businesses were invited to an estate meeting which took place on 3 March and was attended by representatives from 14 businesses, plus representatives from the Council. The meeting resulted in some action points being adopted to tackle various issues around environment, crime, traffic and parking. It is expected that a committee of local businesses will be formed during April, initially supported by the Town Centre Management and Business Support team.
- 3.5 This quarter has also been a busy one for the production of business information publications – with a newly updated version of the 'A to Z Guide to Local Services for Business' being prepared and published and the design and proofing of the 'Bromley Business Guide and Directory 2011/12'. The former is now an electronic only publication produced in partnership with the News Shopper and hosted on both the Council and News Shopper websites. The final delivery of the 'Guide' has been slightly delayed but is expected to be available for distribution – free of charge – to businesses during April. In addition the new look Bromley Business E-bulletin has been prepared and dispatched twice during the quarter (in January and March) – and the e-bulletin has been actively promoted at business events.
- 3.6 In addition to the publications for businesses, work has been ongoing to prepare and design a visitor map and guide to the borough called 'Explore Bromley Borough'. This provides an overview map of the borough with

heritage, leisure, sports, countryside and parks attractions with clickable links to further information about each attraction. The 'Explore Bromley Borough' guide will be published on the Council website in April.

## **5. Proposed activities for the Town Centre Management and Business support service.**

5.1 The key priorities for Town Centre Management during the first quarter of 2011/12 include:

- Finalisation of TCM action plans for 2011/12
- Proposals to potential sponsors for core funding or support for specific events / projects.
- Delivery of Spring and Summer events – including an Easter event in Bromley and celebration of new library opening in Orpington (expected May), and preparation for 2012 Queens Jubilee events.
- Finalisation of Christmas lights policy for 2011
- Follow up to feasibility study on potential BID for Orpington
- Development of town centres community safety partnership with Police and Shop Safe – including upgrade of system
- Maintain vigilance on environmental issues
- Continue to work with local business groups to encourage participation – e.g. re-launch of Beckenham Business Association
- Undertake a review of town centre markets, promotions and rides.
- Develop improved monitoring of town centre statistics, especially footfall

5.2 The key priorities for Business Support during quarter 4 include:

- Promotion and distribution of the new Bromley Business Guide and Directory
- Revision of the Business web pages on the revamped Council website to improve content and navigation
- Publication and promotion of the 'Explore Bromley Borough' visitor guide
- Develop inward investment plan for Bromley North Village
- Follow up and develop a response to results of the Orpington Business Survey
- Work with Communications and external consultant for publication of borough Invest Bromley brochure.
- Liaison with local commercial property agents through forum meeting
- Ensure publication of an edition of the Bromley Business E-bulletin and promote the wider take up of the service.
- Follow up and support for emerging Cray Avenue Industrial Estate business group.

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## **BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

|                 |  |
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| <b>Meeting:</b> | Economic Partnership   |
| <b>Date:</b>    | 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2011  |
| <b>Subject:</b> | Skills and Employment Sub-Group  |
| <b>Authors:</b> | Simon Norton, Principal, Orpington College<br><a href="mailto:snorton@orpingtoncollege.ac.uk">snorton@orpingtoncollege.ac.uk</a> |

### **1. Recommendations.**

The Partnership is asked to note the Report. The Skills and Employment Sub-Group met on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 and this report includes the actions and activities from that meeting.

### **2. Remit and Activities**

- 2.1 The Group monitors and reviews the monthly employment data for Bromley, including business start-up figures, in order to identify the types of skills required to meet employer requirements and how any gaps can be met by key local partners.
- 2.2 It formally advises the Economic Partnership on these issues through reports and the participation of the Group's Chair at the Economic Partnership's meetings.
- 2.3 The Group maintains strong links with Jobcentre Plus to monitor and review the support provided to adults in the job-seeking process.
- 2.4 It also facilitates the exchange of information between employers, colleges, the voluntary sector and the Borough Council to support local action on skills and employment.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Federation of Small Businesses has reported to the Group its concerns on the impact on small businesses' capacity to generate employment arising from:
  - Increased National Insurance rates
  - HMRC adopting a more rigid approach to collecting unpaid taxes from businesses
  - The economic position generally.
- 3.2 On a more positive note, it was recognised that Bromley and the South East generally is more buoyant than the rest of the country and there are a number of significant development/regeneration projects underway across the Borough which should have a positive impact on local jobs.

- 3.3 Unemployment continues to increase within the Borough to 2.7% in February; however Bromley remains below the London average of 4.1% and the national average. The Group has concerns that in the short term the private sector in Bromley will not be able to make up for the reduction in public sector jobs, as envisaged by the Government strategy. For this reason there is an increased need to provide training, advice and support to local unemployed adults to take better advantage of the opportunities available. For example, the majority of vacancies are in the Care Sector, where there is often a reluctance of local people to take up jobs as well as skill mismatches.

These labour market statistics and their implications are reviewed at each meeting.

- 3.4 The Group has noted that self-employment can be an effective response to the current labour market, in line with Government policy. Jobcentre Plus programmes can help unemployed people take up such opportunities, but there may be limitations on the amount of focussed and flexible training available locally. The Group is currently researching the provision of suitable Business Start-Up courses within the Borough; what is available; to whom; how is it funded; does it meet the need? The Group will report back and make recommendations as appropriate, following consideration at its next meeting.
- 3.5 The planned merger of Orpington and Bromley Colleges will enable a more coherent way of responding to the needs of local businesses and adults post August 2011 and, specifically, commitment to new and larger projects
- 3.6 The hotel and retail developments underway within the Borough are expected to provide more local jobs within the hospitality sector. The local Colleges are aware of this as an important potential training need, which their merger should help them address. Post merger, the Colleges will be commissioning a feasibility study to help shape their response to this requirement.
- 3.7 The Bromley Economic Framework is reviewed and updated at each meeting (quarterly). No significant revisions were identified at the April meeting, but it will be reviewed comprehensively at the Group's next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.
- 3.8 The Work Programme (to replace New Deal) is due to commence June 2011. This is a framework for the provision of employment related support services, helping people to select, train for, obtain and retain employment suitable for their ages and capacities. The Group will play an active role in liaising with the three successful bidders to help ensure actions are not duplicated and will also continue to investigate and monitor the Programme as it develops locally.