

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 20 January 2015

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)
Sharon Baldwin, Orpington 1st BID Company
Dave Freeborn, George Proctor & Partners
Robert Goddard, Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP
Mark Henderson, MSE UK
Sam Parrett, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
Martin Pinnell, LBB Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support
Suzanne Sharp, NewsQuest
Donna Still, Federation of Small Businesses

Also Present:

Diane Diamond, Community Links Bromley
Councillor Peter Fookes
Amanda Grice, Jobcentre Plus
Paul King, LBB Head of Youth Support Services
Mary Manuel, LBB Head of Planning Strategy and Projects
Adam Pope, Phoenix Community Housing
Peter Scott-Wilds, FLR Spectron / South East London Chamber of Commerce
Michelle Williams, FLR Spectron

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Paula Heffernan – Jobcentre Plus, Lesley Holland – LBB Operations Manager: Bromley Education Business Partnership, Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP, Stella Marshall – LBB Youth Support Programme Development Officer, Colin Maclean – Community Links Bromley and Robert Sargent – Acorn Commercial.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7TH OCTOBER 2014 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

With regard to Item 4a: Town Centres Development Programme Update, the Chairman confirmed that the New Homes Bonus for 2014/15 would total £1.74m for the Borough and would be used to fund projects for Penge Town Centre/Crystal Palace, place making at the Walnuts Centre and Orpington business enabling and support, Biggin Hill Aviation Technology and Enterprise Centre, and Lagoon Road Industrial Estate redevelopment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2015 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 CENTRES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chairman gave an update on Town Centre Development across the Borough.

Progress was continuing across the sites that made up the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan. Work had now been completed on the planned public realm improvements to Bromley North Village, although some minor contingency works would take place in 2015.

In terms of development across the Borough, the Beckenham Major Scheme's Design and Development phase was on schedule. A base Traffic Model had been developed and was being audited by Transport for London, and design consultants were working on options for the Cinema roundabout with a focus on improving the pedestrian access and environment. Formal consultation on the proposed Beckenham Town Centre Conservation Area had closed on 24th October 2014. Approximately 100 responses had been received, in addition to a formal response from English Heritage, and these were being analysed.

The Miller Development at the Walnuts Shopping Centre, Orpington was under construction and due to be completed in Autumn 2015. A planning application had been received from Berkeley Homes for a Wellness Centre and residential scheme on the Old Police Station site, and it was expected that a planning application for a Premier Inn development in the area would be submitted shortly. It was planned to use New Homes Bonus funding to implement a public realm improvement scheme to bring together the different developments across Orpington town centre.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

B) LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Head of Planning Strategy and Projects provided an update on the development of planning policy in the Borough.

The Government had consulted on whether to extend the scheme which allowed permitted development rights for change of use from office to residential beyond March 2016 with some amendments. The Local Authority had consulted on Article 4 directions to exclude identified office sites in Bromley town centre after July 2015, and was awaiting for a response from the Secretary of State. The Local Authority's representations to the Mayor's draft Further Alterations to the London Plan had been considered as part of

the Examination, but the changes requested by the Local Authority to the office guideline classification for Bromley and Orpington town centres were not supported by the Inspector.

The Chairman noted that Biggin Hill and Crystal Palace had been included in the London Plan and the Further Alterations to the London Plan as Strategic Outer London Development Centres for, respectively, aviation and sports, leisure and culture. The potential to include the Lower Sydenham industrial area as a strategic industrial location was now being explored, as well as smaller industrial areas identified across the Borough.

The Government's response to its consultation on the proposed changes to simplify change of use for retail units across A Use Class categories was awaited.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

C) 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 3 2014/15.

In Quarter 3 2014/15, a number of events had taken place in town centres including Christmas events in Beckenham, Penge and Bromley town centres.

The Local Authority continued to maintain direct contact with the Orpington 1st Business Improvement District (BID) Board through the attendance of non-voting members, Councillor William Huntington-Thresher and the Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support. The grant agreement between Bromley BID Working Group and the Local Authority was finalised in early October and the Working Group had subsequently appointed Central Management Solutions, to undertake the work required to bring the proposed Bromley BID to a ballot in Autumn 2015. Work had commenced on the feasibility stage, and an in-depth consultation would take place in Spring 2015 to identify the issues for the town centre and the aspirations of local businesses through the Bromley BID.

In considering town centre unit vacancies, 11% of units were currently vacant in Beckenham town centre, 11.8% of units were currently vacant in Bromley town centre, which included a reduction in vacancies in Bromley North following completion of the public realm improvements, and 8.1% of units were currently vacant in Penge town centre, which was lower than the national average of 13.2%. The Orpington 1st BID area had a vacancy rate of 15.2%.

The Town Centre Management and Business Support Service had worked closely with various organisations to provide a programme of support and networking opportunities for local businesses. The Local Authority had re-

launched the Bromley Business Growth Club in partnership with Action Coach on 23rd October 2014, which would support established local businesses seeking to grow. The bi-monthly Business e-Bulletin had changed its format and was now being hosted and managed by a local e-marketing agency.

Future activities for the Town Centre Management and Business Support Service included encouraging and supporting the Bromley BID Working Group in engaging with businesses across the town centre to consult on a potential BID, and assisting the Beckenham Town Centre Team and the Beckenham Town Centre Working Group to engage with businesses on designs for the major Transport for London funded scheme for Beckenham. An events and activities programme for the managed town centres would be developed, including special markets, and work would also be undertaken with partner organisations to develop a programme of support workshops and seminars for local businesses. A 'Bromley Means Business Expo' would be held on 16th June 2015, and all members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 3rd Quarter of 2014/15 be noted; and**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 4th Quarter of 2014/15 be noted.**

D) BROMLEY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROJECT ROUND 2 UPDATE

Paul King, Head of Youth Support Services, gave an update on the Bromley Youth Employment Project (Round 2) which had been developed by the Local Authority to support sustainable employment opportunities for young people who were unemployed.

The project aimed to:

1. Target priority client groups, including young people identified as at risk of being 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEET), young people aged 18-24 years claiming Jobseekers Allowance and Looked After Children aged 15-24 years.
2. Increase the supply of local employment opportunities for young people by implementing a Borough-wide employer engagement programme, creating a Local Authority graduate internship opportunity to develop a Local Authority strategy to increase the offer of work experience placements, traineeships and apprenticeships across the Local Authority and its partners, and working with Community Links to create a voluntary and community sector based graduate internship opportunity to stimulate the creation of work experience placements, traineeships and apprenticeships across the voluntary and community sector.

3. Increase the work readiness of young people and raise their awareness of apprenticeships by delivering Next Step employability conferences and employability workshops to priority client groups, providing a tailored recruitment and matching service, and supporting short intervention mentoring relationships aimed at Jobseekers Allowance claimants aged 18-24 years.

The key project outcomes over the two year project included creating 100 employment opportunities for young people, getting 500 employers participating in awareness raising events, offering one to one support for 200 employers, and creating 25 employment or work experience opportunities within the voluntary and community sector. It was also aimed to provide employability support to 900 students, enhanced employment opportunities for 25 Looked After Children, targeted mentoring support for 40 Jobseekers Allowance claimants aged 18-24 years, and to support 100 young people into contracted employment lasting a minimum of six months.

The Head of Youth Support Services advised members of the Partnership that significant work had been undertaken with employers to promote the value of work experience placements, apprenticeships and traineeships, and 30 employment opportunities for young people had now been identified. Work was underway to identify apprenticeship and work experience opportunities across the Local Authority and its contractors, as well as in voluntary and community organisations. Two events had recently been held in schools across the Borough to raise awareness of the opportunities available, and a further three events were planned for Spring 2015. Young people who could benefit from the support offered by the Project were also being targeted through Youth Support Services, and five young people had now been supported into employment with local employers.

Mark Henderson, MSE UK, advised members of the Partnership that he would shortly be attending a meeting at 10 Downing Street to discuss issues around apprenticeships and training and that issues impacting the Bromley Youth Employment Project could be raised.

Sam Parrett, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education noted the importance of ensuring that the right skills training was in place to match the opportunities and needs of employers, and confirmed that there had been a significant increase in the number of young people taking up an apprenticeship through Bromley College of Further and Higher Education in recent months.

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) EMPLOYMENT/UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN THE BOROUGH

Amanda Grice, Jobcentre Plus advised members of the Partnership that the Jobseekers Allowance Count in Bromley in November 2014 was 2,720 claimants. This was a decrease of 130 claimants on the previous month and 1,410 claimants since November 2013. There had been a reduction in the number of Jobseeker Allowance claimants aged 18-24 years. In November 2014 there were 580 claimants aged 18-24 years, which was a decrease of 50 claimants on the previous month and 380 claimants since November 2013. There had been a significant increase in new Jobseeker Allowance claimants in January 2015 and this was being closely monitored.

The number of Employment Support Allowance and Income Support claimants in the Borough continued to remain high with, respectively, 8,500 and 2,280 claimants. Where appropriate these claimants were targeted with the support needed to move into employment.

B) BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT

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.

London Biggin Hill Airport had recently undertaken a consultation with local residents and stakeholders on plans to extend the operating hours of the airport and to support the future potential development of the airport's offer. Approximately 15,000 consultation responses had been received, of which 83% of respondents either agreed or agreed with reservations that they supported the proposed extension in opening hours. Bromley Council had launched its own public consultation on the proposed extension of opening hours which would close on 13th March 2015, after which the Council's Executive would consider whether to approve the proposed extension of opening hours.

Following an announcement by the Ministry of Defence to cease funding St George's Chapel, London Biggin Hill Airport had offered to fund the £50,000 annual cost of keeping the chapel open, which housed a war memorial to 454 servicemen who lost their lives in World War Two. The Chairman noted that the Local Authority was working to establish a charitable trust for the running of the chapel and a proposed heritage centre, which would include a public appeal for funding during 2015, and would be pleased to work in partnership with London Biggin Hill Airport.

C) COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP had provided a written report to the Partnership which advised that the commercial property market continued to be strong. There was some concern over a recent loss of commercial space

due to conversion under permitted development rights and, as the number of office buildings in the Borough reduced, it was expected that rents were likely to increase.

D) COMMUNITY LINKS BROMLEY

Diane Diamond, Community Links Bromley was pleased to announce that a Corporate Social Responsibility Expo would be held on 18th March 2015 at Bromley Civic Centre. This event would showcase the voluntary sector in the Borough and support the development of links between local businesses and third sector organisations, and members of the Partnership were invited to attend.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

E) GENERAL NEWS ROUND

Sam Parrett, Bromley College of Further and Higher Education was pleased to announce that the new hospitality training centre at the College's Orpington campus would open in February 2015, and that bookings for the Chef's Table Training Restaurant could be made through the Bromley College website. A business and conference centre was now available for use at the College's Orpington campus, and a number of business club and business networking events would be held during Spring 2015 to promote the new facilities.

Suzanne Sharp, NewsQuest, advised members of the Partnership that 2015 was the 50th anniversary year for the News Shopper. A special celebratory publication would be published on a quarterly basis throughout the year. It was hoped that one of these publications would be based around business in Bromley, and members of the Partnership were requested to submit their stories.

Adam Pope, Phoenix Community Housing, confirmed that Phoenix Community Housing had established a 'Building Lives' academy through one of its community centres and was now recruiting the first cohort of young people into its traineeship programme. Phoenix Community Housing had successfully applied for a Heritage Lottery Enterprise Fund grant of £3.8m which would be used to restore a 1920's public house in Bellingham to provide a cinema, brewery, live music and café offer to the local community.

Mark Henderson, MSE UK, noted that the strength of the pound was impacting companies with a high level of exports, but that his company was continuing to develop in new markets including Cuba and Brazil. He was pleased to announce that MSE UK had won the 'Best Small Business' award in the 2014 Bromley Business Awards.

Dave Freeborn, George Proctor & Partners, confirmed that there continued to be a high level of interest in land development in Bromley. The Local Authority would be holding a planning forum shortly to support developers in understanding the planning application process.

Peter Scott-Wilds, FLR Spectron/South East London Chamber of Commerce advised members of the Partnership that the Chamber of Commerce would be delivering more networking opportunities for businesses during 2015. A Construction Forum had recently been established and it was hoped that the Leaders of the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham would meet with the Chamber of Commerce on a six monthly basis to consider how businesses could work together more effectively across the South East London region.

Michelle Williams, FLR Spectron, was pleased to announce that FLR Spectron had won the 'Best Medium Business' award in the 2014 Bromley Business Awards, had been highly commended in the 'Commitment to the Community' category and had been commended in the 'Best Employer and Staff Development' category.

Donna Still, Federation of Small Businesses confirmed that work continued to be undertaken to ensure that small businesses were able to benefit from opportunities in Local Authority procurement. Some concerns had been raised by proposed changes to parking fees across the Borough and the impact this may have on businesses.

Sharon Baldwin, Manager, Orpington 1st BID Company was pleased to announce that a business show would be held on 19th February 2015 as part of 'Love Orpington' week, and that all members of the Partnership were invited to attend. A food festival was being planned for Orpington 2015 and work continued with Bromley College of Further and Higher Education to develop links with the Hospitality and Catering College with a view to developing a vibrant street food offer in Orpington town centre.

Robert Goddard, Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP advised members of the Partnership that there was strong demand for legal services at the present time.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

5 BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Members of the Partnership considered the forward rolling work programme for the Bromley Economic Partnership for 2014/15.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the new Director of Business at Bromley College of Further and Education would be invited to a future meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership to outline developments across the College's business provision.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

7 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 14th April 2015

The Meeting ended at 5.27 pm

Chairman