

## **BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

Minutes of the meeting held at 4.00 pm on 27 June 2023

### **Present:**

Councillor Yvonne Bear (Chairman)

Ose Akpom, LBB Economic Development Manager  
Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education  
Zoe Carr, Penge SE20 BID Company  
Anne-Marie Douglas, Jobcentre Plus  
Christopher Evans, Community Links Bromley  
Chris Glover, Churchill Theatre  
Gary Hillman, N. Hillman & Sons  
Chandra Sharma, Federation of Small Businesses  
Lee Thomas, Fairlight Group  
Chris Travers, Orpington 1st BID Company  
Bruce Walker, Lansdown Asset Management  
Katy Woolcott, London Biggin Hill Airport

### **Also Present:**

Colin Hitchins, London Biggin Hill Airport

## **1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Hal Khanom – LBB Head of Economic Development, Jason Stanton – Mytime Active, Sam Parrett – London South East Colleges, and Lydia Lee – LBB Assistant Director Culture and Regeneration, Chris Deadman – Mytime Active and Maria Humphreys – London South East Colleges attended as their respective substitutes.

Apologies for absence were also received from Russell Clarke – Sundridge Investments Limited, Frances Forrest – Your Bromley BID Company, Michael Humphries – Handelsbanken, Mike Lewis – Michael Rogers LLP, Helen McIntosh – South East London Chamber of Commerce, Lorraine McQuillan – LBB Place Shaping & Local Economy Manager, Clare Searle – Greener and Cleaner, Caroline Tatchell – Splash Damage and Liz Timms – Treval Engineering Ltd.

## **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman proposed that Katy Woolcott be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Bromley Economic Partnership for the 2023/24 municipal year. The motion was seconded by Lee Thomas, put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that Katy Woolcott be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Bromley Economic Partnership for the 2023/24 municipal year.

**3 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDING THE MEETING**

One question had been received from a member of the public for written reply and is attached at Appendix A.

**4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2023 AND MATTERS OUTSTANDING**

The Chairman noted that there were no matters outstanding.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023 be agreed.

**5 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members considered the Terms of Reference and membership of the Bromley Economic Partnership. The Chairman advised that, in addition to the names of representatives/organisations being updated, the following changes had been made:

**2.5** *The membership of any member who fails to attend two consecutive meetings without good cause shall lapse and a replacement or reinstatement may be sought.*

**5.1** *Reports associated with the work programme of the Economic Development Plan will be taken to the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee as and when required.*

In response to a question, the Chairman clarified that the Bromley Economic Partnership was effectively a sub-committee of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS Committee.

**RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference for the Bromley Economic Partnership be agreed.

**6 LOCAL RETAIL BUSINESS - CASE STUDY**

The Bromley Economic Partnership received a presentation from Philip Tindley, Twang Guitars and Twang Music Academy Ltd. As part of his presentation to the Partnership Mr Tindley outlined the history of his business, successes and challenges. The Partnership were also provided with details of a new venture – the Twang Music Foundation – which made music tuition available to disadvantaged children in local schools. The Partnership also heard that a number of local events were held such as Jam in the Park.

The current cost of living crisis and inflation were currently the biggest challenges. There had been a noticeable downturn in business in the last couple of months resulting from the cost-of-living crisis and the future remained uncertain. Competition from online shops and websites also posed a significant challenge to the business as did the downturn in demand during school holiday periods.

The Partnership heard that closure of music shops represented the loss of a valuable community resource where like-minded people could meet and talk. The Partnership recognised the need to encourage people to support local high street shops with the adage “use it or lose it” more relevant now than ever.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr Tindley confirmed that the business had been established in 2004 and had 16 teachers on a contractual basis and 5 members of staff, although the business continued to grow.

In response to a question concerning opportunities within the Borough for the next generation of musicians, Mr Tindley highlighted that music was generally underfunded with poor resources in schools. The number of opportunities available had undoubtedly been impacted by the pandemic but it was possible for people to create their own opportunities through performing in pubs and clubs. Music was everywhere across society and played a big part in people’s lives.

A Member of the Partnership suggested that consideration could be given to Mr Tindley engaging with the Churchill Theatre to arrange an event and also consider taking part in the next Make Music Day.

The Chairman thanked Mr Tindley for his presentation and wished him all the best for the future.

## **7 NTEZ - UPDATE**

Bromley Economic Partnership received a presentation from Charlotte Ryan, LBB Economic Development and a copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix B.

The Partnership noted that the first BR1 Lates event was held on 27 April 2023 and the success of the event had exceeded all expectations with over 3000 visitors – a significant increase in footfall in the library which resulted in increased footfall in the High Street. The success of the event had demonstrated that there was demand for evening activities in the Town Centre.

The next event was due to be held on 25 July 2023 and would be a sport and wellbeing festival. Members of the Partnership were asked to promote the

digital posters that had been produced for the event through social media channels.

Other events that would be taking place in the High Street over the coming weeks included the Umbrella Project, raising awareness of neurodiversity and a winter lights spectacle, with further details being provided at the next meeting.

In response to a question, it was agreed that Members of the Bromley Economic Partnership would be added to the BID circulation list.

The Partnership also noted that Bromley BID were keen to take on the BR1 Lates branding and keep it up to date.

In response to a question, the Economic Development Manager explained that footfall was captured using cameras and mobile phone data. Spend was measured using Visa and Mastercard data for Bromley Town Centre which enabled officers to see what people were spending on their credit cards. This then enabled a year-on-year comparison. Unfortunately, there was no way of monitoring smaller cash spends. The Chairman highlighted the importance of gathering indicative measures which demonstrated that the events that were being held were impacting on footfall and spend.

A Member of the Partnership congratulated Officers for their organisation of such a successful BR1 Lates event. It was suggested however that a hashtag for a Twitter feed could have amplified the positive messages from the evening and possibly promote upcoming events in the high street. Members of the Partnership suggested that it would be helpful to improve communications around the event and ensure that all interested parties were informed.

Members of the Partnership discussed ongoing issues with parking in the Town Centre and the challenges this posed in terms of encouraging people into the High Street in the evenings. The Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration explained that, purely based on data, there was an over capacity of car parking in the Town Centre, although challenges with the reduction in the Glades opening hours and the resulting impact on events in the Town Centre were acknowledged. It was also acknowledged that car parking was not always available in the places where people would want to park for events in the evening.

A Member of the Partnership also reported that there had been reports from business owners that the introduction of cashless parking was acting as a barrier to people going into Town Centres. The Assistant Director agreed to check the data that was available.

The Chairman asked for an update on the wider Night-time Strategy that was being developed for the Borough. The Assistant Director confirmed that the BR1 Lates events were pilot events and data was being gathered to inform a Borough-wide strategy. The Chairman noted that the funding received was

specifically for Bromley, but evidential data would be gathered which would justify hosting events across the Borough.

## **8 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - UPDATE**

Bromley Economic Partnership received a presentation from Ose Akpom, LBB Economic Development Manager regarding proposals for the allocation of funding that had been received. A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix C.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director for Culture and Regeneration confirmed that external consultants had been appointed to undertake the employment land and space study and the purpose of the study was to inform decisions around the Local Plan regarding land allocation. The Chairman also noted that at the September meeting there would be an update on the progress of the Local Plan.

Bromley Economic Partnership noted that the Local Authority had gone out to tender for a supplier to open up supply chain and procurement opportunities to access new markets. Work was also underway to review business adviser opportunities for existing businesses. A Member of the Partnership highlighted that any advisor that was appointed needed to have the capability to nurture developing businesses.

The Assistant Director highlighted that there were restrictions on the way the grant could be spent, and it was not possible to give grants to businesses.

The Partnership discussed challenges faced by businesses in terms of securing a reliable workforce and the uncertainties around the labour supply chain.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director explained that there had been two processes for determining priorities. The Business Support Programme had been agreed by the Council's Executive earlier in the year which was why tenders were now out. The People and Skills stream was fairly new as the Government had brought the funding forward and there was now a requirement to utilise the funding by 2025. Although timescales were tight there were opportunities to feed into established programmes.

Anne-Marie Douglas from Jobcentre Plus suggested that there were other priority areas for the People and Skills stream which needed to be considered. These included Over 50s and long-term unemployed.

The Economic Development Manager highlighted that as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund there was additional funding outside of this allocation over which the Council had no control.

## **9 PARTNER UPDATES**

Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, School Standards and Adult Education advised that the end of the academic year was approaching. Members of the partnership were reminded that access to essential skills training such as English and English as a Second Language (ESL) was free.

Gary Hillman – N.Hillman & Sons advised issues with planning continued to slow development opportunities although there were some exciting future opportunities at both the Royal Bell Hotel and Flamingo Park.

Anne-Marie Douglas – Jobcentre Plus advised a local jobs fayre was being held at Burnt Ash Lane. Members of the Partnership were encouraged to send details of any current vacancies and it was agreed that email details would be provided following the meeting.

Chris Glover – Churchill Theatre advised that a jobs fayre would be held in the library the following week. A successful Make Music Day had been held and Bromley had taken part for the first time. At the weekend Floral Fest had taken place in the Town Centre. On 15 June a Safer Business Action Day had been held and Bromley BID was partnering with the Council for the next BR1 Lates event.

Christopher Evans – Community Links Bromley (CLB) informed members that a Volunteering Award event had been held in the presence of the Mayoress. A number of people had been recognised at the event and the youngest award winner had been 16. Another participant had been involved in volunteering for 53 years.

Chris Deadman – MyTime Active informed members that it had been a relatively positive start to the year with an increase in customer through put. The challenge was to balance the pricing strategy to ensure demand was not dampened. The labour market was a significant challenge and communication continued to be an ongoing challenge.

Maria Humphreys – London South East Colleges advised that the College welcomed more opportunities for work experience placements as this would help to develop work ethic.

Zoe Carr – Penge SE20 BID Company informed members that the London Festival of Architecture was in full swing along with the Penge and Palace trail. There were a number of volunteer projects going on and Pride in the Park had recently taken place. As well as a number of other events, Paws in the Park would be held on Saturday. The Partnership noted that there were issues with school pupils engaging in Anti-Social behaviour in Penge. Extra security teams had been bought in but if the issues were not addressed there would be an impact on footfall. It was noted that the BID had not yet signed its partnership agreement with LBB.

Bruce Walker - Lansdown Asset Management advised that there were a lot of schemes providing urgently needed housing which were currently caught up in the planning system. This had created a bottle neck but there was a need to get these housing schemes moving. The Partnership also noted that schemes were being introduced to try to encourage more students, especially girls, into construction.

Lee Thomas – Fairlight Group highlighted that businesses were under pressure and planning consents were taking a long time. The market was suppressed and rising interest rates would compound these challenges if they continued.

The Vice-Chairman – London Biggin Hill Airport (LBHA) informed members that business was going well, and performance remained better than pre-covid. The hotel was now finished, and Bombardier had received approval for solar power. Plans were underway for completion of a spatial survey to provide granular data in order to develop an understanding of growth at a local and national level and a presentation on the outcome of the survey could be provided at a future meeting.

A visiting Member also suggested that BHAL could host a future meeting of the Bromley Economic Partnership.

Chandra Sharma, representing the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) advised that a business confidence index had been launched. Inflation figures were also being closely monitored.

Chris Travers – Orpington 1<sup>st</sup> BID Company informed members that occupancy in the high street was strong, but it was unclear whether it would be sustained over the coming months as there had been a drop in spending. Coronation celebrations had been successful as had the Orpington Literary Festival. A Children's Business Fayre would be held in July and a Music Festival was planned for August.

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business to be discussed.

## **11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

4.00pm, Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023  
4.00pm, Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
4.00pm, Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2024

The Meeting ended at 6.03 pm

Chairman