



THE LONDON BOROUGH
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DATE: 6 April 2023

To: Members of the
BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)	Portfolio Holder for Renewal, Recreation and Housing
Katy Woolcott (Vice-Chairman)	London Biggin Hill Airport
Carol Arnfield	LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education
Zoe Carr	Beckenham Together BID Company & Penge SE20 BID Company
Russell Clarke	Sundridge Investments Limited
Anne-Marie Douglas	Jobcentre Plus
Christopher Evans	Community Links Bromley
Frances Forrest	Your Bromley BID Company
Chris Glover	Churchill Theatre
Mark Haynes	The Glades
Alex Henderson	Henderson Biomedical
Gary Hillman	N. Hillman & Sons
Lesley Holland	LBB Operations Manager, Bromley Education Business Partnership
Michael Humphries	Handelsbanken
Denise Kelly	Nugent Shopping Park
Lydia Lee	LBB Assistant Director, Culture and Regeneration
Mike Lewis	Michael Rogers LLP
Steve Lipscombe	Ronin Marketing
Helen McIntosh FCIPR	South East London Chamber of Commerce
Lorraine McQuillan	LBB Place Shaping & Local Economy Manager
Sam Parrett	London South East Colleges
Emma Santer	Bromley FC
Robert Sargent	Acorn Group
Chandra Sharma	Federation of Small Businesses
Jason Stanton	Mytime Active
Caroline Tatchell	Splash Damage
Lee Thomas	Fairlight Group
Liz Timms	Treval Engineering Ltd
Chris Travers	Orpington 1st BID Company
Bruce Walker	Lansdown Asset Management

A meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership will be held at Bromley Civic Centre on **TUESDAY 18 APRIL 2023 AT 4.00-5.30 PM** *

PLEASE NOTE STARTING TIME

*Copies of the documents referred to below can be obtained from
<http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/>*

A G E N D A

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, questions that are not specific to reports on the agenda must have been received in writing 10 working days before the date of the meeting.

Questions specifically relating to reports on the agenda should be received within two working days of the normal publication date of the agenda. Please ensure that questions specifically on reports on the agenda are received by the Democratic Services Team by **5pm** on **Wednesday 12th April 2023**.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31ST JANUARY 2023 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING (Pages 1 - 14)

4 LOCAL OFFICE-BASED BUSINESS - CASE STUDY

- Challenges, opportunities and successes experienced by the business locally

5 LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP)

- Presentation on LSIP to raise awareness and obtain feedback from the business community

6 ULEZ EXPANSION - UPDATE

7 LOCAL PLAN - UPDATE

8 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND (SIF) - UPDATE

- SIF proposal submitted to GLA to access up to £1m of funding to develop dark-fibre digital infrastructure across Bromley

9 NTEZ UPDATE

10 CORONATION UPDATE

11 PARTNER UPDATES

- Key updates from Partners

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Request for future agenda items

13 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 27th June 2023
4.00pm, Tuesday 7th November 2023
4.00pm, Tuesday 9th January 2024
4.00pm, Tuesday 26th March 2024

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BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 31 January 2023

Present:

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)
Andrew Cox, London South East Colleges
Anne-Marie Douglas, Jobcentre Plus
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley
Frances Forrest, Your Bromley BID Company
Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons
Michael Humphries, Handelsbanken
Steve Lipscombe, Ronin Marketing
Lorraine McQuillan, LBB Place Shaping & Local Economy Manager
Chandra Sharma, Federation of Small Businesses
Jason Stanton, Mytime Active
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group
Liz Timms, Treval Engineering Ltd
Bruce Walker, Lansdown Asset Management

Also Present:

Ose Akpom, LBB Economic Development Manager
Councillor Colin Hitchins
Matthew Hopkinson, Didobi
Hal Khanom, LBB Head of Economic Development
Sarah King, Federation of Small Businesses
Satu Streatfield, Publica

25 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Zoe Carr – Beckenham Together BID Company & Penge SE20 BID Company, Russell Clarke – Sundridge Investments Limited, Mark Haynes – The Glades, Lesley Holland – Bromley Education Business Partnership, Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP, Helen McIntosh FCIPR – South East London Chamber of Commerce and Chris Travers – Orpington 1st BID Company.

Apologies for absence were also received from Louise Wolsey – London South East Colleges, and Andrew Cox attended as substitute.

Apologies for lateness were received from Bruce Walker – Lansdown Asset Management.

The Chairman welcomed Liz Timms, Treval Engineering Ltd, to the meeting and proposed that she join the membership of the Partnership as a

representative of the engineering sector. Following a brief discussion, Members of the Bromley Economic Partnership agreed with this proposal.

RESOLVED that Liz Timms join the Bromley Economic Partnership as a representative of the engineering sector.

26 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING

No questions had been received.

27 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST NOVEMBER 2022 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING

The Chairman noted that there were no matters outstanding.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2022 be agreed.

28 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE

The Partnership received an update regarding the Night-Time Enterprise Zone (NTEZ) and Strategy, High Streets for All (HSfA) and Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

Hal Khanom, LBB Head of Economic Development informed members of the Partnership that the Local Authority had been unsuccessful in its Levelling Up Fund bid for the proposed work in Crystal Palace Park. This was disappointing, but it was felt to have been a strong application and they would give consideration to applying for the next round of funding.

Lorraine McQuillan, LBB Place Shaping and Local Economy Manager advised that Bromley town centre had been awarded two pots of money. The first was part of the HSfA programme, and would be used to deliver youth markets during March and April 2023. The aim was to attract young people into the High Street and engage with them in a positive way. The second pot related to Bromley town centre becoming a NTEZ. Funding had been awarded to three London boroughs to boost activity in their High Streets after 6.00pm, and events and projects would be delivered throughout the year. The LBB Place Shaping and Local Economy Manager highlighted that these funding pots would provide a great opportunity to showcase the town centre to the rest of the borough, as well as the rest of London.

Members of the Partnership were advised that although the NTEZ funding was specifically for Bromley town centre, there was also a requirement to produce a night-time strategy for the borough. This year the work in the town centre had involved trialling project and events with a view for them to also

occur in other parts of the borough. Research and engagement to help underpin the strategy was also being undertaken and the LBB Place Shaping and Local Economy Manager introduced Matthew Hopkinson, Managing Director – Didobi and Satu Streatfield, Publica, who were leading on this work.

Matthew Hopkinson, Managing Director – Didobi informed members that the company worked with the GLA to create evidence bases for night-time economies. Didobi focussed on the quantitative and qualitative research while Publica looked at urban realm improvements and engagement. There were three core parts:

- Engagement – with businesses, night-time workers, residents and visitors. It was key for them to understand what people felt was needed, and what they would support, in order to gain an idea of the social, economic and environmental impact. This would involve analysing data related to things such as footfall, transport and crime.
- Creating a model for economic uplift – changing opening hours could create more jobs and employment, and result in more money being brought into the local economy, but the associated costs also needed to be considered.
- Production of a Toolkit – to support local businesses, the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the Council.

Satu Streatfield, Publica informed members that they were looking at improvements to the public realm to help support the night-time economy. There were already some amazing assets in the town centre, and they would look to ensure that people could find their way after dark – they wanted residents and stakeholders to get involved in advising what they would like to see, what their aspirations were, and what were considered to be the big challenges.

In response to questions from a visiting Member, the Managing Director – Didobi advised that the NTEZ funding was specific to Bromley town centre, and noted that it also related to night-time workers, and what was available for them. The LBB Head of Economic Development highlighted that the work being led by Didobi focussed on the night-time economy in Bromley town centre, however the Economic Development Team planned to develop a wider night-time strategy over the next two years. It was hoped that the work with Didobi, particularly around cost benefits and the value of businesses opening later, would form the basis of what they tried out in other town centres and areas of the borough.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group considered that one of the first stakeholders that should be contacted was The Glades Shopping Centre, as they would play an important role in businesses staying open later. The Managing Director – Didobi said that landlords would be key. It was noted that there was some wide sections of public realm, which provided an opportunity to bring things in and create a micro piece – they would be able to provide examples and case studies of where this had happened. A visiting Member noted that proposals had previously been developed to install structures in the High Street and

suggested that these could be reviewed. The Chairman said that this was an evolution of this concept. The LBB Head of Economic Development confirmed that they had been talking to The Glades as part of the NTEZ work and they were trying to influence businesses to stay open later. The Chairman highlighted that work should also be undertaken with the BID, who could bring the business community on board with the emerging plans. Frances Forest, Your Bromley BID Company confirmed that discussions had already taken place, and the consultants would be attending the licensing partnership that week to meet with some of the businesses in the town centre.

Mike Humphries, Handelsbanken noted that previous proposals had included floating roofs and a water feature. To make the night culture work, the whole vision and vista of the High Street needed to be considered. The perception of the town centre at night needed to be altered by changing the structure and creating a safe environment – the infrastructure from the car parks needed to support this. The Chairman agreed, and advised that improved lighting was part of the infrastructure that would be addressed. It was noted that the police had recently increased resources in the town centre. This highlighted that there was not a single fix, and it would need to be looked at holistically.

Mr Thomas said that consideration needed to be given as to how people could get to and from the town centre, and feel comfortable to explore and enjoy it. Visitors would not come to the town centre if they did not feel safe. It was noted that another consultant had undertaken some work, and suggested that these details be shared as it was felt there would be a certain amount of synergy between the two. Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons highlighted the need to drive evening trade into the High Street.

Mr Thomas suggested that providing free car parking at certain times could help attract people into the town centre. The Chairman noted that the events delivered needed to be unique, and they needed to think creatively.

The Chairman thanked and congratulated the Economic Development Team for successfully securing the pots of funding.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

29 LOCAL INDUSTRIAL-BASED BUSINESS - CASE STUDY

The Chairman invited Liz Timms, Director – Treval Engineering Ltd (“Director”) to the meeting to provide an overview of the company.

Members of the Partnership were advised that Treval Engineering Ltd was a structural steel fabricator, working in the construction industry and energy sector across the UK and Channel Islands. Established in 1968, Treval Engineering Ltd was a third-generation family business – the site they work from, a former riding school near the boating pond on Cray Avenue, had been in the family since the 1940’s.

In terms of the challenges faced by businesses in the manufacturing and construction industries, it was considered that increased costs, for utilities, consumables and materials, were having a huge impact. Steel prices had increased 120% within three months and had increased more than 200% over an 18-month period. Cost basis was particularly difficult and as a small business this had a big impact. There was also a potential slowdown of the economy looming – they were seeing a slowdown on the residential side of the market, but the main contractor business was currently still strong.

Another potential challenge was the ULEZ expansion – as the business was located on the boundary they had had to update their fleet of vehicles, which had a huge financial impact and took away from any other forms of investment. This was a major concern for staff – they were young people, with young families, who had moved out of the borough. They could not afford to change or upgrade their cars, or pay the proposed ULEZ charge. This created a challenge in terms of staff retention. Treval Engineering Ltd had considered relocating their premises to a site they owned in Tunbridge Wells, but at the moment they did not want to move out of the borough.

The Director said that the company had weathered the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic well. Steel prices were starting to reduce, and it was hoped that this would make things more competitive, and the market would start to pick up. The company had always tried to look at apprenticeships and other avenues for training. This had been difficult, as the work was quite specialist – however their first welding apprentice was due to graduate at the end of March, which was a positive step. It was good to see that colleges were taking on more industry-focussed apprenticeships. The Director said the company felt extremely lucky – they had a young workforce, who were eager to learn and a joy to work with.

In response to questions from the Chairman, the Director said that the company had 18 full time employees, but they also employed subcontractors for various jobs. Their customer base was national, and they worked with oil terminals all over the country and the Channel Islands. The company used to feel that it was connected to other local manufacturers, and had attended the Cray Valley Partnership, where local businesses met every few months. However lots of these businesses had now gone, and the use of the buildings had changed, and there was not necessarily the interest to meet and share information.

A visiting Member enquired about the impact that the ULEZ expansion could have on staff retention. The Director said it was felt to be a serious threat, and the company would need to do something for their staff. The staff were reasonably well paid, all above the working living wage, but a number did not qualify for the means tested grant. The staff were very open about this being a concern. In response to a further question, the Director said she believed that the company could get more out of the local economy. They had a good succession plan in place, bringing in youngsters with enthusiasm and motivation, and giving them the flexibility to drive the business themselves.

The last three years had been difficult, with lots of uncertainty, but there was definitely room to get more out of the local economy.

In response to questions from Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group, the Director said that other than the traffic on Cray Avenue being very slow, the part of the borough that their site was located in provided good access to road and rail networks. It was not known if they would find an alternative site that was suitable in the borough – they were likely to look outside of the borough, and noted that they did already own two other sites. The Chairman enquired if Treval Engineering Ltd had any plans to expand. It was highlighted that, as part of the new Local Plan, officers would be assessing the commercial space requirements across the borough. There appeared to be a demand for more, and approaches had been received from other developments along Cray Avenue. The Director confirmed that the company would like to expand.

Mike Humphries, Handelsbanken, emphasised that ULEZ was becoming a big issue. People were concerned that they would not be able to afford to go to work and businesses were looking to relocate outside of the borough. In response to a question, the Chairman advised that the Council had made representations against the proposed ULEZ expansion. The Conservative Group were fully opposed as they were not convinced of the need for it in Bromley and considered that the scrappage scheme was insufficient. A visiting Member said that Bromley had more than 350,000 residents – in comparison the consultation had only received 30,000 responses for the whole of outer London. A Council campaign would be shared in the public domain, and they would oppose this as far as they could – in addition to affecting people personally, it would also have an impact on trades. There was thought to be around 30,000 non-compliant vans in London and significantly fewer were available on second-hand market. Chandra Sharma advised that the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) had launched a ULEZ campaign #myULEZconcern and were interested in hearing from small businesses.

Bruce Walker, Lansdown Asset Management enquired as to what percentage of the workforce at Treval Engineering Ltd would be affected by the ULEZ expansion. The Director said that it would affect approximately 50% of their workforce. Mr Walker noted that Lansdown Asset Management was trying to recruit junior positions within the borough however there was lack of interest due to ULEZ. Some businesses were looking to move just outside of the borough in order to continue with their existing workforce – consultants and trades that they used were saying they could not service sites unless they were paid more. The Chairman said that the local MPs were fighting this proposal all the way through the system – they would do what they could to stop, or mitigate, what was being imposed.

Mr Thomas said that embracing change was always difficult, but highlighted that when the original zone had been introduced, people had been given a reasonable period of time to change their vehicles. The important thing was being able to plan and manage the issue. The LBB Head of Economic Development informed members of the Partnership that the Local Authority

had put out a joint statement with Bexley, Harrow and Hillingdon Council's which demonstrated that the outer London voice was not being heard in policy making. The Local Authority had issued a number of communications in relation to ULEZ and the lobbying voice had been strengthened by the connections made with other outer London boroughs.

The Chairman thanked the Director for her presentation to the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

30 LONDON SOUTH EAST COLLEGES (LSEC)

Andrew Cox, Group Director of Strategic Growth and Partnerships – London South East Colleges (“Group Director”) provided an overview of the Local London Green and Digital Strategic Projects.

The Group Director informed members that LSEC were working on the Green Project in partnership with Local London and its associated boroughs. Two further projects had been secured:

- *GLA funded: Local London Green and Digital Mayoral Academy (£237k)*
A sub-regional project which would collaborate across 11 further education providers, 9 London boroughs and 30+ employers in the Local London region to ensure the GLA had a central delivery mechanism to improve its Green and Digital offer.
- *DfE funded: Local London Green Academies Partnership (£2.46m)*
A sub-regional project which aimed to increase inward investment across the Local London region. Through an intensive capital and revenue investment model would see 13 further education providers collaborate to improve the regions Green skills offer.

These strategic projects were intrinsically linked with the Local Skills Improvement Plans, which were implemented under the Skills & Post-16 Education Act 2022. This was designed to put employers and local skills needs at the centre of post-16 education and colleges had a responsibility to make training and skills development more responsive to the needs of the local labour market. The Local London & Green Skills Academy and Local London Green Academies Partnership were centred around designing courses aligned to meet current and future skills needs across the Green and Digital sectors.

The Group Director advised that, over the two projects, partnership engagement included 3 Further Education (FE) provider; over 30 employers supporting were the projects; 11 Local Authorities; and 5 Chambers of Commerce. To develop this further, a Green & Digital Advisory Board had been established. The membership included key colleges and training providers to ensure the provision and initial foundations were right, and this would later develop into an Employment Board.

In terms of the progress made to date, this included:

- Commissioning industry consultants to review each Colleges estate, curriculum and staffing teams;
- Work had begun on building and fitting out 8 green laboratories across Local London, focusing on retrofitting, heat pumps, EV and solar PV (ready for September 2023);
- In the process of scheduling executive/SMT training for College leaders across the region;
- Begun the development of new curriculums to support the incoming green skills crisis;
- Cross working across a variety of sub regional boards to ensure consistent knowledge exchange (Retro-fit London, Green New Deal, Local London Employment and Skills Board);
- Green and Digital training delivered to over 1,000 learners;
- Exploration of a Green and Digital Metaverse to improve accessibility to Green and Digital training; and,
- Supporting a variety of events to improve employer engagement.

A visiting Member considered that the building and fitting out of 8 green laboratories seemed to be ambitious with the grant awarded. The Group Director said that there were 8 local green laboratories located between Enfield and Bromley, and there were three different investment levels – four colleges would receive £300k, two would receive £100k and two would receive £50k. It was ambitious; however they were not building brand new spaces – they would instead be refurbishing spaces within the existing college campuses. For example, LSEC had been allocated £300k to develop a renewables academy at its Bromley campus – £40k was allocated for refurbishing the existing space identified, with the remaining £260k earmarked for equipment. This would enable an initial provision to be established and, when they worked with the consultants, they would consider future needs.

The visiting Member further questioned what work had been undertaken to identify the skills gaps within the borough. The Group Director said that initially they had gathered national data to understand the general picture. There had also been two reports on London's green and digital research which were used to guide the need across the region. A project would be undertaken to do further research to understand the specific level of local need. The visiting Member highlighted that there was a gap of around 400 engineers at London Biggin Hill Airport (LBHA) which needed to be addressed. The Group Director said that they could look at other wider engineering pathways and he was aware that work was underway to discuss possible options with LBHA and Bombardier.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group highlighted that, in recent years, the green agenda had become an important consideration. Lending institutions could exclude businesses from the market if premises did not tick all the boxes. It was noted that only a third of what was required would be coming on to the market. Training was imperative as the green agenda would remain for years to come.

The Chairman thanked the Group Director for his update to the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

31 UKSPF BUSINESS SUPPORT

The LBB Head of Economic Development informed members of the Partnership that the UKSPF had replaced the EU structural funds. Each borough had received an allocation and there were strict rules in terms of what the money could be spend on. In terms of the business support element, £400k would be received over three years and would be used to build on the work undertaken as part of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). This included 'Start Up Bromley', providing advice and space for a further two-year period and 'Bromley Business Hub' being reinstated to the level initially envisaged.

They would also be gathering evidence and data to support business aims. Members of the Partnership often raised issues about the lack of supply and a robust employment land and space study would be undertaken. This had now gone out to tender and the successful company would speak with members of the Partnership as stakeholders. This work would go beyond the numbers-based supply and demand study and would look at the context of typology as well as land.

Other elements of the work would include providing a business advice programme, which would also go out tender, and could still be shaped. They would also be building on their understanding of economic data such as footfall, spend and vacancies.

The LBB Head of Economic Development advised that the GLA had launched an open call for 8 programmes across London, which had a £30m pot of funding allocated. The programmes were related to:

- Innovation;
- Supplier-readiness;
- Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to bridge the digital divide;
- Growing the local, social economy;
- Property advice service for SMEs;
- Low carbon;
- Support for fast-growing diverse founders; and,
- Investment-readiness support for diverse founders/SMEs.

The applications were open for subregional partnerships and businesses to apply, however this work would need to be scaled. They were working closely with members of the Local London partnership to look at the digital divide and growing local social economy, as well as considering what they could do on a borough level. The LBB Head of Economic Development said that an update would be provided at a future meeting of the Partnership.

Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group advised that businesses in other areas were receiving 20-50% towards green upgrades to their buildings. It was considered that the team would need to push further to take their fair allocation of the funding pot from central government. The LBB Head of Economic Development said that there were four staff members in the Economic Development Team, and they were building on working smartly and in partnership. For example, the digital divide programme would give £2,500 to SMEs to connect to fast fibre broadband – Bromley could be part of this as they had joined Local London. This provided access and maximised the impact of the work undertaken.

Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley said he welcome the proposed work around the digital divide. In response to a question, the LBB Head of Economic Development highlighted that this fund related to supporting SMEs themselves with the digital divide, rather than individuals. They were pushing for programmes to have an element of subcontracting or supply chain access locally.

Chandra Sharma, representing the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) said he welcomed the work to be undertaken on the Bromley Business Hub and considered that it would be good to get input from local businesses. In response to questions, the LBB Head of Economic Development said that information about the business support tenders could be circulate to members of the Partnership. *ACTION: LBB Head of Economic Development*

Members of the Partnership were advised that the business advice programme was split into two elements. In addition to providing business advice, they would be looking at supply chains, thinking about how they could use procurement better, including Meet the Buyer events. It was noted that they were still waiting for the GLA to send grant agreement – however the specification was ready as there was a requirement to spend the funding by the end of March.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

32 PARTNER UPDATES

Steve Lipscombe – Ronin Marketing advised that he ran a design and marketing company, and they were cautiously optimistic. Before Christmas there had been an element of fatigue – his company had spent some time focussing on its own design and marketing, which was starting to bring results.

Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley (CLB) informed members that a partnership recruitment fair had recently been held. It had been attended by a range of health providers and visited by between 250-300 people. A further event was taking place at LSEC on 10th February 2023, which would focus on apprenticeships and volunteering. CLB had also been supporting the night-

time economy bid and, as part of the Mottingham Big Local, the refurbished local church would be reopened the following day.

The Vice-Chairman – London Biggin Hill Airport (LBHA) informed members of the Partnership that Bombardier were now operating in their new facility. This had left a gap in the tenants, and this space had been filled by a new company and had created a new handling facility on the airport. A new development for an existing tenant, Castle Air, who serviced and chartered helicopters, was underway as their business had grown, and Oriens Aviation had built a new facility of more than 20,000 sq. ft which was now operational. The Airport had been working on its spatial plan and looking at their growth strategy over the next decade. LBHA had recently opened its training facility and would be hosting a Future Week, commencing on 13th February, and a Careers Day on 16th February. The practical completion of the 56-bed hotel facility and restaurant was expected to be reached on 13th February.

A visiting Member advised members of the Partnership that the LBHA CEO chaired a Leaders Group which provided an opportunity to identify needs and give feedback. Futures Week had been a successful programme, which would continue to be held twice a year, and had provided three new apprenticeships at Bombardier. There had also been demand for work experience at the Airport, and 15 young people would spend a week experiencing the different trades at the airport. It was noted that the LOCATE business brunch would also be returning.

Gary Hillman – N. Hillman & Sons said that the recent planning application for the Royal Bell Hotel had been refused. They were looking to add another two rooms, from 56 to 58, in the existing footprint and conversations were continuing with the Technical Support Officer.

Bruce Walker – Lansdown Asset Management advised that they had two schemes that were ongoing in the borough. One of these schemes was for 85 units in Orpington, which was mostly social housing and shared ownership units. In response to questions from the Chairman, Mr Walker said that sale prices were holding up and there was a great deal of demand, but issues related to planning were highlighted. Building costs had jumped significantly but were now levelling off and had reduced in some areas – however it was highlighted that it was difficult to get trades in from outside the London boroughs.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group said he agreed with the comments made by Mr Walker, and building the right quality would always create a sale. They had not experienced any issues in finding tenants, however the existing stock run on a daily basis was old. Buyers and investors would only consider exemplars of that type of asset. It was considered that Bromley's assets were very poor and a proper masterplan of Bromley town centre, and across borough, was needed. In terms of planning applications it was noted that yields and interest rates could change whilst delays were experienced. Mr Thomas said that overall he was positive about things – Bromley had a lot to offer, and the borough needed to be properly marketed.

Jason Stanton – Mytime Active said that trading had been stable. Income remained strong, but there were challenges associated with cost base. Supplier costs, all through the chain, had increased and it was difficult not to pass these on to customers. Mytime Active were looking to redevelop Orpington Golf Centre, however there were some challenges relating to planning and supply costs which were slowing down the project. Another challenge faced related to recruitment and Mytime Active had supported the recent recruitment fairs. These had been successful, with 15-20 appointments made, however it was noted that there were approximately 60 vacancies across the Bromley portfolio. In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr Stanton said that the weather before Christmas had impacted the use of the Golf Centre, however leisure was generally good. In terms of membership, people had made the decision to stay as members, but were sacrificing secondary spend.

Mike Humphries – Handelsbanken said that it was really good to hear members' positivity. Cost of living challenges, rising inflation and a spate of increases in Bank of England Base rate through 2022 had clearly impacted the economy and all of us, both personally and in our businesses. 2023 would undoubtedly be challenging, but as ever in challenging times there came opportunities. Economists were now suggesting whilst interest rates would be increased again this week, they were now close to the "pivot" level for base rate, which was anticipated would now be 4.25-4.5%. With pressures on energy prices also diminishing it was perceived that this would also have a positive effect on inflationary pressures – with inflation economists anticipating (naturally based on life as it was today), currently likely to end the year at around 6%. So despite the economic headwinds everyone was being faced with, and were continuing to face, they were cautiously viewing the future with optimism. Yes, it would be a lengthy path to full recovery, and yes, it was likely the country would be in recession for all of 2023, but this was now not perceived to be as deep a recession as feared last year and the prospects for 2024/2025 were looking promising. So not all doom and gloom. Whilst they understood a number of banks were reducing their banking offerings in terms of opening accounts/providing loans, Handelsbanken remained fully open, and their "Local Relationship Banking" model was proving increasingly popular. In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr Humphries advised that more had been lent during the first few months of the year than they had over the last three years, even at the current interest rates.

Frances Forrest – Your Bromley BID Company advised that an event celebrating what people loved about Bromley would take place on 11th and 12th February. In response to questions, Ms Forrest said that things in the town centre were looking up, with footfall being better than towns of a similar size. It was noted that there were still too many vacancies, which tended to be large units, but there were plenty of businesses interested in coming into the town centre. In relation to the King's Coronation, Your Bromley BID Company had applied for a £5k grant for installing bunting in the town centre. The LBB Head of Economic Development said that they would be happy to liaise with Your Bromley BID Company regarding the grant and best dressed shop competition.

Chandra Sharma, representing the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) advised that 48 people had signed up for the apprenticeship event at LSEC. Sarah King (FSB) noted that the FSB had formally responded to the ULEZ expansion consultation, and they were having conversations with the Mayor's Office and TfL to share concerns. The FSB were keen to see action taken to support small businesses with the impact of the ULEZ expansion in August 2023. Members of the partnership were advised that key highlights from the FSB Small Business Index report included:

- confidence amongst businesses in the London region had risen since the last report.
- 67% of small businesses had increased the average salary over the last year.
- 18% of small businesses had lost staff during the previous quarter.
- 41% of small businesses saw revenue increase.

With regards to green skills, there were some great resources available for small businesses and further information was available via the Zero Carbon Business website: <https://zerocarbonbusiness.uk/>

Andrew Cox – LSEC informed members of the Partnership that they had recently developed a 5-year curriculum strategy – an employer consultation event had been held the previous week and further stakeholder consultations would take place in the coming months. It was noted that lots of events would be taking place across the borough for National Apprenticeship Week.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

33 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members of the Partnership suggested the following items of interest for subsequent meetings:

- Local Plan
- Continued conversations regarding the UKSPF
- ULEZ expansion

The Chairman advised members of the Partnership that the consultation on the Bromley Supplementary Development Plan (SPD) would be closing in the coming days.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

34 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 18th April 2023

The Meeting ended at 6.02 pm

Chairman

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