

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

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

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Adrian Hollands, Baker Tilly Tax and Accounting Limited
(Vice-Chairman)
Carol Arnfield, Bromley Adult Education College
Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP
Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley
Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce
Jean Norton, Bromley Education Business Partnership
Martin Pinnell, LBB Head of Town Centre Management and
Business Support
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport

Also Present:

Jeff East, Acorn Commercial
Mike Ellis, Prospects / South London Business
Councillor Peter Fookes
Dave Freeborn, George Proctor & Partners
Mark Henderson, MSE UK
Amanda Hone, Bromley Arts and Community Initiative
Peter Martin, Bromley Arts and Community Initiative
Tyler McGill, Phoenix Community Housing
Nigel Morriss, Bromley Arts and Community Initiative
Kevin Munnely, LBB Head of Town Centre Renewal
Ivan Reffell, Best of Bromley Borough

1 BROMLEY ARTS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

A presentation was given by Peter Martin, Amanda Hone and Nigel Morriss who were representatives of the Bromley Arts and Community Initiative. This Bromley-based community group aims to procure the Royal Bell Hotel in Bromley North with the intention of developing the building as a focal point for social, recreational, cultural and educational interests in the Borough, and to promote and encourage the work of Bromley-based artists and creative organisations. The members of the Bromley Arts and Community Initiative proposed to develop a partnership with the building owners to enable an application for up to £5m to be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for restoration of the building and development of the arts and community offer.

The Chairman thanked the members of the Bromley Arts and Community Initiative for their presentation.

In considering the proposed development of the Royal Bell Hotel, the Chairman noted that any development of the building must be undertaken with the agreement of Spirit Pub Company which currently held a 20 year lease on the property. Peter Martin confirmed that Spirit Pub Company had given its agreement in principle to allow the community group to apply for funding to assess the feasibility of the project. Spirit Pub Company was responsible for the state of the building, and as the current state of repair of the building left it difficult to let, the proposal to seek funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund could help reduce the repair costs that Spirit Pub Company would be liable for at the end of the lease.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

Peter Martin and Amanda Hone left the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Bek Bekir – National Apprenticeships Service, Neville Cavendish – Jobcentre Plus, Robert Goddard – Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP, Jim Kehoe – LBB Chief Planner, Mary Manuel – LBB Head of Planning Strategy and Projects, Peter Pledger – South London Business, Melanie Ross – Barclays Bank PLC and Suzanne Sharp – NewsQuest.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH JULY 2013 AND MATTERS ARISING

In considering matters arising from the previous meeting, the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support noted the request for a step by step guide to employing a young person in the Borough, and confirmed that the jobs and careers section of the Bromley Council website was being updated to provide additional guidance to employers as well as links to access further support.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2013 be agreed.

4 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 UPDATE

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. With regard to Site C: the Old Town Hall, Heads of

Terms had now been agreed with the developer and the leases had also been completed. A report seeking authority to enter into the agreements was considered by at a special meeting of the Council's Executive on 17th September 2013 and had been agreed. Cathedral would aim to submit their planning application with respect to this site within 6 months of entering into the conditional contract. It was hoped that works could commence on site in Summer 2014, with the planned hotel and conference centre expected to open in late 2015.

Work was now underway in East Street and High Street as part of the planned public realm improvements to Bromley North Village. The full programme would take 18 months to implement and was expected to finish in Winter 2014. A significant issue with a water main in High Street had caused some early difficulties, but the Local Authority was working with Thames Water to resolve this.

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 which would see Crown Buildings redeveloped for additional retail floor space and a cinema. Planning permission had been granted for the scheme and authority had been obtained to sell the Local Authority's freehold interest in an area adjoining Crown Buildings which was required for the scheme. Crown Buildings had been demolished and the developer was progressing negotiations for the pre-letting of retail units included in the proposed cinema-led development.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

B) GROWTH AND DELIVERY PLANS - BROMLEY, BIGGIN HILL AND CRAY VALLEY

The Head of Town Centre Renewal gave an update on progress on developing growth and delivery plans for Bromley, Biggin Hill and Cray Valley. Work was currently being undertaken to identify the development capacity in each of the identified areas, and this would be used to inform the Local Plan for Bromley.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

C) DLR EXTENSION TO BROMLEY

The Head of Town Centre Renewal confirmed that 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 from either Catford or Hither Green Stations. Transport for London had appointed consultants to undertake economic and design feasibility and viability assessments of a number of options and these were due to report in Autumn 2013.

In considering how the £800M scheme might be funded, the Chairman noted that Crossrail was funded through a London-wide tariff, which might be similarly utilised for an extension to the Docklands Light Railway. Bromley did not currently benefit from any underground service, and the proposed scheme would help reduce pressure on other routes used by commuters to travel to Canary Wharf. It was important to continue to promote the value of the proposed scheme to the Mayor for London, and the Chairman requested that members of the Partnership voice their support where appropriate.

Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce, advised the Partnership that the London Borough of Greenwich was seeking to extend its Docklands Light Railway Service to Eltham, and it may be possible to link the proposed extension to Bromley to this scheme.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

D) TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT UPDATE

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 2 2013/14.

In Quarter 2 2013/14, the Town Centre Management and Business Support Service had worked to deliver a number of events in town centres including a number of High Street Garden activities in Bromley Town Centre, the family entertainment day, 'Are you Bromley's Future?' and the unveiling of the new Beckenham Town Signs on 6th July 2013. A new 'pop up market' in Penge had been launched on 27th July 2013, with two further markets held in August and September 2013.

Town Centre Managers continued to engage landlords and agents for vacant units across the Borough to encourage the use of shop window vinyls and pop-up shops. The Town Centre Manager for Beckenham had also been working with the new Beckenham Town Centre Team to develop draft terms of Reference and a business plan in advance of its first formal meeting on 26th September 2013. Work continued with the Local Parades Initiative and applications had been received from shopping parades across the Borough.

The Local Authority continued to maintain direct contact with the Orpington 1st BID Company through the attendance of non-voting members, Councillor William Huntington-Thresher and Martin Pinnell. A temporary manager had been employed by the Orpington 1st BID company in July 2013 to start delivering a range of projects and to oversee the development of internal management and finance systems. Interviews for the post of permanent BID Manager had taken place in late August 2013 and, subject to contact, it was hoped that the preferred candidate would be in post by early October 2013.

The Bromley North Village improvement works commenced in late July 2013 and were expected to run until November 2014, with a one month break in

December 2013 to support trade during the Christmas period. The Town Centre Manager for Bromley had been working closely with the Bromley North Village project team to help minimise disruption during the works and provide information to business owners and members of the public around the scheme. As part of this a public event and a business event had taken place in July 2013. A reduction in business rates had also been secured for businesses in the most affected streets.

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 which would be reported to Members during Autumn 2013, and the development of a strategy to implement further BIDs across the Borough. Work would also be undertaken to engage more with local businesses and town centre stakeholders, including a focus on developing Town Teams or similar partnership bodies in larger towns across the Borough. A number of events were planned across the Borough during the quarter, including markets in Beckenham and Penge as well as Christmas light switch on events and celebrations in each of the managed town centres during November and December. Other activities would include work to continue to guide and promote the Bromley Business GrowthCLUB programme and other business support events, and maintaining regular business communications channels and publications including the business e-bulletin.

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support advised members of the Partnership that a recent consultation had been published by the Department for Communities and Local Government around proposals to introduce permitted development rights for change of use from retail to residential, which would allow retail units to be converted to homes without the need for separate planning permissions. This was following a similar scheme introduced in May 2013 to support change of use from office to residential for a limited three year period. The consultation would close on 15th October 2013 and members of the Partnership were invited to contribute where appropriate.

In considering the proposals, the Chairman noted that the proposed scheme might be utilised to reduce the length of overlong high streets, however there was a danger that the proposals might damage smaller shopping parades.

Mark Henderson, MSE UK was concerned at the loss of industrial space in the Borough, particularly for larger businesses, and highlighted a security issue experienced by commercial premises in Worsley Bridge Road which might be resolved with the installation of CCTV. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support noted that the development of a Business Improvement District or other form of cross-working between businesses might resolve the issue and would speak with Mark Henderson following the meeting.

The Chairman advised the Partnership that Windsor had the Windsor Town Card which offered a range of retail and service discounts to encourage

residents to use their town centres. The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support confirmed that a similar scheme was being re-launched by the Orpington 1st BID company. He promised to study a similar scheme for Bromley.

The Chairman also noted that a Town Centre Parking Working Group had recently been formed by Members and that it would consider a range of town centre parking issues.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 2nd Quarter of 2013/14 be noted; and**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 3rd Quarter of 2013/14 be noted.**

E) OUTER LONDON FUND

The Head of Town Centre Renewal confirmed that work was being undertaken with design teams to extend public realm improvements in Bromley North Village throughout Bromley Town Centre which would include the introduction of 'Legible London' wayfinding signs as well as supporting businesses in Bromley North Village to improve their premises. Lighting would also be used on key buildings, such as the Churchill Theatre, as a way to emphasise the town centre.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

F) LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support confirmed that a further period of consultation would be undertaken on the draft Local Plan in January 2014 and asked all members of the Partnership to contribute where appropriate. It was expected that the final Local Plan would be agreed by Autumn 2014.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

G) EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS INITIATIVES

Jean Norton, Bromley Education Business Partnership advised members of the Partnership of the close partnership working across the Local Authority to deliver a joined up approach to employment and skills. There was a current focus on supporting the transition of young people from full time education into employment. A mapping exercise was also being undertaken to identify the full range of initiatives aimed at supporting young people into employment. This would allow better cross-working between initiatives, reduce duplication and develop a clearer route into employment for young people. The initiatives identified as part of the exercise would be invited to join the Bromley

Employment and Skills Group which continued to meet on a quarterly basis, bringing together a range of stakeholders to share best practice on support into employment as well as details of current and forthcoming programmes.

Other work being undertaken by the Bromley Education Business Partnership including organising a group of business ambassadors to undertake mock interviews with young people and help them develop a better understanding of the skills employers were seeking. The Partnership had also developed a pre-apprenticeship programme which matched businesses with young people, as well as a service which supported employers through the process of recruiting a young person and during the first six months of an apprenticeship.

An event would be held at the United Reformed Church, Bromley on 17th October 2013 outlining a range of employment initiatives as well as changes to the benefit system and how this would affect those in receipt of benefit and employers, and all members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

Mark Henderson, MSE UK noted the need for a suitable apprenticeship programme for the engineering industry. Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce also highlighted the potential to establish a University Technical College in the Borough.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

5 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 brought together a cluster of modern aviation-related businesses at and around London Biggin Hill Airport to support continued economic development in the area. A further meeting of the LoCATE stakeholders would be held in January 2014 to ensure that the economic development potential of London Biggin Hill Airport as a Strategic Outer London Development Centre was reflected fully in the Local Plan for Bromley.

Work had been undertaken towards securing a business deal which could realise significant investment in the airport and create a number of employment opportunities.

C) COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MARKET

Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP gave an update on the commercial property market in the Borough. The market for retail space had improved, leading to a reduction in rent-free periods and other incentives. Less than 2% of Grade A office space was currently available to let.

Jeff East, Acorn Commercial reported that new home sales remained strong across the Borough, but was concerned that the cost of the planning application process continued to rise for developers. Dave Freeborn, George Proctor & Partners, agreed that it could be difficult to get planning permission, even when a developer had worked with the Local Authority on a pre-application enquiry, and noted that it was also difficult for businesses to apply successfully for bank loans. The Chairman noted the issues identified with the Local Authority planning process and requested that any suggestions on how it could be streamlined within the law be provided to him.

Mike Ellis, Prospects / South London Business confirmed that there was a shortage of industrial space in the Borough, particularly for larger businesses and that the need to protect existing industrial space from residential or other development should be reflected in the Local Plan.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

6 GENERAL NEWS ROUND

Carol Arnfield, Bromley Adult Education College confirmed that the Bromley Adult Education College continued to work closely with Jobcentre Plus to deliver qualifications to local people who were unemployed. Since the start of the Autumn Term 2013, 15 new courses had been run for Jobcentre Plus which had benefitted 120 jobseekers.

Steve Nelson, South East London Chamber of Commerce reported that the Chamber of Commerce was introducing an Executives' Club which would be launched later in 2013. A range of breakfast and lunchtime events would continue to be delivered.

Mark Henderson, MSE UK noted that this was the first meeting of the Partnership he had attended and advised members of the Partnership that MSE UK was a long established family firm which manufactured hospital and centrifuge equipment. The company currently exported 35% of its products.

Ivan Reffell, Best of Bromley Borough confirmed that work was currently being undertaken with smaller town centres across the Borough. As part of this, a film highlighting local independent traders in West Wickham High Street had recently been produced and a number of marketing surgeries had been held

for West Wickham traders which included the benefits of advertising via social media. The Best of Bromley Borough website had been contacted by Chislehurst traders to produce a similar film and it was hoped that a highly subsidised film package could be offered to retailers across the Borough.

Mike Ellis, Prospects / South London Business advised members of the Partnership that Prospects offered a national scheme for apprenticeships which employed apprentices directly and placed them with employers. The National start up loan scheme available to young people aged 18-30 years to support them to start their own businesses had now been opened to those aged 30+ years although funding was more limited for those over 30 years.

Adrian Hollands, Baker Tilly Tax and Accounting Limited (Vice-Chairman) was pleased to advise members of the Partnership that a quiz night in aid of the Bromley Community Fund would be held at The Warren, Hayes on 31st October 2013 and all members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley provided all members of the Partnership with a summary of the Community Links Bromley annual report. Community Links Bromley was currently exploring the issue of corporate social responsibility which could lead to a survey of Bromley businesses and an event in 2014.

Nigel Morris, Bromley Arts and Community Initiative, invited all members of the Partnership to become involved in the community group and noted that any business or legal advice around how the group should proceed in its stated aim to develop the Royal Bell Hotel as a venue for arts and the community would be welcome.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 14th January 2014
4.00pm, Thursday 10th April 2014

The Meeting ended at 5.46 pm

Chairman