

BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 18 April 2023

Present:

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport (Vice-Chairman)
Zoe Carr, Beckenham Together BID Company & Penge SE20
BID Company
Anne-Marie Douglas, Jobcentre Plus
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley
Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons
Michael Humphries, Handelsbanken
Mike Lewis, Michael Rogers LLP
Lorraine McQuillan, LBB Place Shaping & Local Economy
Manager
Jason Stanton, Mytime Active
Caroline Tatchell, Splash Damage
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group
Chris Travers, Orpington 1st BID Company

Also Present:

Ose Akpom, Economic Development Manager, LBB
Hal Khanom, Head of Economic Development, LBB

35 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education and Chandra Sharma – Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), and Elena Diaconescu – Head of Bromley Adult Education College and Sarah King – FSB attended as their respective substitutes.

The Chairman welcomed Clare Searle, Greener and Cleaner, to the meeting and proposed that she join the membership of the Partnership as a representative of the green sector.

RESOLVED that Clare Searle join the Bromley Economic Partnership as a representative of the green sector.

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

No questions had been received.

37 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31ST JANUARY 2023

AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING

The Chairman noted that there were no matters outstanding.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2023 be agreed.

38 LOCAL OFFICE-BASED BUSINESS - CASE STUDY

The Chairman welcomed Gregory Micallef, Managing Director – Gregory Micallef Associates Ltd to the meeting to provide an overview of the company. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A.

In response to questions, Members of the Partnership were advised that one of the key considerations was ensuring that the right workforce was in place to enable more contracts to be taken on by the company. The current employment market was interesting and for potential employees there was a clear differential between a family run business with a heart and soul and a larger commercial organisation.

Out of the 23 people working for Gregory Micallef Associates Ltd., 18 resided within the Borough. Members of the Partnership also noted that Gregory Micallef Associates Ltd. sought contracts locally and nationally as long as potential clients were seeking the good quality advice offered by the company.

The Chairman thanked Gregory Micallef for his attendance at the meeting and presentation.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

39 LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP)

Philip Doyle, Senior Policy Manager at Local London, provided an update to the Partnership on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix B.

In response to questions, Mr Doyle suggested that increasing the skill level of the workforce and providing a pipeline of skilled workers would lead to an increase in demand for space for manufacturing across the Borough. The Chairman highlighted the importance of ensuring that young people had the skills required to access the jobs that were available.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that across London it would be helpful to have a pooled facility for certain skill sets. In addition, it would be necessary for the Borough as a whole to widen its vision around the skills and the employment land that would be required in the future in order to keep jobs local.

A Member of the Partnership emphasised the need to identify manufacturing land across the Borough in order to ensure that there was the necessary space for people to work.

The Head of Economic Development explained that the purpose of the Local Skills Improvement Plan was to address the skills challenge that had been highlighted by employers across London. The key for the London Borough of Bromley was to identify the correct sectors to be included in the Bromley Annex of the Improvement Plan.

The Partnership requested that the Annex be circulated following the meeting to enable Members to respond following the meeting.

A Member suggested that charitable organisations experienced skills challenges around developing people to become great managers. It was also noted that there was a need to develop individuals who had a broad range of skills including general administrative and managerial skills.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr Doyle confirmed that engineering would be picked up under the two headings of Construction & Civil Engineering and Manufacturing. The Chairman suggested that it may be beneficial to have engineering as a separate heading.

The Chairman noted that the Council experienced particular skills shortages within the Social Care sector but also the Housing and Planning sectors. It was recognised that in these sectors there were skills shortages across London and the challenges were not restricted to Bromley.

It was agreed that the consultation document would be circulated following the meeting and the report would be circulated when it was available.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

40 ULEZ EXPANSION - UPDATE

The Chairman provided an update on proposals from the Mayor of London to expand the Ultra-Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ).

LB Bromley and some other London Councils have bought a judicial review, of which some grounds have now been accepted so the JR will be proceeding, with the first hearing due in July.

The Chairman reported that the Council had no powers to prevent cameras being installed on 'A' roads and on traffic lights as these fell under the jurisdiction of the Mayor of London. The Mayor had confirmed his intention to proceed with the proposals and it was unlikely that the judicial review would prevent this, although the Council was working to slow down implementation.

It was reported that the view of the Council was that ULEZ was not right for Bromley. Tube stations were not common across the Borough and many residents were reliant on their cars. In addition, Bromley did not suffer from the heavy traffic congestion experienced in inner London Boroughs. ULEZ

was seen as a regressive tax which impacted on the most vulnerable residents.

The Head of Economic Development reported that it was likely that the judicial review would be heard in early July. In addition, the Council had challenged the statistics around death rates in Bromley due to the Borough's ageing population (which impacted these figures). The Council would be reviewing progress on the Borough's Air Quality Action Plan. The ambition remained to maintain good air quality across the Borough. ULEZ was perceived to have a limited impact on maintaining air quality.

Members of the Partnership highlighted that ULEZ would have the biggest impact on lower paid staff. It was however acknowledged that it would be a positive step forward to have a constructive conversation around improving air quality around Orpington High Street. Concerns were raised surrounding a recent ULEZ protest in Orpington Town Centre which had focused on the War Memorial.

The Partnership noted that there were a large number of key workers who commuted into the Borough from other areas. There was a concern that with staff essentially being taxed to travel to work they would seek employment in areas not subject to the ULEZ.

A Member of the Partnership made the point that, more broadly, the scheme was having a positive impact on air quality as a result of a large reduction in polluting vehicles across London, that many of these were using roads in Bromley and that was of benefit for everyone.

A Member of the Partnership noted that it would be helpful for more environmentally friendly transport methods such as electric vehicles to be promoted across the Borough. It was suggested that it would be helpful for the Economic Partnership to have a wider discussion regardless of the decision to be taken around ULEZ.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

41 LOCAL PLAN - UPDATE

The Head of Economic Development provided a brief update on the Local Plan. The Local Authority was consulting on a Local Plan Issues and Options document and at this point the Council was not setting out its preferred policy position, it was seeking views from local stakeholders regarding key issues for the Local Plan.

The Chairman highlighted that at this point the Council was trying to identify priorities for the Borough and the consultation contained a series of questions designed to elicit feedback from key stakeholders.

A Member of the Partnership highlighted that in the Borough there was very little Brownfield land for infill development. In terms of future development, it

was essential for the Local Authority and key stakeholders to identify the future direction for the Borough and urged all Partnership members to participate in the consultation.

The Chairman reiterated that the development of the Local Plan was based in evidence and there was a need to follow processes in order to develop a robust evidence base.

The Economic Partnership noted that the London Plan remained in place.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

42 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUND (SIF) - UPDATE

The Economic Development Manager provided an update reporting that the Council had recently submitted a proposal to the GLA to access up to £1m from their Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). The funding was available to target investment by broadband infrastructure providers in order to develop full-fibre infrastructure by connecting Council sites or building assets via a local dark-fibre network. It would also enable the infrastructure provider to commercialise the additional full-fibre capacity and passive infrastructure deployed under this project. The aim was to stimulate further commercial investment to increase the coverage for residents or businesses.

The key benefits of the project were that it would increase the speed and connectivity at key Council owned sites to improve productivity, increase the range of digital services, reduce costs and future-proof the Council to make better use of Smart/IOT technology. The project would also help to increase the general full-fibre footprint across the Borough and address gaps in connectivity at key or strategic locations. This was in accordance with the Council's Digital Infrastructure Work Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

The Economic Development Manager outlined the approval process explaining that the SIF funding was subject to approval by GLA with the decision anticipated by early May. It was also subject to approval by the Council's Executive committee.

Members of the Partnership recognised the importance of ensuring a robust broadband infrastructure as broadband was an essential tool.

The Chairman noted that a significant amount of work was being undertaken to ensure that there was good broadband coverage across the Borough.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

43 NTEZ UPDATE

The Partnership received an update and presentation regarding the Night-Time Enterprise Zone (NTEZ). The Place Shaping and Local Economy Manager confirmed that Bromley's application for a Night Time Economy Zone had been successful and a number of events had been arranged for over the summer.

Members of the Partnership were asked to help with the promotion of events.

It was noted that research had been commissioned into the Night Time Economy in Bromley and the findings from this research would be presented at the next meeting in June alongside an update on the Umbrella Project.

Members of the Partnership noted that the Economic Development Team were aware of the impact of vacant units on the High Street. An update on progress to re-let the units would be sought from the Council's Property Team.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

44 CORONATION UPDATE

The Place Shaping and Local Economy Manager reported that there would be big screens in Queen's Gardens, Bromley and Market Square, Orpington screening the Coronation on 6th May 2023. Grants had been provided for community events and fees for street parties had been waived. In addition, there would be a Best Decorated Shop competition with a £100 gift voucher donated by the Glades for the winning business.

The Partnership noted that the BIDs were also decorating the Town Centres for the celebrations.

The Chairman reported that the grant funding for Street Parties had been highly oversubscribed, and the Council was hopeful that there would be a good weekend of celebration across the Borough, boosting local businesses.

It was noted that information on Coronation celebrations across the Borough was included on the website and a link to this information could be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

45 PARTNER UPDATES

Anne-Marie Douglas – there was a drive to encourage priority group customers, including those customers who were over 50, to upskill. A Twitter online Jobs Fayre had been developed and this had proven to be very popular and businesses were encouraged to advertise any vacancies on the platform.

Prior to the start of the meeting Mike Humphries sent the following update - The Cost of Living challenges, rising inflation and increases in Bank of

England Base rate seen through 2022 have continued to have an impact on the economy and all of us both personally and in our businesses in the first quarter of 2023. This has also started to be seen in the financial markets with a couple of bank failures in the US and Credit Suisse in Switzerland. Regulations in the banking industry in the UK are very stringent and at this juncture we are not aware of any UK banks that might be struggling. Handelsbanken I am pleased to say remains one of the strongest Banks worldwide in terms of asset size and has the best Credit rating of any Bank in the whole of Europe. The positive news for the economy generally is the view currently that further increases in Bank of England Base rate are expected to be limited to perhaps one further increase of 0.25% in May, with Base rate then remaining at 4.25 / 4.5% for much of the rest of the year before some reductions are seen during 2024. Much however depends on inflation which is currently 10% plus but which will reduce sharply over the coming months not least because the impact of the energy increases last April will drop away; so our economists anticipate (naturally based on life as it is today) currently that inflation by year end could be half what we see today. The path to full recovery is likely to be 2 to 3 years, but the UK may now just avoid a recession and as I have reported previously the prospects for 2024 / 2025 are looking promising. So not all doom and gloom. In conclusion Handelsbanken continue to view the future with confidence and remain fully occupied - opening accounts, receiving large deposits and lending both to Private individuals via Mortgages and to businesses via commercial loans, our "Local Relationship Banking" model proving hugely popular.

RESOLVED that the updates be noted.

46 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

The Meeting ended at 6.05 pm

Chairman