

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 3.00 pm on 26 January 2021

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)
Sharon Baldwin, Orpington 1st BID Company
Robert Buckley, LBB Head of Renewal
Zoe Carr, Beckenham Together BID Company & Penge SE20
BID Company
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley
Lesley Holland, LBB Operations Manager, Bromley Education
Business Partnership
Michael Humphries, Handelsbanken
Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP
Marg Mayne, Mytime Active
Helen McIntosh FCIPR, South East London Chamber of
Commerce
Lorraine McQuillan, LBB Town Centres & BID Development
Manager
Chandra Sharma, Federation of Small Businesses
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group

Also Present:

Councillor Vanessa Allen
Councillor Yvonne Bear
Councillor Julian Benington
Russell Clarke, Sundridge Investments Limited
Neil Coates, London South East Colleges
John Coupland, South East London Business Network (SELBN)
Chris Glover, Churchill Theatre
Zoe Griffiths, Your Bromley BID Company
Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons
Ben Johnson, LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy
Steve Lipscombe, Ronin Marketing
Alicia Munday, LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and
Regeneration
Emma Santer, Bromley FC
Lawrence Wilson, Business Doctors

10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education, Mark Haynes – The

Glades, Denise Kelly – Nugent Shopping Centre, Robert Sargent – Acorn Group and Caroline Tatchell – Splash Damage.

Apologies had also been received from Frances Forest – Your Bromley BID Company, Sam Parrett and Louise Wolsey – London South East Colleges, and Zoe Griffiths – Your Bromley BID Company and Neil Coates – London South East Colleges attended as their respective substitutes.

11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3RD NOVEMBER 2020 AND MATTERS ARISING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2020 be agreed.

Matters Arising:

5a. Town Centre Renewal Update

Further information regarding the Bromley public realm scheme had been circulated to members of the partnership via email. With regards to the Memorandum of Understanding with BT Openreach, the LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration confirmed that it was currently in draft form.

5b. Planning Policy Update

Further policy updates would be provided to the Partnership once the London Plan was adopted.

5c. Business Support Update

Discussions around the discretionary grants scheme had taken place between John Coupland, South East London Business Network (SELBN), LBB Head of Renewal, and LBB Town Centres and BID Development Manager. An update on business grants had been included as an agenda item for the meeting.

6. Partner Updates and Opportunities for Joint Working

Members were advised that London South East Colleges (LSEC) had been successful in their bid to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake work around local youth unemployment.

12 BUSINESS GRANTS UPDATE

Alicia Munday, LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration attended the meeting to provide information regarding the current business grants.

The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration advised members that the team were administering 11 various business grants, and, through support grants, had delivered over £105m to businesses in the Borough. The grants were divided into two areas – mandatory grants, with

criteria set by the government, for which the Council facilitated payments; and discretionary grants, for which the Local Authority set the criteria within a national framework.

Mandatory grants were administered directly by the Council's Exchequer Services, whereas the discretionary grants were co-ordinated by the Business Support Team. The first discretionary grant scheme had been administered in summer 2020 and had seen £2.275m distributed (from an allocation of £2.4m) to 178 businesses. In line with government requirements, just over £120k was returned. It was noted that the aim was always to have no grant monies returned, but if the grant could not be distributed within the timescale set, this was the legal requirement.

The Local Authority had received 287 grant applications, and of the 178 grants paid out: 73% went to Limited companies; 5% to partnerships; 2% to charities; and just under 20% to sole traders. The administration of grants at this level was an entirely new concept for the Public Sector – the team had worked with partners to share ideas and best practice, and were supported by a senior officer board which included the Director of Finance, the Director for Housing, Planning and Regeneration, the Chief Auditor and Finance officers.

The most recent grants announced by the government were the Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG), which for Bromley equated to just over £6.6m. Addressing feedback received in relation to the time taken to distribute the ARG, the LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration advised that the fund had been announced by the government in November 2020, for which it took a further two weeks for guidance to be received. Once the grant amount was confirmed, in direct response to the criteria used in the summer, the team had undertaken work to find out the needs of business via round table events and online surveys. Due to the overall value of the ARG, a report was required to be drafted and presented to Elected Members for consideration of the proposals. This had taken place over the Christmas period, and the Leader of the Council had taken an urgent decision in January 2021. At this point, the team could start commissioning the development of the systems needed to administer the grants. This was extremely complex, and it was noted that all risks, including fraud, sat with the Local Authority. Work was being undertaken with a team of developers, who were working on similar projects across the country and in great demand. Despite this, within two weeks of approval, two schemes had gone live. The independent bars and public house scheme went live the previous week and had a ringfenced total of £1m. Grants were based on business rates, or for those that were exempt, a lumpsum of £3k would be allocated. It was noted that around 20 applications had already been received. The hardship grant scheme had gone live that afternoon, which would provide support to local businesses and those, such as sole traders, whose income had been directly impacted by the pandemic.

The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration informed members that a further three schemes were in development: a £1m innovation fund (which it was hoped would be available in mid-February

2021); the distribution of a top-up payment scheme; and an enterprise hub. In addition to this, it was anticipated that Phase 2 of the grants would be considered by the Council in February.

The team was working to make the Business Support section of the Council's website easier to use, and as clear and concise as possible. However, they were still having to process a large number of applications that did not provide the correct evidence, and some that were clearly not eligible. For this round of grants, some constraints had been added, such as only attempting to contact a business twice for further information before their application was withdrawn – the team were doing everything they could to communicate this to businesses. It was noted that the government had listened to feedback, and was allowing Local Authorities until March 2022 to use their full allocation of the ARG. The Council had a clear agenda relating to this, which was for the local economy to prosper long after the pandemic, and the team were working with businesses to target the best use of the grants.

John Coupland, South East London Business Network (SELBN) noted that there had been a number of communications between himself and the Business Support team, particularly in relation to the concerns raised at the last meeting regarding sole traders, and thanked them for their help so far. Mr Coupland asked for clarification regarding the balance of the discretionary grants returned to government, as he had understood that there had “not been enough money to go round”. The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration responded that the Council could always utilise more funding if it was received, and highlighted that it was never the intention to return funding to central government if they did not have to. However there had been the need to find a balance between increasing the threshold each time, and there being enough money “left in the pot” and time for it to be distributed. This had been fed back to government, and in response they had given a much greater timescale for the ARG to be utilised. It was noted that some grants were received at short notice and had tight deadlines which added to the complexity.

Mr Coupland noted the update regarding the hardship grant that had gone live that day and enquired as to how it would be communicated. The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration advised that the scheme had only gone live within the last half an hour. The following day a press release would be published, and information would be circulated via the Business Support e-bulletin, to which businesses had been encouraged to sign up.

Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley asked if there was any data regarding unsuccessful applications for discretionary grants, particularly in relation to the charitable sector. The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration advised that 12 applications had been received from charities, of which 5 had been awarded a grant allocation. The remaining 7 had not been eligible, which may have been related to them not having the overheads necessary to warrant a successful application.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group highlighted that in order to be eligible for discretionary grants, the Local Authority had required a business to show a dip in their turnover within the first two months. As not all businesses would see the full impact of the pandemic happen immediately, there would have been a large number of businesses that would not fall into Bromley's eligibility criteria. It was questioned why this had not been amended, particularly if there was a balance of £120k. The LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration responded that the criteria had been set with the best of intentions, at that particular point in time – however the length of the pandemic had not been known, and in hindsight things may have been done slightly differently. The scheme had been taken to its limit with regards to eligibility, with the BR threshold being increased each time. There had been no further time to introduce additional criteria, and government guidelines had been strict with regards to the return of any unallocated funds. It was noted that the hardship grant would support businesses affected by seasonal effects, as any three months could be selected (and did not have to be consecutive) to evidence a loss of income of up to £10k.

Mr Coupland, South East London Business Network (SELBN) noted that in relation to the first round of discretionary grants, he had put in writing to the Local Authority that he questioned the guidelines provided, as they had not been written with sole traders in mind. It was hoped that lessons would be learnt from this, as it was felt the balance returned to government was unacceptable and could have been used to help this group.

RESOLVED that the Business Grants Update be noted.

**13 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 RENEWAL UPDATE

Robert Buckley, LBB Head of Renewal provided an update on Town Centre renewal across the Borough.

In addition to the work around grants that the LBB Interim Assistant Director of Culture and Regeneration had already described, the team was also working on a Digital Infrastructure Work Plan. This had been mentioned at the last meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership, and the importance to both businesses and residents in the Borough had been highlighted. A report regarding this would be presented to the meeting of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd February 2021. A copy of the report can be viewed via the following link:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50085860/Digital%20Infrastructure%20Report.pdf>

The Digital Infrastructure Work Plan had two main streams. The first of these was working on the Memorandum of Understanding with BT Openreach, regarding the roll out of full fibreoptic broadband, which it was anticipated would reach 85% of the Borough by 2023, and result in vastly improved connectivity for all. The second stream related to the Council launching its own 'toolkit', which was the provision of small pieces of kit to be installed on Council-owned assets to aid good wireless connection.

Other areas of work being undertaken included connecting Council-owned sites, such as libraries and schools, and looking at funding sources. A bid had been submitted to Connected London for funding of up to £1m to provide them with improved broadband. Discussions were also taking place with the Planning department to ensure that when applications came through for digital infrastructure proposals, they took on board the benefits to communities.

With regards to Bromley Town Centre, they were mid-way through the High Street Improvement Scheme, with the third of the seven stages underway. A planning application (Reference: 21/00337/FULL1) had been submitted for a number of interventions on the High Street, including a covered seating area, sculpture and performance area. The designs had been well received by Ward Councillors, local groups and key stakeholders. The overall aim of the scheme was to make the town centre an attractive destination that residents were encouraged to come in to, interact with the new features, and support local businesses.

Members were advised that the Your Bromley Business Improvement District (BID) had launched their business plan in advance of the BID ballot which would take place on 25th February 2021. This had been a difficult task with the backdrop of the pandemic, but they had put forward some very good proposals, and it was hoped these would be supported by businesses and that they would vote to renew the BID for a further five years.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group noted that he had been pleased to see a number of planters installed on Orpington High Street, to separate pedestrians from the traffic. In contrast, the plastic red and white barriers in Bromley High Street had been dislodged, and it did not give the best impression of the town. The LBB Town Centres and BID Development Manager advised that the planters in Orpington High Street were also due to be installed in Bromley, Beckenham and Penge within the next few weeks, and the red and white barriers would be removed.

RESOLVED that the Town Centre Renewal update be noted.

b PLANNING POLICY UPDATE

Ben Johnson, LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy provided an update in relation to Planning Policy.

The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy highlighted that a further government consultation was underway regarding permitted development

rights. It included a new use class which grouped several former categories, such as shops, offices and restaurants, into one. There was also another consultation taking place regarding the intention to bring forward a permitted development right from August 2021, to allow any use within that class to be changed to residential use. The Local Authority would provide a response to the consultation, which would end on Thursday. Whilst it was appreciated that the government wanted to introduce some flexibility to help achieve their ambitious housing targets, there were some concerns regarding the impact they would have in allowing wholesale changes to commercial areas. A report regarding these issues would be presented to the Council's Development Control Committee, a link to which was provided following the meeting:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50085754/CONSULTATION%20ON%20PLANNING%20APPLICATIONS.pdf>

With regards to the Draft London Plan, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised members that since the last meeting, there had been further 'toing-and-froing' between the Secretary of State and the Mayor of London, and the document had still not been adopted. However, it was further along the adoption process, and the Secretary of State had advised that he intended to confirm he was happy with the document by the 1st February. Therefore, the London Plan was likely to be fully adopted by the end of February / beginning of March 2021 and would then be used to assess planning applications in the Borough. It contained a number of new planning policies relating to housing, and it was noted that the housing target had been increased by around 130 units per annum. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said he would be happy to provide further updates on specific policies within the London Plan if required.

(ACTION: LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy)

An update regarding this would also be provided to the Council's Development Control Committee on 28th January 2021, and a link to the report was provided following the meeting:

<https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50085730/LONDON%20PLAN%20UPDATE.pdf>

In response to a question from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that following the adoption of the London Plan, there was no absolute requirement to review the Local Plan. However, there would be certain policies that "pulled in different directions" and legislation stated that the most recently adopted document took priority – although it was noted that this would not instantly invalidate the Local Plan.

In response to a further question from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that the SPDs for Orpington and Bromley town centres were progressing well. Work was underway to inform urban design elements of the documents. It was intended that the draft SPD would be brought to various Council Committees for scrutiny during the Spring, and would include guidance relating to the implementation of planning policies in the town centres.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group, noted the concerns regarding the changes to use classes, and questioned if an Article 4 could be used to stop these wholesale changes. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that no real details were known yet, however it was anticipated that an Article 4 direction could be used to remove some of the permitted development rights. It was noted that the changes may also affect the existing Article 4 directions in Bromley town centre – these may just move across, but the Local Authority’s response would ask for clarification regarding this.

Russell Clarke, Sundridge Investments Limited, highlighted that he was experiencing issues with regard to the registration of planning applications. This was taking longer than the deadline of 8 to 12 weeks, and was leaving applicants and developers in limbo. These concerns were echoed by Gary Hillman, N. Hillman and Sons. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that he was aware of some resourcing issues within that department which may be adding to the delays. It was agreed that this would be flagged with the LBB Head of Development.

(ACTION: Chairman / LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy)

RESOLVED that the Planning Policy update be noted.

14 PARTNER UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT WORKING

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

Zoe Griffiths – Your Bromley BID Company, advised that the ballot for their second 5-year term would commence from Friday, closing on the 25th February 2021. A majority of the votes was required, of which they were hopeful. However the key concern was that turnout would be lower than expected due to lockdown, which had also impacted on their engagement with businesses. If successful, it would attract a further £2.8m to support Bromley businesses over the next five years.

Zoe Carr – Beckenham Together BID Company and Penge SE20 BID Company, informed Members that the team had been undertaking work in relation to the business grant schemes, as well as the draft Economic Development plan. They were currently trying to establish which businesses had, and had not, claimed the grants they were entitled to, and feeding back on the criteria. It was highlighted that a number of business owners were too proud to claim, and had instead taken out loans, which was concerning. The ‘Street Ranger’ in Penge was going round the town centre, trying to talk with the businesses that were still open – those that were closed were being contacted by telephone and email. Ms Carr had been approached by a number of businesses that also had mobile elements, such as pizza vans or bakery deliveries, and were finding that they were “stuck between” hospitality and business rates which was something that needed to be looked into

further. The team were planning for events in the summer months, and further ahead to the Christmas period.

Steve Lipscombe – Ronin Marketing, noted that as a marketing and design company, their experience during the pandemic was that they had needed to think of different ideas for marketing. From a creative point of view, it was difficult to work remotely, and the team was missing the benefits of being in a room all together. Overall, the business was doing reasonably well, and customers were “holding up”.

Sharon Baldwin – Orpington 1st BID Company, said that their main focus currently was agility and sustainability. They had been required to respond in an agile manner to deliver different types of services, and provide support to businesses in different ways. The team was excited about the opportunity to transform Orpington into an innovative, creative and sustainable town centre. There was a huge amount of development about to take place, and they would consider the needs of all stakeholders, and look at social, economic and environmental sustainability. They were working with businesses to use this quieter period to look at their environments, ensuring that when the town centre reopened, it was somewhere that people wanted to visit.

Russell Clarke – Sundridge Investments, said that little had been happening since the meeting in November 2020. It was felt that there was a deeper feeling of discomfort regarding the economy during the current period of lockdown. There was money out there, but most industries were not conducting a lot of business. Generally, tenants, both business and residential, were paying their rents, with the exception of pubs and restaurants. As highlighted earlier in the meeting, delays were occurring due to issues relating to planning, and it was taking much longer to get a response and decisions. An application had been submitted with a deadline for decision of eight weeks – yet after five months an outcome was still awaited.

Neil Coates – London South East Colleges (LSEC), advised Members that they were looking to secure more funding for businesses, and to provide a series of online training provisions to support staff on furlough, having a particular focus around mental health. The previous day, LSEC had launched a Bromley Youth Hub in partnership with the DWP – this focussed on supporting 16-18 years olds’ who had been made unemployed, referring them into training, apprenticeships or, hopefully, work. Work was also continuing with the South East London Chamber of Commerce to submit an application for businesses to be supported by the Kick-Start scheme.

Lesley Holland – Bromley Education Business Partnership, informed members that as part of the Local Authority’s youth services, they had also submitted a bid to the DWP to develop youth hubs across the Borough. These would focus on working with 18-24 year olds’ who were claiming universal credit, and helping them into employment. They hoped to hear the outcome of the bid in a couple of weeks, with the intention to start the scheme in March 2021. It was noted that half of the team had been redeployed to the Council’s COVID response team.

Marg Mayne – Mytime Active advised that this period of lockdown had been extremely challenging. Leisure facilities and services were currently closed, and staff had been furloughed. Discussions were taking place with the Local Authority with regards to what support they could offer, particularly for restarting services and having the leisure centres available to help people get fit and healthy as the country came out of lockdown. To help aid people's wellbeing, virtual online exercise classes had launched in December 2020, and had now been made available free of charge. These were highly recommended, and could be accessed via www.mytimeactive.co.uk/app.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group noted that during the most recent lockdown, they had seen people trying to return to work. There had been a new flow of customers on the co-working side of the business, a number of whom felt they could not continue to work from home. They had taken advantage of the quiet period to invest in upgrading the facilities. With regards to flexible workspace, around 50% of people were in the buildings – they were charging a day rate of £8-9 for anyone wanting a day working away from home.

Lawrence Wilson – Business Doctors, informed members that they were doing their best to support local businesses during these challenging times. Workshops had been provided, free of charge, with a focus around business planning. They had tried to make them as interactive as possible, and provide businesses with the opportunity to suggest ideas, share success stories and learn from each other. The next event was scheduled for 17th February 2021, and could be accessed via the following link:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-resilience-and-bounce-back-workshop-tickets-138442951595>.

Helen McIntosh – South East London Chamber of Commerce (SELCC) noted that the Chamber had been extremely busy since the last meeting, with the government changes to the Kick-Start causing additional work. For many years, the Chamber had been affiliated to the London Chamber of Commerce, who were keen for there to be a Chamber in each borough, and as a result, the SELCC would also be working closely with Croydon. The latest copy of their business magazine, Masthead, had been published which included an interesting article on green screen technology. It was noted that a 'Virtual Breakfast Meeting' with Gareth Bacon MP would be held on 11th February 2021.

Gary Hillman – N. Hillman & Sons / Cray Wanderers FC, advised members that in relation to The Royal Bell Hotel, scaffolding had been up whilst they restored the front façade, and would start to be removed the following day. Internal restorations had also been continuing. They had been communicating and negotiating with some leading hotel brands – however most preferred working with locations having at least 75 rooms, and The Royal Bell would have between 50-58 rooms. The hotels brands also had different requirements in terms of the hospitality, food and beverage offer, and due to these sectors currently being closed down, further work relating to this had been paused. It was noted that hospitality companies in central London were looking at areas like Bromley, as following the pandemic, hospitality locations

were expected to spread further out into the suburbs. A 'Stopping Up Order' was currently awaited relating to a piece of land that had been purchased at the rear of The Royal Bell. Conversations had also been held with Bromley Civic Society with regards to having an exhibition at the front of the building, once the scaffolding was removed.

With regards to Cray Wanderers FC, the first team had been doing really well, and they now had 22 youth teams established. Prior to lockdown the first team had been heading towards promotion, however as a result of the pandemic the season had been declared 'null and void'. It was noted that the Section 106 restrictions regarding the number of units allowed were becoming a "hurdle" for the Flamingo Park development, and discussions with the Local Authority were continuing. Once up and running again, everything was looking positive from a Cray Wanderers point of view, and they were looking to take the lease for Hoblingwell Wood Recreation Ground to increase the number of youth teams even further.

Emma Santer – Bromley FC, informed members that she had recently been appointed Commercial Manager at the Club. She had a number of years' experience on the commercial side of various sports, and was looking forward to taking the commercial and events work "up a level" and bring in further revenue. Due to the pandemic, this was currently difficult, so lots of planning, and work with the Directors, was being undertaken. Bromley FC's first team were playing that evening, and the match could be viewed via a livestream.

Chris Glover – Churchill Theatre, advised that the Theatre had been closed since March 2020, and a date for reopening was awaited from the government the following month. A full season was planned from April 2021, yet realistically it was expected to start later than this.

Chandra Sharma attended the meeting representing the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). Members were advised that the FSB London Small Business Index had just been released, which measured confidence amongst businesses. This had fallen during Quarter 2, from -26 to -61, and uncertainty in confidence was highlighted across the country, with index scores being negative in all areas. However, London's small businesses had recorded their highest levels of confidence for the next three months, compared to other regions in England, and was above the national average of -33. More could be read via the following link: <https://firstvoice.fsb.org.uk/first-voice/regional-voice/fsb-london-publishes-the-findings-of-its-latest-small-business-index-study.html>

Local networking events had been continuing virtually during the pandemic, with 20 events taking place across London. In Bromley, two events took place each month – the last one had been attended by the LBB Assistant Director for Governance and Contracts, and they were looking to arrange a further session focussing on 'Contracts and Tenders'.

Members were reminded that the FSB was an official Gateway to the Kick-Start Scheme for the employment of 16-24 year olds', which was fully funded by the government: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/kickstart-scheme.html>

The FSB had partnered with The Good Business Foundation to adapt the Good Business Charter accreditation and make it accessible for small businesses with less than 50 employees. This streamlined version of the GBC allowed smaller firms to stand out from the crowd, and lead the way on a range of important issues, from ethical employment practices to prompt payments.

The FSB Transition Hub was designed to support small businesses and the self-employed to understand and prepare for what comes after the end of the UK/EU transition: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/uktransition.html>

On 28th January 2021, by demand, the FSB had organised a national webinar entitled 'UK has left the EU'. On the panel of experts to answer questions was the newly appointed Secretary of State for Business, Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Professor Anand Menon (UK in a Changing Europe), Alex Doisneau (Managing Director, Dnata UK), Joe Mayes (UK Government Reporter, Bloomberg News) and James Sibley (FSB Head of International Affairs). Hosted by Rosemary French OBE: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/event-calendar/the-uk-has-left-the-eu-uk-transition-and-business-webinar-28-jan.html>

Work was also continuing in relation to the updating of the FSB manifesto for the 2021 London Mayoral elections. FSB London members, via their policy work and events, were being asked to contribute to their manifesto refresh. Key policy areas included: Infrastructure, Environment, Crimes Against Business, Health and Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion (BAME; LGBTQ+; Women in Business), Cost of doing business and Skills.

Some of the FSB members were also working with the Rotary Clubs in the Borough to deliver workshops, free of charge, to people who had been made redundant.

Further information was provided following the meeting:

- *Brand new FSB London LGBTQ+ event launching on 28th January 2021: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/event-calendar/london-fsb-lgbtq-280121.html>*
- *Wellbeing events for small businesses taking place monthly.*
- *FSB London was contributing to a FSB national webinar on Cybercrime and awareness in March.*
- *FSB London continued to support many small businesses with their issues and concerns and one campaign that was launched, and continued to run, to provide support is #LondonLandlordsListen: <https://firstvoice.fsb.org.uk/first-voice/regional-voice/fsb-campaign-to-get-landlords-to-support-tenants.html>*
- *Many 'essential' businesses in high street locations were expressing concern and were very worried about their ability to continue without financial support, e.g.: dry cleaners.*

- FSB London continued to ask its members to sign up with the Local Authority to receive the latest business grants news.
- The FSB had social media channels and Members could also keep in touch with press releases via: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-library.html?contentType=press-releases>
- FSB Covid-19 Hub: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign/covid19.html>

Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley informed Members that they had been working on the volunteer mobilisation to support the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination, with further opportunities still available. Support was also being provided more generally to the sector to help secure additional funding, and they had submitted a bid to the lottery for delegated authority to distribute funding to the sector. They would be opening a grants round with the Local Authority to promote the COVID Respite Fund, with awards of up to £5k for organisations working with residents affected by the closure of day centres in the Borough.

In relation to the 'Kick-Start' programme, Community Links Bromley had been approached by a number of voluntary and community organisations who were willing to host a young person as part of the scheme. London Sport also had some funding available for programmes related to social isolation and loneliness, particularly focussed on young people – a seminar relating to this would be held on Friday, with the fund officially launching on 1st February 2021. Consultation work was also being undertaken with regards to future investment in Mottingham, as part of the 'Big Local' scheme.

John Coupland – South East London Business Network (SELBN) informed Members that the network did not charge any membership or joining fees, and believed in producing value as best they could. They had experienced a great amount of growth with regards to their LinkedIn group, which was approaching 4,000 members regionally. Messages had been received from new members to say that it was refreshing not to be receiving spam, which had put them in a good position going into the third period of lockdown. Mr Coupland advised that through his encouragement, he was finding that people were giving value by providing their reasons for blogging or share a video. Events could be shared, but it was highlighted that they did not welcome spam, which it was noted increased when times were hard. The SELBN had been hit by the pandemic, as they had been unable to attract sponsors for offline events, but he had been working hard to ensure they still delivered.

Mr Mike Humphreys, Handelsbanken also provided a written update following the meeting:

2020 was a challenging year for everyone, but I am pleased to advise as I reported at the last meeting, that Handelsbanken remained open for business throughout, and continues to do so, with staff rotating between office working and working from home.

Handelsbanken is different to the main UK banks in that we continue to provide "old style relationship banking", following our ethos of "Local

Relationship Banking", meaning we are geographically closely located to all our customers i.e. from our Bromley office we only look after customers who live or have their businesses located in a BR postcode or SE6. This meant last year despite restrictions we could continue to directly support our customers, both business and personal, with the direct challenges they faced. I am pleased to advise that currently we still have no customers in Bromley in "difficulty".

As a result, as a Bank, we remain very much "open for business", and are happy to consider opening accounts, and provide loans - both personal and business - to potential customers who meet our Bank criteria. So looking forward to 2021, an easing of Lockdown restrictions and continuing our support to both customers and the community.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

**15 BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WORK PROGRAMME
2020/21**

Members of the Partnership considered the forward rolling work programme for the Bromley Economic Partnership for 2020/21. Members were asked to send any suggestions for agenda items to the clerk.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman invited Councillor Yvonne Bear, Small Business Champion to provide members with an update regarding the draft Economic Development Plan.

Councillor Year informed members that work had been undertaken over the last couple of months to build an economic profile of the Borough. This was the first time that such a range of information had been gathered into one place – it had been an extremely interesting exercise, and allowed them to look for pockets of expertise that could be developed.

This piece of work was nearing completion, and consideration was being given to the key areas to address in order to make the most of the economic opportunities, and help businesses to recover following the pandemic. Four workstreams had been identified:

- Place – formulating strategies around identifying space for commercial development;
- Employability – skills development to ensure businesses had access to a readily available skilled workforce;
- Infrastructure and Transport – including digital infrastructure and the enhancement of transport links; and
- Business Support – utilising the Innovation Grant and establishment of business support hubs.

Comments on the document were being sought internally, after which a copy would be circulated to members of the Partnership for informal comment prior to public consultation. *(ACTION: LBB Culture and Regeneration / Clerk)*

Christopher Evans noted that today's conversations had reflected the challenges of planning ahead in the current climate, and queried what modelling the Local Authority had undertaken to look at the different scenarios that could potentially be faced. It was suggested that it may be useful for a discussion regarding to take place at the next meeting of the Partnership.
(ACTION: Clerk)

The Chairman responded that the plan would be as flexible as possible, as the future was unknown, and they would be required to be "quick on their feet".

RESOLVED that the issues raised be noted.

17 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 20th April 2021

The Meeting ended at 4.29 pm

Chairman