

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 8 January 2013

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Neville Cavendish, Jobcentre Plus
Robert Cundy, Federation of Small Businesses
Robert Innes, Skills Funding Agency
Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley
Sam Parrett, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
Martin Pinnell, LBB Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support

Also Present:

Amanda Grice, Jobcentre Plus
Jim Kehoe, LBB Deputy Chief Planner
Kevin Munnely, LBB Head of Town Centre Renewal
Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce
Simon Wilson, Barclays Bank PLC
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Sarah Phillips, Marc Hume, Director of Renewal and Recreation, Adrian Hollands from Baker Tilly Tax and Accounting Limited, Michael Lewis from Michael Rogers LLP and Suzanne Sharp from NewsQuest.

The Chairman welcomed Simon Wilson to the meeting as a representative of Barclay's Bank PLC and also Steve Nelson from the South East London Chamber of Commerce.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH OCTOBER 2012 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2012 be agreed.

3 UPDATES ON MAIN PARTNERSHIP THEMES AND OTHER RELEVANT COUNCIL INITIATIVES:

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

A) TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Town Centre Renewal gave an update around Town Centre Development across the Borough, details of which were given in the table appended to his written report.

Progress was continuing across the sites that made up the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan. Since the previous meeting the following key milestones had been achieved:

Churchill Place (Site G)

The Council was moving towards the procurement of a development partner in relation to this site, which would deliver a significant expansion in retail and office space as well as housing. Following the successful conclusion of the Pre-Qualification stage of the procurement process, Muse Developments, Barratt Developments and Kier Property had been invited to proceed to the next stage of the selection process. The aim was to identify the preferred developer by April 2013.

Bromley North Village

Members of the Partnership were shown large scale display boards which illustrated the plans for East Street, Market Square and High Street North. The Executive was due to consider a report on 9th January 2013 seeking authority to release the Council match funding contribution to the redevelopment, subject to Transport for London approval being secured on 14th January 2013. The implementation programme was being finalised with the main capital works expected to commence in April 2013. Local businesses would be consulted to ensure the least amount of disruption during the construction which was due to take between 12 – 18 months.

Steve Nelson from the Chamber of Commerce asked if the use of local suppliers and businesses could be written into the construction agreement. The Head of Town Centre Renewal said that using local businesses was good practice and would be encouraged where possible. This view was iterated by the Chairman who further commented on the positive improvements which would be made to the area and also on the improvements to the pedestrian access from The Hill car park to the High Street.

Bromley South (Site J)

The railway station improvements were nearing completion. Work was also progressing on establishing a permanent drop off point on the Waitrose access road.

Westmoreland Road Car Park (Site K)

Some changes to the proposed basement car parking provision were being considered although the number of spaces (400) would be unchanged. Local businesses had been contacted and work on the demolition of the car park was due to commence shortly with the building work expected to commence in March 2013. There was to be a comprehensive publicity campaign to deal with the parking issues arising from the closure of Westmoreland Road car park. It was not anticipated that there would be any significant car parking problems. The Hill car park was being upgraded and there would be more on-street parking. In addition there was now additional car parking at weekends in the St Blaise car park at the Bromley Civic Centre. A Variable Messaging System was being installed to make parking in the town centre easier.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

B) BROMLEY TOWN CENTRE PARKING

Bromley Town Centre Parking had been discussed during consideration of the previous item.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

C) TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave an update on progress across the main Partnership themes of Town Centre Management and Business Support in Quarter 3 2012/13.

In Quarter 3 2012/13, the main priorities of the Town Centre Management had included the planning and delivery of a number of events in town centres across the Borough including a 2k 'Santa Dash' run through Bromley Town Centre and a Christmas parade in Beckenham. In addition events had taken place in Orpington and Penge. Community Events supported by Town Centre Management also took place in Biggin Hill, Chislehurst, Hayes, Petts Wood, St Mary Cray and West Wickham.

Christmas lights schemes had been funded for the four main town centres through the Town Centre Management Initiative Fund as well as donations from local residents and businesses. Town Centre Management had also provided donations to ten smaller town centres across the Borough, but the majority of the costs for these schemes were funded through business and community fund raising.

Work had also been ongoing to respond to applications from local areas for funding from the Local Parades Initiative, with improvements currently being implemented to Sundridge Park Parade and Keston Village.

Officers continued to assist the BID Working Group with the Business Improvement District (BID) campaign for Orpington. Business rate payers

within the Orpington BID area were being contacted prior to the official BID ballot and preliminary indications were that 75-80% of those businesses giving their voting intention said they would vote "yes". The BID ballot had been confirmed for 21st February 2013 and it was hoped that this would be successful.

Future activities for the Town Centre Management and Business Support Service included undertaking initial consultation and feasibility work for a possible BID proposal in Beckenham Town Centre. There would be continued delivery of the events programme across the borough and running of a spring event in Bromley Town Centre (funded by the Outer London Fund round 2). In addition a joint campaign was being developed with local commercial property agents to promote Bromley as a location for commercial space occupiers, including a possible promotional event.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 3rd Quarter of 2012/13 be noted; and,**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 4th Quarter of 2012/13 be noted.**

D) OUTER LONDON FUND

Work was ongoing to deliver Round 2 projects funded by successful bids to the Outer London Fund.

This included the introduction of a "Wayfinder" system for Bromley Town Centre which would help to streamline and reduce the amount of signage. Other planned events included an Arts based creative event at the end of March 2013 and a fashion week in the Glades Shopping Centre in May 2013. There would be an H G Wells "heritage" celebration later in the year.

Robert Cundy from the Federation of Small Businesses said that he had been approached about a new Smart phone App - the idea of which was to direct individuals to appropriate shops for specific purchases. The Chairman confirmed that the Council were aware of this App and it might be something which could receive future consideration.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

E) LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Deputy Chief Planner provided an update on the development of planning policy in the Borough.

The National Planning Policy Framework had been published on 27th March 2012, and there was now a need to develop a Local Plan rather than a Local Development Framework. The Local Plan would replace the Bromley Unitary Development Plan and would work alongside the London Plan to set the future direction of development in the Borough. An updated version of the “Options and Preferred Strategy” of the Local Plan would be submitted to the Development Control Committee meeting on 29th January 2013. It was intended that the “Options and Preferred Strategy” would then go to the Executive meeting on 6th February 2013 for approval to go out to public consultation which was expected to take about six weeks.

A broad approach would be taken to determine where the priorities should be. This will take into account the findings of the recent Stimulating the Economy study carried out by G L Hearn for the Council. After the summer specific sites for development would be looked at. Consultations on this would take place in the Autumn.

The Community Infrastructure Levy would probably be introduced in Bromley in 2014.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

F) BUSINESS AREAS POLICY - GL HEARN REPORT

The Deputy Chief Planner outlined the background to the commissioning of the study by G L Hearn Ltd to explore the potential for stimulating the economy in the borough. This had been done primarily in response to government announcements on a package of planning and housing measures aimed at stimulating economic growth.

The main conclusions in the report were that there was not the evident market demand to support a further major business park scheme in the Borough. The report considered that a targeted, multi-pronged strategy which sought to develop the economy and business base of the Borough up to 2031, (avoiding over-reliance on development of a single location), would be most likely to support increased economic growth into the longer term. This would include focussing on areas such as Bromley Town Centre, Cray Valley and Biggin Hill.

Robert Cundy asked if there had been any interest in building commercial premises and remarked that people preferred new office accommodation. The Chairman replied that there had not been a lot of interest so far and commented that Bromley Town needed to be promoted as a good office location. The Head of Town Centre Renewal said that discussions were taking place with the Mayor’s Office regarding the Growth Fund and the possibility of refurbishment of existing office accommodation.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

G) BROMLEY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

Hannah Jackson, LBB Project Officer was unable to attend the meeting. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave the following update on her behalf:

The Bromley Youth Employment Project had been developed by Bromley Council to support sustainable employment opportunities for young people who were unemployed. The project would run from 1st April 2013 for a three year period, and would provide internship and apprenticeship opportunities for a minimum of 80 young people aged between 18-24 years who were resident in the Borough with a view to supporting these young people to gain recognised qualifications and enter sustained employment.

The Council recognised that in order to create a project that would provide the best outcomes for young people, it should source an experienced and proficient employment and skills provider who had an evidenced capability to broker sustainable jobs across all sectors. After evaluating 35 Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs), seven organisations were invited to tender. The tender returns have been considered by an evaluation panel, which included representation from the National Apprenticeship Service. Bromley Youth Council also participated in the evaluation process, offering comments on parts of the tender return which were not deemed to be commercially sensitive.

The results of this process would be scrutinised in a confidential report to Executive and Resources PDS on 31st January 2013, before the Resources Portfolio Holder takes a decision on awarding the contract.

Robert Cundy asked about the criteria for the young people participating in the project and whether the employment opportunities would need to be in Bromley Borough. Representatives from Jobcentre Plus who supported the project confirmed that the criteria was for unemployed Bromley residents in the specified age range. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support would clarify whether the placements would need to be in Bromley. He confirmed that the project would not exclude unemployed graduates.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

4 PARTNER UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT WORKING TO INCLUDE:

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

A) UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN THE BOROUGH

Neville Cavendish and Amanda Grice from Jobcentre Plus, provided an update on unemployment and employment trends in the Borough as at November 2012 and circulated statistics at the meeting.

There continued to be a decrease in the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). 44% of Bromley customers had been claiming JSA for over 6 months and 24% of jobseekers were aged between 18-24 years. These trends compared favourably with other London Boroughs.

Jobcentre Plus was continuing to work with colleagues at the Council in the introduction of the 'benefit cap' which would be launched in Bromley in April 2013. 400 households would be affected and discussions were taking place with those concerned as to how this would impact upon them. The Chairman was pleased to hear that Jobcentre Plus was working with the Money Advisory Service to help customers manage their household budgets.

It was reported that an initiative to try and reduce the level of unemployed young people was taking place in wards such as Crystal Palace which were in traditional areas of high unemployment for young people. Jobcentre Plus was working with partners to offer focused support and training in these areas.

Amanda Grice remarked that there was a misconception there were "no jobs", as there were jobs and good calibre employees available. The job market had changed and there was more part time and fixed contract work. Jobcentre Plus was considering specific industries in the Borough and in January 2013 was focussing on the Care industry, looking at employers, skill shortages and training.

B) BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT DEVELOPMENTS

Katy Woolcott provided an update on developments at London Biggin Hill Airport following its identification as a Strategic Outer London Development Centre in the London Plan, and as part of the LoCATE (London Centre for Aviation Technology and Enterprise) project which brought together a cluster of modern aviation-related businesses at and around London Biggin Hill Airport to support continued economic development in the area.

The LoCATE Team had completed both a property report and an analysis of the economic value of the airport to the local economic community. This had identified the airport's key role in continuing to meet the need for direct air services to London into the future. At the previous Partnership meeting it had been noted that an Oxford Economics report had been published which explored the role of business aviation in the European economy and the benefits it realised for business and the local economy.

There were currently 1,000 jobs in and around Biggin Hill airport and the industrial estate. Over the next five years, the airport aimed to increase the number of businesses on the airport and industrial estate which could realise an additional 1,000 jobs. In answer to a question from Steve Nelson, Katy Woolcott confirmed that subject to planning policy there was ground available for commercial development.

Katy Woolcott reported that the Government's draft Aviation Policy Framework was expected to be concluded by March 2013, with the policy being implemented in 2015.

C) COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MARKET

Mike Lewis from Michael Rogers LLP was unable to attend the meeting. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave the following update on his behalf:

There remained a steady flow of enquiries and there had been an upturn in the level of letting and sales activity across the commercial sectors (office, industrial and retail) during the second half of 2012. It was too early for this to translate into rental or value growth but there was little in the way of new space coming to the market and this could result in pressure upon supply later in the year if things continue the way they are. Although there had been no new office development for many years, Mike Lewis considered that there were good reasons to be optimistic for the future.

D) GENERAL NEWS ROUND

Alicia Munday reported that Bromley Adult Education Centre was continuing to work with Jobcentre Plus in respect of training. 211 unemployed people had undertaken training opportunities in the last academic year. In the current academic year this figure was 203 (to date).

Sam Parrett from Bromley College of Further and Higher Education was pleased to announce that the merger with Orpington College had settled down well. The recent £2 million investment at the Bromley campus had raised the profile of higher education and increased facilities for those with learning disabilities. There were more young people attending the college and there had been an increase in the numbers pursuing part time higher education. It was reported that the college was hoping to rebuild the sports hall and sport facilities. It was also hoped that training opportunities for the hospitality industry could be developed, with the possibility of establishing a hospitality training academy in Orpington. In addition the college was also looking to develop an Apprenticeship Recruitment Centre. In answer to a question by the Chairman, Sam Parrett confirmed that a lot of the training for care workers took place at the college, mainly in conjunction with the NHS.

Steve Nelson reported that there were 5,500–6,000 members of the South East London Chamber of Commerce. Currently businesses were being

encouraged to join the Chamber of Commerce by being given six months free membership.

Colin Maclean from Community Links reported on an externally funded neighbourhood programme which had been commissioned in Mottingham. This was designed to help women into business. Training courses were being organised for such things as cake making, crafts etc and there could be opportunities for potential business 'start-ups'. The Partnership agreed that social enterprise would be a good topic for discussion at the next meeting.

Simon Wilson from Barclays Bank, who headed up Barclays recruitment in South East London was not aware of any candidates who had been referred from Jobcentre Plus. Some recruits were travelling long distances from out of the Borough to work in Bromley, but Barclays were keen to recruit local people. Amanda Grice believed that Jobcentre Plus had worked with Barclays and agreed to discuss the matter further with Simon Wilson outside of the meeting.

Robert Innes from the Skills Funding Agency said that more promotion would be given to encourage local businesses to take up the Apprenticeship Grant.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

6 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 9th April 2013

4.00pm, Tuesday 9th July 2013 (to be confirmed)

The Meeting ended at 5.50 pm

Chairman