

# BROMLEY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

**Meeting:** Economic Partnership  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> April 2011  
**Subject:** Skills and Employment Sub-Group  
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## 1. Recommendations.

The Partnership is asked to note the Report. The Skills and Employment Sub-Group met on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 and this report includes the actions and activities from that meeting.

## 2. Remit and Activities

- 2.1 The Group monitors and reviews the monthly employment data for Bromley, including business start-up figures, in order to identify the types of skills required to meet employer requirements and how any gaps can be met by key local partners.
- 2.2 It formally advises the Economic Partnership on these issues through reports and the participation of the Group's Chair at the Economic Partnership's meetings.
- 2.3 The Group maintains strong links with Jobcentre Plus to monitor and review the support provided to adults in the job-seeking process.
- 2.4 It also facilitates the exchange of information between employers, colleges, the voluntary sector and the Borough Council to support local action on skills and employment.

## 3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Federation of Small Businesses has reported to the Group its concerns on the impact on small businesses' capacity to generate employment arising from:
  - Increased National Insurance rates
  - HMRC adopting a more rigid approach to collecting unpaid taxes from businesses
  - The economic position generally.
- 3.2 On a more positive note, it was recognised that Bromley and the South East generally is more buoyant than the rest of the country and there are a number of significant development/regeneration projects underway across the Borough which should have a positive impact on local jobs.

3.3 Unemployment continues to increase within the Borough to 2.7% in February; however Bromley remains below the London average of 4.1% and the national average. The Group has concerns that in the short term the private sector in Bromley will not be able to make up for the reduction in public sector jobs, as envisaged by the Government strategy. For this reason there is an increased need to provide training, advice and support to local unemployed adults to take better advantage of the opportunities available. For example, the majority of vacancies are in the Care Sector, where there is often a reluctance of local people to take up jobs as well as skill mismatches.

These labour market statistics and their implications are reviewed at each meeting.

3.4 The Group has noted that self-employment can be an effective response to the current labour market, in line with Government policy. Jobcentre Plus programmes can help unemployed people take up such opportunities, but there may be limitations on the amount of focussed and flexible training available locally. The Group is currently researching the provision of suitable Business Start-Up courses within the Borough; what is available; to whom; how is it funded; does it meet the need? The Group will report back and make recommendations as appropriate, following consideration at its next meeting.

3.5 The planned merger of Orpington and Bromley Colleges will enable a more coherent way of responding to the needs of local businesses and adults post August 2011 and, specifically, commitment to new and larger projects

3.6 The hotel and retail developments underway within the Borough are expected to provide more local jobs within the hospitality sector. The local Colleges are aware of this as an important potential training need, which their merger should help them address. Post merger, the Colleges will be commissioning a feasibility study to help shape their response to this requirement.

3.7 The Bromley Economic Framework is reviewed and updated at each meeting (quarterly). No significant revisions were identified at the April meeting, but it will be reviewed comprehensively at the Group's next meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

3.8 The Work Programme (to replace New Deal) is due to commence June 2011. This is a framework for the provision of employment related support services, helping people to select, train for, obtain and retain employment suitable for their ages and capacities. The Group will play an active role in liaising with the three successful bidders to help ensure actions are not duplicated and will also continue to investigate and monitor the Programme as it develops locally.