

## **BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 29 March 2022

### **Present:**

Councillor Peter Morgan (Chairman)  
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)  
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley  
Frances Forrest, Your Bromley BID Company  
Councillor Hannah Gray, Executive Assistant for Renewal,  
Recreation and Housing/Small Business Champion  
Michael Humphries, Handelsbanken  
Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP  
Chandra Sharma, Federation of Small Businesses  
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group  
Chris Travers, Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID Company

### **Also Present:**

Ose Akpom, LBB Economic Development Manager  
John Baker, Chairman of The Commercial Park Group  
Councillor Yvonne Bear  
Ben Johnson, LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy  
Hal Khanom, LBB Head of Economic Development  
Martin Stone, GLL

## **32 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education, Zoe Carr – Beckenham Together BID Company & Penge SE20 BID Company, Chris Glover – Churchill Theatre, Mark Haynes – The Glades, Alex Henderson – Henderson Biomedical, Lesley Holland – Bromley Education Business Partnership, Marg Mayne – Mytime Active, Robert Sargent – Acorn Group, Bruce Walker – Lansdown Asset Management and Louise Wolsey – London South East Colleges.

Apologies for absence were also received from Sharon Baldwin – Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID Company and Chris Travers attended as substitute.

## **33 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

No questions had been received.

**34 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH JANUARY 2022  
AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING**

The Chairman noted that there were no matters outstanding.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 be agreed.

**35 TOWARDS A MORE ACTIVE BROMLEY IN THE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT SPACE**

The Partnership received a presentation from Hal Khanom, LBB Head of Economic Development, providing headlines on measures relating to Place, People, Prosperity and Planet. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A.

In response to questions from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Economic Development said that the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) broke deprivation down into lots of elements. Overall the borough was doing well, but in terms of access to housing and services, 50% of neighbourhoods in Bromley were within the top 30% most deprived. Avison Young was delivering an Economic Evidence Study which would look at various areas including productivity and employment clusters – the first report would soon be available and could be shared with the Partnership.

*(ACTION: LBB Head of Economic Development)*

Ose Akpom – LBB Economic Development Manager confirmed that the GDP figure quoted in the presentation was generated within the borough.

Katy Woolcott – London Biggin Hill Airport considered that there was a need to have a flexible and supportive planning policy to help grow new industry – “time killed deals” and businesses could not afford to wait.

**36 DISCUSSION 1: COMMERCIAL SPACE**

The Chairman welcomed John Baker – Chairman of The Commercial Park Group to the meeting for discussion of this item.

Members were shown a video of the Bromley Park development:  
<https://vimeo.com/575279418/872da049a6>

Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP informed the Partnership that this demonstrated the pinnacle of Grade A office space that could be achieved which was brand new and of a high specification.

The Chairman noted that when speaking with companies who let office space in Central London, Bromley was not put forward as a relocation option as there was little office stock available. Mr Lewis said that when he spoke with

representatives of major West End firms, they were often unaware that the travel time between Bromley South Station and Victoria Station was only 15 minutes and that the borough also had an airport. There was a job to do to get these messages across – The Commercial Park Group was emphasising this, but it was considered that more help was needed from the Council. Katy Woolcott – London Biggin Hill Airport agreed that the airport was a unique selling point for the borough. Formula 1 Management was an example of a large company, with a large number of employees, that had based themselves in the borough because of the airport. It was important that the good quality of life and global connectivity was being articulated in the marketing of the borough.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group highlighted that the green agenda had been accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rise in fuel prices. Grade A office space would be new to the market as the old stock could not be refurbished to this standard. The old stock was likely to be turned into other uses which meant that the office hubs could not be retained.

Mr Baker – Chairman of The Commercial Park Group advised that the partnership of the John Baker Group and Sir Robert McAlpine had designed the proposed Bromley Park development, located on Elmfield Road. There was a need to build and develop prime real estate as companies wanted spaces that they could occupy long-term and required associated facilities and amenities. Phase 1 of the Bromley Park scheme proposed the redevelopment of Wells House, which would deliver around 100,000 sq. ft. of Grade A office space, and an application for a further 50,000 sq. ft. had been submitted in the vicinity. Bromley South had been pitched as a commercial hub which had great transport links and was in close proximity to London Biggin Hill Airport and Gatwick Airport, and shopping centres such as The Glades and Bluewater. Companies were looking for large spaces – to attract big companies, the right environment needed to be created and Bromley needed to “be ahead of the game” in providing commercial basis for the future. There were two major organisations on the verge of signing up and the potential lettings could bring a further 6,000 people into the town centre. Mr Baker said that Bromley provided a green borough, and he was supremely confident that these developments would succeed – however there was a need to ensure that planning applications were turned around much quicker.

Councillor Yvonne Bear highlighted that the review of the Local Plan provided the opportunity to rethink things. The changes to permitted development had altered the balance and the competing needs of housing and business needed to be considered – spaces to be used as hubs for businesses identified. Ben Johnson – LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy informed the Partnership that they were in the very early stages of the Local Plan. The first stage would be to gather evidence, looking at a range of needs and there were a number of key issues to tackle. The need for employment land use would have to be demonstrated and identified, which may prevent other uses from taking it over. In response to a question from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that consultation on the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Orpington town centre was

underway, and for Bromley town centre was expected to commence in the summer, which provided guidance to help the implementation of planning policies. Councillor Bear noted that the second stage of the Local Plan review would look at issues, such as that raised by the LBB Head of Economic Development relating to transport links to the industrial areas of the borough.

Councillor Hannah Gray, Executive Assistant for Renewal, Recreation and Housing/Small Business Champion said she was a supporter of the business districts, which were essential across the borough, however there was a need to consider other elements. With regards to London Biggin Hill Airport, it was highlighted that accommodation was needed – Bombardier had built a huge hangar and increased the number of staff employed, but they were struggling to identify residential accommodation for apprentices through to highly qualified engineers. There was also a need to improve connectivity and increase the availability of high fibre broadband in the industrial areas of the borough. All of these elements would be required, or businesses would not come to the area.

Chris Travers – Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID Company highlighted that they often described their location as the London/Kent gateway and enquired as to what opportunities were foreseen outside of Bromley town centre. Mr Lewis said that, from an office perspective, rental values in Orpington had suffered in comparison to Bromley. The Bromley South area was in a key position beside the station, whereas Orpington Station was a 10-minute walk up the hill from the town centre – the office area had been at the bottom of Knoll Rise, however much of the office space had been turned into residential units.

Mr Thomas emphasised that industrial areas were just as important and noted that there were good transport links to the Nugent Shopping Park area. There had been a change of emphasis to retail parks and these had displaced jobs into other industrial spaces – there was a need to address how to retain businesses. Councillor Bear advised that new and interesting businesses had been attracted into that area with Amazon taking over the former Allied Bakery site and the establishment of the Halo Business Park. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy agreed about the importance of employment and industrial land. This was linked to the process of seeking evidence for the requirement of employment land, and that there were several challenges to be met.

In response to a question from Mr Travers, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that he was not aware of any staffing issues within the planning department. Some applications were complex, and bigger schemes in particular took more time to assess – it was not within the Council's gift to change the planning system. Michael Humphries of Handelsbanken considered that the perception of planning was a huge issue – major developers were frustrated with the timescales which was why they were looking outside of the borough. There was a need to be “fleet of foot” and consider how processes were being operated – the implementation of the Local Plan in two years' time would be too late. The big retailers would not be attracted to the area if there was not the footfall which offices would provide.

The need for the Council and businesses to work together was emphasised. The LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy advised that the Local Plan review was a long process – it involved rounds of consultations and presentation to the Secretary of State, none of which was within the Council’s control. Ms Woolcott said there was a need for local policies to map national policies in order to provide transparency.

The LBB Head of Economic Development questioned how developers could be encouraged to bring forward commercial developments in preference to residential schemes in the area of Bromley South. In other locations within the borough where rents were lower and there were viability challenges to bringing workspace forward, the LBB Economic Development team was interested in partnering with developers and operators to leverage external grants for affordable workspace delivery. For example there was a shortage of light industrial space which was increasingly at risk from Permitted Development Rights (PDR). The LBB Head of Economic Development would undertake further work to understand the growth sectors around Bromley, including in Kent, to take advantage of Bromley’s position as a gateway between London and the wider South East.

Ms Woolcott highlighted the issue of sustainability – there was increased demand for electricity and a sustainable way of accessing it needed to be identified.

Mr Thomas said that as a developer, continuity was required. If members of staff in the Council changed it was difficult for things to be “kept on track”, and key people needed to be kept in place long-term.

### **37 START UP BROMLEY FILM SHOWCASE**

The Chairman welcomed Martin Stone – Sector Libraries Manager, GLL to the meeting and Members were shown a video showcasing the Start Up Bromley initiative: <https://youtu.be/BCS2yHW7zTQ>

Members were advised that Start Up Bromley had been developed over the last year, and now had around 250 members. Business lounge facilities were available at Bromley Central Library, Orpington Library and Biggin Hill Library and there was an ongoing programme of workshops, events and walk-in consultations.

The Start Up Bromley Business Week had taken place between Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March - Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022, during which a number of business-related events were held to promote support to businesses primarily within the borough, as well as aspiring entrepreneurs. These had included workshops on e-commerce, intellectual property and legal and compliance issues, and a Business Pitch Competition had also been held with the winner receiving a cash prize. On the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022, a Spring Marketplace had been held at Contingent Works allowing 20 owners to display their businesses and network with others.

Feedback from members of Start Up Bromley highlighted that they benefitted from the provision of appropriate spaces to work; training; coaching sessions; and networking, which could allow new schemes to develop. Members were advised that the ARG funding was coming to an end, however GLL had agreed to fund Start Up Bromley for another year.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group said that through running businesses centres, he was aware that there was good encouragement for small businesses, however as they grew, they often left the borough. Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley, advised that external delegated authority had been given to distribute £235k of lottery funding. This had been oversubscribed with £1m worth of bids having been received. A programme of support would be provided to both successful, and unsuccessful, bidders and it was considered that there may be some synergy with the Start Up Bromley offer. Mr Thomas and Mr Evans said they would like to discuss this further with Mr Stone following the meeting.

Chandra Sharma – Federation of Small Businesses congratulated Mr Stone for the work undertaken to provide businesses with support through the Start Up Bromley scheme. There was a need to undertake further work in relation to broadband, and adjustment of the opening times, but there had been some great showcase events. The Chairman highlighted that every business started as a small business – it was important to support them as they were the future.

## **38 DISCUSSION 2: GREEN AND STEM SKILLS**

The Chairman noted that the Council was making good progress towards its target of being carbon neutral by 2029.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group, advised that if funders required ESG targets to be met, this would be something that developers would need to address. Organisations would need to work towards this – larger businesses would have to abide by regulations and be an exemplar, and then SMEs would generally follow suit.

Katy Woolcott – London Biggin Hill Airport, informed the Partnership that they had a corporate sustainability and environmental programme in place. This looked at elements such as employee travel plans; expectations of suppliers; CO2 emissions; and performance certificate categories of buildings. Councillor Gray noted that London Biggin Hill Airport had hosted business brunches, which brought local businesses together discuss ideas on delivering innovation, green initiatives and enhanced connectivity. This was an important agenda, which the airport was taking seriously.

Michael Humphries – Handelsbanken, said that discussions regarding sustainability and the environment took place at every meeting. Banks had a role to play in looking at their own suppliers and how staff travelled to work – and they also spoke with customers about what they were doing, as well as

their plans and aspirations. The requirements for EPCs were changing all the time and customers were looking at the quality of buildings and could look to offload weaker stock. Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP, said it was proposed that by 2027, buildings would need an EPC minimum 'C' rating to transact any business, and by 2030 the minimum rating would be 'B'. There were concerns that existing stock would be rated as 'E' and if it was not possible to get them to a rating of 'C', whole swathes of office space may be unlettable and untransactable. Mr Lewis highlighted that EPCs were produced by trained assessors and not building surveyors, and this needed to become far more stringent.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the LBB Head of Planning Policy and Strategy said that through London Plan policy, a certain level of carbon reduction was received, with the rest offset through a payment. The payment received by Bromley went into an affordable energy pot which could be used to pay for things such as solar panels and LED lighting. There was an ambition to deliver carbon neutrality on sites, but they were not yet at this stage.

Chandra Sharma – FSB, advised that resources and information was available via the FSB Sustainability Hub: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/campaign-listing.html> and the Zero Carbon Business website: <https://zerocarbonbusiness.uk/>

Councillor Gray advised that she had been appointed as STEM ambassador for London Biggin Hill Airport and would be leading on the 'Unite to Inspire' initiative. This aimed to inspire younger people into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) industries. A 'Futures Week' had been held in February 2022, which was designed to inspire and encourage young people interested in pursuing a career in the aviation industry and had provided an opportunity for 14 young people to experience the many roles available in aviation. A work experience week would also be taking place, and apprenticeships with Bombardier were being promoted. In response to a question from the Chairman, Councillor Gray said that London South East Colleges were intending to extend their existing facilities to deliver a STEM provision. Ms Woolcott noted that the airport was working with the College to develop courses. Mr Thomas highlighted that the University of Surrey had set up its own science park and considered that Cray Avenue would be an ideal location to replicate something similar for the borough.

### **39 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman informed Members of the Partnership that he would not be standing for re-election and therefore this would be his last meeting. On behalf of the Partnership, Councillor Hannah Gray thanked the Chairman for all the work he had undertaken over a number of years.

**40            DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

4.00pm, Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022  
4.00pm, Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022  
4.00pm, Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023  
4.00pm, Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023

The Meeting ended at 5.55 pm

Chairman