

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 16 April 2013

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Adrian Hollands, Baker Tilly Tax and Accounting Limited (Vice-Chairman)
Bek Bekir, National Apprenticeships Service
Robert Goddard, Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP
Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley
Martin Pinnell, LBB Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support
Suzanne Sharp, NewsQuest
Donna Still, Federation of Small Businesses

Also Present:

Jeff East, Acorn Commercial
Helen Hart, Bromley Adult Education College
Hannah Jackson, LBB Community Development Manager
Matthew Jaffa, Federation of Small Businesses
Gary Kendall, Newsquest South London
Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP
Vaughan Leyshon, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
Mary Manuel, LBB Head of Planning Strategy
Kevin Munnely, LBB Head of Town Centre Renewal
Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce
Robert Sargent, Acorn Commercial
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Neville Cavendish – Jobcentre Plus, Amanda Grice – Jobcentre Plus, Robert Innes – Skills Funding Agency, Jean Norton – Bromley Education Business Partnership, Howard Oldstein – The Glades Shopping Centre and Sam Parrett – Bromley College of Further and Higher Education.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH JANUARY 2013 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2013 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 - INCLUDING PARKING ISSUES

The Head of Town Centre Renewal 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. The Council had received the judgement of the High Court following the challenge from Linden Homes/Network Rail to the number of residential units that could be accommodated on Site A: Bromley North. The Council was required to prepare, publish, consult upon and promote a new policy for the site, and it was proposed that this be included in the forthcoming Local Plan. Officers were continuing to work with Transport for London to examine the business case underpinning a potential extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Bromley North. The Council were anticipating that Transport for London would agree to fund and promote this business case work and engage in further discussion around the proposed scheme. Officers had also held a preliminary meeting with Greater London Authority planners to examine options for designating Bromley Town Centre an Opportunity Area in the revised London Plan.

With regard to Site B: Tweedy Road, Officers were currently undertaking a traffic modelling assessment of the area which would be discussed with Transport for London. Following these discussions, a report would be considered by the Strategic Asset Management Group with a detailed proposal for the site. The Land Group had been selected as the Council's development partner in relation to Site C: the Old Town Hall, and regular progress meetings had commenced. Proposals for the site had been developed by Cathedral in liaison with English Heritage who had confirmed that the scheme design was acceptable in principle. There was potential for a Michelin-starred restaurant to be developed as part of the hotel offer.

Following a review of the options for Site F: Civic Centre, it had been agreed that in the short term, the Council would meet its accommodation needs through more efficient use of the campus site. The Council was moving towards the procurement of a development partner in relation to Churchill Place (Site G), which would deliver a significant expansion in retail and office space as well as housing. Following consideration of a number of returns to the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire tender process, Muse Developments, Barratt Developments and Kier Property had been invited to proceed to the next stage of the selection process and submit outline proposals, with the aim of identifying the preferred developer for Site G by May 2013.

The improvement works at Site J: Bromley South would shortly be completed. Lifts had been operational since early September 2012 and the new ticket office and entrance hall were due to be completed by the end of April 2013.

The planning application for the redevelopment of Site K: Westmoreland Road Car Park had been approved by Development Control Committee on 6th March 2012. The car park had formally closed on 2nd April 2013 and work had commenced on the demolition of the car park. The work programme was scheduled for 24 months for full scheme completion, and a high proportion of the restaurant units had already been pre-leased, as well as the cinema. A planning application for a mixed use scheme consisting of a hotel and residential units had been submitted by agents in respect of Site L: Former DHSS in September 2012. This was not in conformity with the Area Action Plan policy for this site and was refused by the Development Control Committee in the March 2013 planning application cycle.

The designs for planned public realm improvements to Bromley North had now progressed through to the detailed design phase which added traffic and engineering details and calculated final estimates. Subject to external funding approvals, implementation of the scheme would start from June 2013. The work programme had been divided into seven phases to minimise disruption to traders and was expected to take around 18 months.

In terms of development across the Borough, Officers were working with a new consortium that was seeking to implement a comprehensive improvement programme in the Walnuts Shopping Centre, Orpington. An application for this redevelopment had been approved by the Development Control Committee on 20th September 2012, and work had commenced on the demolition of the job centre. Interest had been expressed by a range of businesses in relation to other available space across Orpington Town Centre.

Beckenham Town Centre had not been successful in its Step 1 Bid to the Transport for London Area Based Programme for 2013/14; however the Council had been awarded funding of £200,000 through the Local Improvement Programme for High Street/Rectory Road junction improvements. Outline proposals for this work had been developed as part of the Step 1 Bid and Officers were proceeding with survey works to inform a detailed design for implementation. A full range of short term improvement projects had been approved by the Beckenham and West Wickham Town Centres Working Party on 7th February 2013 and were currently being implemented.

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 on progress across the main Partnership themes of Town Centre Management and Business Support in Quarter 4 2012/13.

In Quarter 4 2012/13, the Town Centre Management and Business Support Service had worked to deliver a number of events in town centres including the Bromley Arts Festival, funded by the Outer London Fund, the Hayes Clock unveiling and a special event in the Walnuts commissioned by the Business Improvement District (BID) Working Group in partnership with the Town Centre Management team to raise awareness about the proposed Orpington BID amongst both business owners and shoppers.

The BID Ballot had taken place on 21st February 2013. There had been a 48% turnout of those eligible to vote, of which 54% were in favour, representing 60% of the rateable value. The recruitment process for a manager of the BID was now underway and it was planned for the Orpington 1st BID Company to 'go live' in April 2013. In response to a query from a member of the Partnership, the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support confirmed that a BID could be developed for an industrial area and that BID status allowed businesses to access additional investment through a range of funding streams and potential sponsorship. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support also confirmed that there would be a renewal ballot for the Orpington 1st BID Company in 2018 and that any expansion of the BID area could be considered at that point.

Work was ongoing to action improvements under the Local Parades Initiative. A business support programme for Bromley Town Centre had also been launched in February 2013 in partnership with ActionCoach and would run to the end of the year. The Chairman asked members of the Partnership to signpost business owners who might benefit through either initiative as appropriate

Future activities for the Town Centre Management and Business Support Service included initial consultation and feasibility work for possible BID proposals in both Bromley and Beckenham Town Centres, and the development of a strategy to implement further BIDs across the Borough. The Local Parades Initiative would also continue, and the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support would liaise with Suzanne Sharp, NewsQuest to promote the initiative to local businesses. A number of events were planned across the Borough during the quarter, including a major Fashion Week event in May 2013 and an HG Wells themed heritage event in September 2013 in Bromley Town Centre.

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support advised members of the Partnership that shop front vinyls continued to be used for vacant units. 7.4% of units were currently vacant in Bromley Town Centre (excluding The Glades Shopping Centre and The Mall), which was lower than the national average. Beckenham and Orpington Town Centres currently had

vacancy rates of 4.9% and 5.0% respectively, and West Wickham Town Centre had a vacancy rate of just 2.7%.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 4th Quarter of 2012/13 be noted; and**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 1st Quarter of 2013/14 be noted.**

C) OUTER LONDON FUND

The Head of Town Centre Renewal confirmed that work was ongoing to deliver Round 2 projects funded by successful bids to the Outer London Fund.

Work was now being undertaken with design teams to extend public realm improvements in Bromley North Village throughout Bromley Town Centre. This would include the introduction of 'Legible London' wayfinding signs, additional seating around bus stops and countdown crossings at major points. Improvements to the Bromley South area would include the introduction of a permanent kiss and drop off point on the Waitrose access road and work to open up St Mark's Churchyard at Bromley South to provide a semi-public green space. Officers had also contacted the owners of 2-22 High Street, which was sited opposite the station entrance, around the potential to renew the frontage of these buildings.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

D) LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Planning Strategy 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.

Consultation on the Options and Preferred Strategy' stage of the Local Plan had closed on 15th April 2013, with consultation publicised and up to about 100 responses expected. The next stage was to prepare policies in line with the strategy (taking the consultation responses into account) and site allocations. There would be a further consultation later in 2013 regarding development policies and site allocations within the emerging Local Plan, and members of the Partnership were asked to contribute to these consultations where appropriate.

Members of the Partnership were advised that the Government had recently announced proposals to introduce permitted development rights for change of use from commercial to residential, which would allow offices to be converted to homes without the need for separate planning permission. The Local Authority was concerned at these proposals and was seeking to exempt a number of areas across the Borough, including Bromley Town Centre and the Cray Business Corridor to protect commercial space in key areas. The Local Authority was expected to know in May 2013 if the application for exemption had been successful.

In response to a question from a member of the Partnership, the Head of Planning Strategy confirmed that planning applications would have to take the Local Plan into account when it had been agreed, and that the 'weight' it was given during the planning application process would increase as its preparation progresses.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

E) BUSINESS AREAS POLICY

The Head of Town Centre Renewal outlined the background to the commissioning of the study by GL 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 report considered that a targeted, multi-pronged strategy which sought to develop the economy and business base of the Borough up to 2031 would be most likely to support increased economic growth into the longer term. This would include a focus on areas such as Bromley Town Centre, Cray Valley and Biggin Hill. The plan for each area would be developed through a land use framework, an understanding of the development mix that was needed to secure future economic growth for the area, an infrastructure plan and a delivery plan.

In considering future economic growth across Bromley Town Centre, Robert Sargent, Acorn Commercial highlighted the need to ensure there was a high residential population in the town to support the office and retail space created, as well as the night time economy in the area.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

F) BROMLEY EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

Hannah Jackson, LBB Community Development Manager gave an update on the Bromley Youth Employment Project which 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, seven organisations had been invited to tender. The tender returns were then considered by an evaluation panel, which included representation from the National Apprenticeship Service. Bromley Youth Council also had an opportunity to comment on elements of the tender return.

The LBB Community Development Manager confirmed that following scrutiny by the Executive and Resources PDS Committee on 31st January 2013, the Portfolio Holder for Resources had made his decision to award the contract for the Bromley Youth Employment Project to Bromley College of Further and Higher Education, which would include delivery of 198 internship and apprenticeship opportunities for unemployed Bromley residents between 18 and 24 over a three year period (April 2013 – March 2016). By delivering most of the project through existing staff and resources, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education would be able to deliver value for money and pass 79% of the contract value on to employers by offering a subsidy for employing apprentices and interns placed by the project. Both interns and apprentices would be paid at least the minimum wage during their internship.

Vaughan Leyshon confirmed that project had been branded the 'Star Project' and that work was already being undertaken to promote the project to employers as well as organisations such as Jobcentre Plus. A guide to the project for employers would be circulated to all members of the Partnership shortly.

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

Information on current unemployment and employment trends in the Borough would be circulated to members of the Partnership following the meeting.

B) BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT DEVELOPMENTS

Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport 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 bought 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. There were currently 1,000 jobs in and around London 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.

Katy Woolcott was pleased to confirm that the new London Biggin Hill Airport Fire Station was now completed and would be officially opened by James Cleverly, Greater London Authority Member for Bromley and Bexley and Chairman of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority on Thursday 18th April 2013.

C) COMMERCIAL PROPERTY UPDATE

Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP gave an update on the commercial property market in the Borough. The level of enquiries for commercial property in the Borough had reduced in recent months, however enquiries were now of a better quality. The market for industrial space had improved significantly. The demand for prime retail space was less strong, however there was increasing demand for secondary sites.

The Chairman noted that a major upgrade was being undertaken in Council-owned car parks across Bromley Town Centre which should support a better parking experience for town centre users.

D) GENERAL NEWS ROUND

Steven Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce reported that the offer of six months free membership to new members of the Chamber of Commerce was going well. The Chamber of Commerce had a database of around 6,000 businesses in the local area and would be pleased to use this to promote local business initiatives and procurement opportunities.

Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley noted that Healthwatch Bromley was currently seeking to recruit a Chair and a Coordinator to drive forward improvements to local health and social care services, and asked Members of the Partnership to encourage local business people who had the appropriate skills and enthusiasm to apply for either role.

Vaughan Leyshon, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education was pleased to announce that Bromley College of Further and Higher Education had been rated as 'Good' in a recent Ofsted inspection, and that Ofsted

Inspectors had praised the way that the merger of Bromley and Orpington Colleges had been undertaken. A successful Apprenticeship Week had been held in March 2013 in advance of the forthcoming launch of the Star Project. Office space had been identified at the Orpington campus to accommodate the Orpington 1st BID Company.

Suzanne Sharp, NewsQuest thanked Bromley College, the Local Authority and The Glades Shopping Centre for supporting the Bromley Carer Awards. Limited Edition Magazine was working in partnership with The Glades Shopping Centre to deliver a ladies shopping evening on 21st May 2012, which would include special discounts, give-aways, live music and champagne. NewsQuest was also sponsoring the Bromley Expo in June 2013 and would be providing support to businesses on 'going digital'. In considering advertising and promotion, Gary Kendall, NewsQuest confirmed that property and recruitment advertising in local newspapers was increasing, however retail advertising remained low.

Bek Bekir, National Apprenticeships Service confirmed that the Apprenticeship bus had visited Bromley Town Centre in March and had signposted 1800 people who wished to find out more about apprenticeships. This had included several employers who were interested in recruiting an apprentice.

Donna Still, Federation of Small Businesses, introduced herself to the Partnership as the new representative of the Federation of Small Businesses and noted that a small business award had recently been launched by the Federation.

Helen Hart, Bromley Adult Education College confirmed that the Bromley Adult Education College was working closely with Jobcentre Plus to deliver qualifications to local people who were unemployed. 500 intensive accredited courses had been delivered in the 2012/13 academic year so far, and a short course was also being delivered to support people to use the Jobcentre Plus universal job match website.

Robert Goddard, Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP was pleased to confirm that activity levels were significantly increasing.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support noted that the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority was currently consulting on its draft Fifth London Safety Plan which would determine the way fire services were delivered across the Borough into the future. All members of the Partnership were invited to contribute to the consultation, which would close on 17th June 2013, and to attend the joint public meeting for the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley and Croydon at 7.00pm on Thursday 23rd May at Bromley Central Library.

RESOLVED that the issues raised be noted.

6 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 9th July 2013
4.00pm, Tuesday 8th October 2013
4.00pm, Tuesday 14th January 2014
4.00pm, Thursday 10th April 2014

The Meeting ended at 5.23 pm

Chairman