



MINUTES OF THE WEST LONDON ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD

Thursday 22 June 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors Butt (Chair, London Borough of Brent), Bell (London Borough of Ealing) and Shah (London Borough of Harrow)

Also Present: Councillor Sue Fennimore (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham)

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting on 21 March 2017 be approved as a correct record.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Curran (London Borough of Hounslow), Councillor Cornelius (London Borough of Barnet), Councillor Michael Cartwright (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham), Carolyn Downs (London Borough of Brent), Paul Najsarek (London Borough of Ealing), and Kim Dero (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

4. Public Participation

The Chair outlined that there had been no requests to speak from any members of the public.

5. Business Priorities and Issues in West London

The Chair invited David Lutton (Executive Director of Policy, London First) to give a presentation on the current key issues and priorities for businesses in London and how these specifically related to West London. David Lutton gave a brief introduction into the work of London First and outlined how they represented around 230 large corporations in the city. He specified that there were three major priorities for business in the current economic and political climate: access to people; housing and infrastructure; and balanced UK growth.

Firstly, he specified that access to people centred on the necessity of businesses having a continued access to talent and skills in order to help foster economic growth, and that London First had been working on promoting the principles of an open immigration system. He referenced an ongoing piece of work by The Skills Commission, which was presently collecting evidence of the types of skills that businesses felt were needed from the UK workforce. He encouraged all of the West

London Boroughs to draw upon their expertise and expertise of having worked with local businesses to give evidence to the commission.

Secondly, on housing and infrastructure, he highlighted a business-led campaign called 'Fifty Thousand Homes' which promoted doubling housebuilding in London to at least 50,000 a year by 2020. He also referenced additional priorities such as a reform of congestion charges; the need for the completion of Crossrail 2; and the need to improve London's digital infrastructure and connectivity to match a shift to a more digitally-orientated economy.

Thirdly, on the desire for balanced UK growth, Mr Lutton outlined that London First were presently reviewing their business plan and were thinking about London's role within the UK's overreaching business strategy. He outlined that the view of business was generally that a strong London economy helped to deliver economic growth for the rest of the country, and that this needed to remain a priority.

Members thanked Mr Lutton for his presentation. Questions arose on which sectors were expected to be the most important in the near future and what West London boroughs could be doing to promote these areas. Mr Lutton said that creative and tech industries had grown rapidly and created high value jobs. However, he explained that the companies within these sectors were not necessarily 'placed-based' and that London was in danger of losing talent to countries abroad. He noted that there was a need for London to incentivise businesses to stay in the city, and that this was linked to improving infrastructure and solving the problems stemming from an increasingly unaffordable housing market.

Members also raised the need for a digital inclusion strategy to be at the heart of the wider shift to a digital economy and that this should be promoted by both businesses and London boroughs. Mr Lutton agreed and mentioned that, in light of the rise of automation, the businesses which were most vulnerable were sectors that tended to include people who had been doing the same job for the duration of their life. It was felt that this was relevant to the work of The Skills Commission in developing transferable skills and therefore greater flexibility within the UK workforce.

There were additional questions on what role businesses had in solving the problems in the housing market. Mr Lutton said that there were a number of businesses which had considered purchasing housing developments to provide stable accommodation for their employees, or using employment space as additional housing space, but that there was yet to be widespread definitive action on this. Members also heard that the Greater London Authority (GLA) Culture Team were looking at developing cultural quarters in the city to attract and retain entrepreneurial tech companies.

Questions arose on transport infrastructure and what other aspects, aside from Crossrail 2, could assist in supporting West London businesses. Mr Lutton said that improving roads and easing congestion would also be key to improving transport infrastructure across London. He noted that there were interesting ideas developing on localised congestion charges in order to fund specific local projects and that PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) were completing financial modelling on this. There were also some additional discussions on the draft of the Mayor's Transport

Strategy 2017 which included proposed strategies to improve transport links in outer London.

The Chair thanked Mr Lutton for attending and outlined that London First would be welcome to present again at a future meeting of the West London Economic Prosperity Board (WLEPB).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The report and presentation be noted; and
- (ii) That the areas identified in the subsequent discussion be incorporated into the WLEPB's Forward Plan, to be returned to at a later date.

6. **Growth Agenda of the New Government**

Dan Gascoyne (Director, West London Alliance) introduced the report and appendices which set out what Britain's main political parties had committed in their respective General Election Manifestos relating to: infrastructure, employment and skills, transport, digital policy, Brexit, devolution and constitutional reform. Mr Gascoyne commented that, at the time of the meeting, with the Conservative Party in discussions with the Democratic Unionist Party, it was difficult to be certain how the government would operate and which of these policy areas would be prioritised during the next Parliament.

In the brief discussion that followed, Members commented that there continued to be the danger of a lack of economic progress caused by the present political uncertainty. However, Members agreed that, despite the uncertainty, it was clear that the skills agenda and the WLEPB's relationship with the London Mayor and Mayor's Office would remain vitally important in the near future. It was agreed that the growth agenda should be brought back to the next meeting of the WLEPB when the political situation was likely to be clearer. It was also agreed that the summary of bills in the 2017 Queen's Speech be circulated electronically to WLEPB Members.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The report and accompanying appendices be noted; and
- (ii) The 'Growth Agenda of the New Government' be re-considered at the next meeting of the WLEPB.

7. **Annual Report and Forward Look**

Amar Dave (Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, Brent Council) introduced the report which outlined a summary of the WLEPB's progress since its inception and a forward look at its future plans. It was explained that the document was split into five sections (Employment and Health; Skills and Productivity; Transport and Infrastructure; Boosting Housing Supply; and a Competitive Economy) which provided detail and case studies on the WLEPB's achievements. Mr Dave also referenced the scorecard of delivery within the appendix to the document.

Members asked for an update on the Dudding Hill orbital rail line which had previously been identified as a priority by the WLEPB. Luke Ward (Head of Growth, Employment and Skills, West London Alliance) explained that this remained of great importance and was specifically referenced in the recent draft of the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2017. He outlined that WSP had been commissioned to complete a feasibility framework on a West London orbital rail line and that the West London Alliance would additionally be working with senior figures within Transport for London (TfL) to assess the viability of this. He mentioned that the work with TfL was hoped to be finished in early August and also pointed out that the consultation on the Mayor's Transport Strategy ran until October 2017. Luke Ward also suggested that the Dudding Hill orbital rail line be referred to as the West London Orbital rail line moving forward.

In additional discussions on the Employment and Health section of the report, it was pointed out that there had been specific reference to continued work on North-West London Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) despite two Boroughs (Ealing and Hammersmith and Fulham) not being part of the plans. It was agreed that the reference to STPs would be removed from the final published version of the annual report.

The Board moved to discussions about housing and it was noted that the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham's Rough Sleepers' Commission, chaired by the CEO of CRISIS, could have some significant recommendations for the work of the Board to consider going forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The content of the Annual Review and Forward Look document be noted;
- (ii) Subject to the specific references to STPs being removed from the final document, the document would be signed by Councillor Cornelius (as Chair during the 2016/2017 municipal year) and published accordingly; and
- (iii) A joint WLEPB response to the Mayor's Transport Strategy 2017 consultation be developed before the end of the consultation period in October 2017.

8. Developing a West London Skills Strategy

Dan Gascoyne directed Members to the report which provided an update on skills commissioning arrangements and recommendations for the development of a West London Skills Strategy. Mr Gascoyne outlined that the paper summarised a number of priorities for this strategy, which included creating a locally accessible offer of foundation skills for all West London residents. He explained that in the London-wide context, the 'Skills for Londoners' Taskforce had been launched in April by the London Mayor which was being tracked closely by both the West London Alliance and colleagues at the GLA. He noted that there was increasing clarity on the need for sub-regions to feed into this taskforce process. He also mentioned that the GLA itself was considering restructuring its skills teams into sub-regions, which was a thought to be a positive development.

Mr Gascoyne also mentioned the proposed terms of reference for the West London Employment and Skills Board (WLESB) which was attached as appendix to the report. It was felt that the creation of a specific Employment and Skills Board would help to bring together the relevant stakeholders in order to help to drive the West London skills agenda forward.

Members raised that the terms of reference lacked a focus on developing digital skills and the need for a prominent digital inclusion agenda, as had been discussed as part of agenda item number 5 of the meeting. There were also discussions on which individuals could potentially fill the proposed membership roles as set out in the terms of reference.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Subject to additional detail on digital skills and digital inclusion, the terms of reference for the West London Employment and Skills Board be agreed, and that each of the boroughs would assist with the recruitment of individuals onto the board;
- (ii) Councillor Curran, as the Lead Member for Skills in West London, be given authority to speak for the West London Economic Prosperity Board in any discussions with the Deputy Mayor for Skills in London (Jules Pipe) and London Government concerning West London's Skills priorities, in consultation with other West London Alliance Leaders; and
- (iii) A draft West London Skills Strategy be prepared by the WLESB for consideration at the 20 September 2017 meeting of the West London Economic Prosperity Board.

9. **West London Employment and Health Programme**

Kim Archer (Work and Health Programme Lead, West London Alliance) introduced the item which provided an update to the Board on the West London Alliance's Employment and Health Programme. She offered some background on the programme, and outlined that it had begun around three years ago with the Mental Health and Employment Trailblazer before incorporating a number of Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) funded pilots. She noted that the supporting Programme Board was chaired by Paul Najsarak (Chief Executive, London Borough of Ealing) and had attained strong interest from both the GLA and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It was felt that this was because of how the trailblazer sought to specifically address the barriers that people with mental health problems had in finding employment. She noted how the TCA pilots had demonstrated how the West London boroughs could work together effectively and had achieved positive outcomes for residents. The outcomes had been particularly positive in helping to tackle unemployment in West London hotspots and working alongside business to drive up skills amongst low earners.

She detailed the importance of funding for these projects, and highlighted that the WLEPB would need to think about how the funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) would be replaced when the UK leaves the European Union (EU). She also explained how the budget for the Work and Health programme was due to be transferred to London sub-regions from early 2018 and that the DWP had delegate

a £16million grant over five years of the provision. Dan Gascoyne added that the London sub-regions had collaborated on procurement, which was being led in West London by the London Borough of Ealing. He thanked WLEPB members for having agreed to share the financial risks and that the budget transfer to sub-regions was an unprecedented example of devolution in London. Kim Archer continued by explaining that four outline business cases had also been submitted as part of the NWL STP work to fund additional initiatives which look across programmes to address a range of different health and employment issues.

Members discussed the urgent need to think about plugging funding gaps with the loss of the ESF. It was stressed that there needed to be a strong piece of work in this area as Britain's withdrawal from the EU was only 18 months away. It was noted that any additional contribution from Councils needed to be identified quickly as budget planning would begin well in advance of the start of the next financial year. Dan Gascoyne acknowledged this and stated that Work and Health Programme team at the West London Alliance were looking at the practicalities and the direct impact caused by the lack of ESF funding plus other potential funding options.

Questions arose on whether the targets for the programmes were felt to be ambitious enough and what more could be done to engage with 'hard-to-reach' unemployed individuals with a range of health problems. Kim Archer said that the targets for the programme were developed in line with what was felt could be achieved when the programme was created. She noted that a formal evaluation of the programme was due to take place in the summer, which would help to re-assess whether more was achievable in terms of overreaching targets and engagement strategies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

COUNCILLOR MUHAMMED BUTT
Chair