

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 5.00 pm on 18 October 2011

Present:

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)
Adrian Hollands, South East London Chamber of Commerce (Vice-Chairman)
Robert Cundy, Federation of Small Businesses
Peter Davies, National Apprenticeships Service
David Keogh, Jobcentre Plus
Colin Maclean, Community Links Bromley
Liz McNaughton, Treval Engineering
Howard Oldstein, The Glades
Sam Parrett, Bromley College
Martin Pinnell, LBB Renewal & Recreation
Peter Pledger, South London Business
Dene Stuart, NewsQuest

Also Present:

Louisa Allen, Community Development Manager
Carol Arnfield, Bromley Adult Education College
Jeff East, Acorn Commercial
Amanda Grice, Jobcentre Plus
Vaughan Leyshon, Bromley College
Councillor Sarah Phillips, Chairman, Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Robert Goddard – Thackray Williams Solicitors LLP, Robert Innes – Skills Funding Agency, Mary Manuel, LBB Head of Planning Strategy, Kevin Munnely, LBB Town Centre Development and Jean Norton, Bromley Education Business Partnership.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JULY 2011 AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising

RESOLVED that the minutes be agreed.

3 UPDATES ON MAIN PARTNERSHIP THEMES:

Members of the Partnership gave an update around progress across the main themes of the Partnership.

A) TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave an update around Town Centre Development across the Borough.

Progress was continuing across the sites that made up the Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan. The Council had responded robustly to the challenge from Linden Homes/Network Rail in relation to the number of residential units that could be accommodated on Site A: Bromley North, and a hearing would be heard before the High Court on 31st October 2011. Further work was being undertaken at Site B: Tweedy Road seeking to develop a temporary parking area during the refurbishment of The Hill and the redevelopment of Westmoreland Multi-Storey Car Parks to support demand during the Christmas period.

The Land Group had been selected as the Council's development partner in relation to Site C: the Old Town Hall, and had been granted a 6 month exclusivity agreement, expiring in November 2011, to allow them time to complete the work needed to support a full Planning and Listed Building Application. The Land Group had recently entered into a joint venture arrangement with the Cathedral Group to undertake the development of the site, and a Specialist Heritage Architect team had been appointed.

Work was ongoing on the refurbishment of Site E: The Pavilion and would be completed in March 2012. Howard Oldstein confirmed that the refurbished gym provision would be ready by January 2012. Following a review of options at Site F: Civic Centre, refurbishment of the North Block was currently being undertaken to support more efficient use of the campus site and would be completed by spring 2012.

Working with CB Richard Ellis, the Council was currently reviewing the development proposition for Site G, with a view to developing a high level master plan to attract a significant development partner. Meetings had also taken place with a number of department store operators in relation to the Site. The Chairman highlighted the importance of developing Site G to complement the existing retail offer in Bromley Town Centre. Following procurement difficulties between Network Rail and their contractors, the target start date for refurbishment works at Site J: Bromley South was now November 2011, with step free access being implemented before the start of the London 2012 Olympics.

Cathedral Group, the Council's development partner for Site K: Westmoreland Road Car Park had conducted a pre-application consultation over summer 2011 in Bromley Town Centre and initial feedback suggested the public reaction had been overwhelmingly positive. A draft planning application was due to be submitted to the Council for landlord's consent shortly. Katy Woolcott confirmed that London Biggin Hill Airport was in talks with Cathedral Group to ensure that any over-flight issues were resolved in relation to the development. Concerns were raised with regard to the number of car parking spaces on site, and Sam Parrett highlighted the potential to utilise parking provision at Bromley College campus for a park and ride scheme.

A pre-application enquiry for a mixed use, hotel-led development had already been submitted by agents in respect of Site L: Former DHSS, and officers were arranging to meet with the applicants towards the end of September 2011. Capital Shopping Centres were also in discussions with the Council in respect of Site M: Queens Gardens regarding a proposal for the site. A public consultation with regards to proposed development had been undertaken in September/October 2011 and it was anticipated that a proposal would be submitted to the Council in October 2011.

An area based bid to Transport for London, as part of the Mayor's 'Great Spaces' initiative, had been successful in providing access to £300k for detailed design work in respect of Bromley North Village. A further allocation of £3m had been made available by Transport for London to implement improvements to the public realm in line with the distinctive character of the area, and public consultation on the detailed designs would take place in November/December 2011, with first phase implementation on works to commence by early summer 2012.

In terms of development across the Borough, two key opportunity sites had been identified in the Walnuts shopping complex in Orpington Town Centre, and further meetings had taken place with landowners over a potential joint redevelopment of these sites. The Walnuts Shopping Centre had now been sold and the new owner had plans to expand the site.

The first phase of environmental improvements had been successfully implemented as part of the Penge Renewal Strategy and initial scoping work was being undertaken to develop a Master plan for Penge. A successful bid had recently been made to the Outer London Fund for £70k of improvement funds, and a further bid was being submitted to the Outer London Fund Round 2 to support a programme of public realm improvements in Beckenham.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

B) INVEST BROMLEY EVENT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave an update on the Invest Bromley event held on 20th September 2011. This event brought together private and public sector representatives to introduce and discuss major development opportunities in the Borough. An Invest Bromley brochure had been produced and additional copies were available on request. Peter Pledger underlined the need to identify Bromley's 'unique selling point' as a development opportunity and also to clarify the type of investor the Borough wished to attract.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

C) TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT / BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support gave an update around progress across the main Partnership themes of Town Centre Management and Business support in Quarter 2 2011/12.

In the second Quarter of 2011/12 the Town Centre Management Team had successfully delivered a range of summer events, including the Family Fun weekend in Beckenham and the Orpington Town Fete. An outreach campaign had been undertaken to encourage increased business donations to Christmas lights across the 4 main town centres in the Borough following a reduction in Council funding. Responses had been disappointing overall, however submissions to Round 1 of the Outer London Fund had been successful in respect of Bromley, Orpington and Penge Town Centres. The projects funded would include purchase and installation of Christmas lights and Christmas events and marketing campaigns, and other activities such as support to independent businesses, installation of graphics to empty shop fronts and, a heritage trail for Bromley. Work to develop the proposal around the possible introduction of a Business Improvement District Scheme (BIDS) in Orpington Town Centre continued, with part of the Outer London Fund funding granted to support BID feasibility and engagement for Orpington.

With regard to the public unrest across London in August 2011, up to 60 businesses in the Borough had suffered some damage or loss, with most of the damage centred on Bromley (particularly Bromley North), Beckenham, Orpington and the Nugent Retail Park. Town Centre Managers had visited all the businesses in the 4 main town centres across the Borough and had provided support and information to businesses affected by the unrest. Businesses were being encouraged to apply to the Riot Act Compensation Scheme and the charitable High Street Fund where appropriate.

Future activities for the Town Centre Management Team included the delivery of agreed projects for the Outer London Fund Round 1 and preparation and submission of bids for Round 2 by 14th November 2011. Following Councillor authorisation, it was proposed to launch a project to undertake detailed feasibility and business consultation on a potential BIDS for Orpington, working with businesses to develop a business plan and proposal which would be put to ballot during the 2012/13 financial year. A programme of winter events would be delivered, including Christmas events in the 4 main town centres.

The Business Support Team had undertaken a wide range of activities including supporting the delivery of the Invest Bromley event and the accompanying brochure, and the publication and promotion of the Explore Bromley Borough electronic visitor map and guide. Two issues of the Bromley Business E-Bulletin had been published and officers had worked to encourage greater take up of the service. Work had also been undertaken with Environmental Services and with businesses regarding the Chislehurst road bridge rebuild.

In the third quarter of 2011/12, work would continue on a number of activities delivered in Quarter 2. In addition, the Business Support Team would work to develop and deliver Outer London Fund business support projects, including a business support scheme in Bromley, Orpington and Penge, an inward investment campaign for Bromley North and shop front improvement grants in Bromley North and Penge. The new Invest Bromley brochure would be distributed and a further edition of the Bromley Business E-bulletin was planned.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Recent work around Town Centre Management and Business Support in the 2nd Quarter of 2011/12 be noted;**
- 2) The plans for Town Centre Management and Business Support activity for the 2nd Quarter of 2011/12 be noted.**

D) OUTER LONDON FUND

The Head of Town Centre Development and Business Support provided an update on bids being developed for the second round of the Outer London Fund.

The deadline for submissions was 14th November 2011 and the Chairman encouraged members of the Partnership to contact Martin Pinnell with any additional ideas to add to the bids.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

E) LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING POLICY ISSUES

The Head of Planning Strategy provided an update on the development of the Local Development Framework. Bromley's Core Strategy would be the overarching planning document within the Local Development Framework, and a consultation on the draft Core Strategy Issues document had been undertaken. The consultation had closed in September 2011, and responses were being analysed and would be reported to the Council's Development Control committee on 17th November 2011. There would be future consultations as the Framework was developed and members of the Partnership were urged to register on the online consultation site.

The consultation on the draft National Planning Policy Framework had just closed and the Council had submitted a response. Peter Pledger highlighted the role of London Biggin Hill airport in supporting future economic growth in the Borough. Katy Woolcott confirmed that the airport would continue to work with Bromley Council, local residents and key stakeholders with regard to development across the site.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

F) SEMINAR ON OFFICE / INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY - PROPOSED

The Chairman highlighted the success of the Invest Bromley Event and proposed that the opportunities offered by office/industrial property in the Borough be promoted in a similar event. This was generally supported by members of the Partnership.

RESOLVED that the proposed event be supported.

4 PARTNER UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT WORKING

Members of the Partnership gave an update on a range of activities undertaken since the last meeting.

Learning and skills provision continued to be developed across the Borough. Sam Parrett confirmed that Bromley and Orpington Colleges had merged on 1st August 2011, and there had been significant investment in development across both campuses. A review was currently being undertaken with a view to increase the higher education offer of the College, which would also include higher level apprenticeships. A community engagement strategy was also in development and the college was seeking to establish an Employer Forum to develop college provision in partnership with the needs of local businesses. Carol Arnfield reported that Bromley Adult Education College offered a range of courses that supported people into employment including counselling, ICT and complementary therapy. Recent courses had also been developed for English for Speakers of Other Languages students.

Peter Davies confirmed that there were currently over 1200 Bromley residents working in apprenticeships across London, with apprenticeships available in a wide range of industries including hair and beauty, IT and electrical and plumbing. The process of recruiting an apprentice was being simplified through use of a web-based matching service, and work was also being undertaken to support small employers to take on apprentices. The Bromley Education Business Partnership had just been awarded a contract to deliver a pre-apprenticeship programme and would be working with partners and employers to support young people into apprenticeships over the next 2 years. Katy Woolcott confirmed that 12 candidates were being identified to participate in an engineering apprenticeship at London Biggin Hill Airport from January 2012.

With regard to unemployment, 2.9% of Bromley's working age population was currently claiming Jobseekers Allowance, with 5 wards showing higher unemployment than the national average. David Keogh confirmed that the Department of Work and Pensions had recently been restructured, which should support stronger working at a local level. Louisa Allen reported that the Reed Partnership had been awarded funding for a two year programme to tackle worklessness in families. Voluntary job clubs had also been set up in the Cotmandene Centre and the Mottingham Community and Learning Shop to support people into employment. Colin Maclean noted the role of volunteering in supporting people back into work and highlighted the need to consider how the voluntary and community sector could engage with the business community.

Businesses across the Borough continued to be impacted by the economic downturn and were working hard to retain skilled staff. New business start ups were steady and there was demand in the property market for small office suites and retail units. Businesses continued to find it difficult to secure finance and Rob Cundy reported an increase in the number of insolvencies in the Borough. With regard to upcoming events, the Glades Shopping Centre was working to encourage retailers to

introduced longer opening hours during December 2011 to support the Christmas retail offer, and the Bromley Business Awards would be taking place at The Warren on Wednesday 26th October 2011.

Katy Woolcott informed members of the Partnership that Project LoCATE had now been established. London Biggin Hill Airport had been identified in the London Plan as a Strategic Outer London Development Centre and LoCATE aimed to bring together key stakeholders, including landowners, businesses and local residents' associations to maximise the economic development potential of the site and make a wide range of opportunities and benefits available to the local community.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

5 COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES

Dene Stuart asked members of the Partnership to provide their good news stories, events and initiatives to the News Shopper for inclusion in the 'Talking Business' supplement and weekly business e-mail.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Head of Town Centre Management and Business Support was pleased to confirm that from 11th December 2011, additional off-peak services would be provided between Bromley North Station and Grove Park Station, with a service provided every 20 minutes, as opposed to the current half hour service.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

7 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

4.00pm, Tuesday 10th January 2012
4.00pm, Tuesday 24th April 2012

The Meeting ended at 6.50 pm

Chairman