

 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee</b> 26 March 2018
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment</b>
<b>Supporting Business Growth in Brent</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report outlines the actions taken to respond to the recommendations from the April 2017 Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Task Group Report, as well as the wider programme of activity developed across the Council to support the business growth and enterprise agenda.

## 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and comment as appropriate.

### 3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The April 17 Scrutiny Task Group Report outlined four recommendations for the Council to take forward, as follows:

**Recommendation 1:** The Council should develop an infrastructure, investment and business support programme to create the best possible environment in which small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can grow and thrive, including:

**(1a)** Working locally and sub-regionally with the Park Royal Business Group, West London Alliance and West London Business to contribute to campaigns for investment in business infrastructure, and

**(1b)** Working sub-regionally, as a member borough of the West London Alliance and in partnership with West London Business, to support inward investment and promotion of the West London brand and the key Brent opportunities within this wider context.

**Recommendation 2:** The Council should develop a skills programme to ensure that Brent has the best possible skills platform so that SMEs have access to appropriately skilled, locally-based staff, including:

**(2a)** Exploring the development of a Brent Works enterprise course to harness entrepreneurial skills in the Borough

**(2b)** Deepening its partnership approach to skills development, exploring the partnership programme developed by Reading Borough Council as an example of best practice, and

**(2c)** Exploring work with an organisation to match young people to work placements, and delivering these in partnership with both Brent Works and Brent Start.

**Recommendation 3:** The Council should appoint a dedicated business champion to advocate for SMEs in Brent.

**Recommendation 4:** The Council should invest in business incubation and support services to help start-up businesses 'get off the ground' and flourish, including exploring an online platform for businesses to access information relevant to setting up, locating or expanding their business in the Borough.

- 3.2 A headline response to the recommendations of the April 2017 Task Group Report is provided below in Table 1. The main body of the report (3.3 onwards) provides further detail on the projects in question and their intended impacts.

*Table 1: Recommendations - Summary response*

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary response</b>
1. The Council should develop an infrastructure, investment and business support programme to create the best possible environment in which SMEs can grow and thrive	<p>The Council has supported the development of a West London Inward Investment Programme, Capital West London. The programme is run by creative agency White Label and launched in Feb 2018 in Wembley's Hilton.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that it supports the promotion of the West London brand and that White Label are kept informed of key Brent opportunities within this wider context.</p> <p>The Council has supported key campaigns around infrastructure, namely the West London Orbital, included in Mayor's Transport Strategy, and supporting the OPDC and TfL with a bid for investment in Park Royal broadband.</p> <p><i>More information on both infrastructure projects is provided in the main body of this report.</i></p>
2. The Council should develop a skills programme to ensure that Brent has the best possible skills platform so that SMEs have access to appropriately skilled, locally-based staff	<p>Apprenticeships and Sector-Based Work Academies (SBWAs) are employer-led training and development programmes which are delivered by Brent Works and Brent Start and the College of North West London respectively. Brent Start is developing wider courses aimed at SMEs – e.g. digital skills (building on the successful Digital High Streets pilot).</p> <p>The Business Board is in the process of selecting further priorities for action from a range of possible projects, which includes local skills development to meet workforce needs.</p> <p><i>More information on Apprenticeships and SBWAs is provided in the main body of this report.</i></p>
3. The Council should appoint a dedicated business champion to advocate for SMEs in Brent	<p>The Council has established a Brent Business Board, whose members act as ambassadors for the Borough's business community.</p> <p>The Board's membership represents a diverse range of size and sectors, including SMEs.</p> <p><i>More information on the Business Board is provided in the main body of this report.</i></p>
4. The Council should invest in business incubation and support services to help start-up businesses 'get off the ground' and flourish	<p>The Council has supported and secured funding for the establishment of the Granville Enterprise Hub, led and managed by the South Kilburn Trust. Additionally, low cost employment space has been secured in Wembley Park and Alperton – now managed workspace and makerspace.</p> <p>The Council has developed an online platform for businesses to access information relevant to setting up or growing an existing business. The portal – Brent for Business (name TBC) is due to launch in June 2018.</p> <p><i>More information on the Business Portal is provided in the main body of this report.</i></p>

## **Economic context and challenges: supporting the business growth agenda in Brent**

- 3.3 Supporting business growth and economic development is an established Council priority. The Brent 2020 Vision identifies Business Growth as a key ambition for the borough, recognising the importance of supporting existing businesses in the Borough to sustain and grow, as well as enabling start-ups and attracting new businesses to Brent. This in turn supports the aims of job creation and income generation for the Council via devolved business rates.
- 3.4 This vision builds on the fact that Brent is an entrepreneurial borough, home to 13,150 businesses. Of these, 0.3% are large businesses (250+ employees) and 99.7% are SMEs (0-249 employees). 8,530 businesses pay business rates to the Council. The largest sectors by employee number are health, business administration/support services, retail, education, and wholesale.
- 3.5 Despite the entrepreneurial culture in Brent, local businesses face a number of challenges to growth, e.g. increasing rates valuations, uncertainties around Brexit, and changes in legislation allowing developers to seek 'Permitted Development' to convert office space to residential without obtaining planning permission.
- 3.6 Whilst barriers driven by national policy and wider economic uncertainties are outside of the Council's immediate control, Brent has established a programme of activity to support enterprise and business growth in the Borough. This builds on the recommendations from the original Scrutiny report and uses the levers available to the Council to maximise the opportunity for growth for Brent businesses. This comprehensive programme of activity is outlined in Table 2 below.
- 3.7 Specific cross-cutting functions have also been developed to support the success of the projects and to build Brent's relationship with its local business base. These include creating bespoke communication channels and establishing key strategic relationships within the business community.

### **Strategic relationship development**

- 3.8 In order to ensure appropriate strategic direction of the Council's programme of business support, the Employment, Skills and Enterprise team has led on developing appropriate relationships within the business community. Specifically, the team has undertaken the following activity:
- Developed close partnership working with existing business groups e.g. Park Royal Business Group and West London Business to develop event briefs, Inward Investment and Place-marketing messages.
  - Established the Brent Business Board: a strategic Board with membership from leading business representatives across a diverse range of size and sectors whose remit is to provide direction and steer to the Council's programme of business support.

### **Bespoke communication channels**

3.9 In order to pull together the various strands of activity and present a coherent offer to businesses, the Council has invested in the creation of a new business-facing website, Brent for Business (title of the website to be confirmed).

3.10 The portal has been designed to fulfil the following functions:

- Provide current information about support for business/start-ups including external support from relevant organisations
- Promote Brent's priority town centres, their amenities and opportunities
- Act as a landing page for businesses enquiries around workspace availability
- Ensure that more local businesses are aware of the Council's role in supporting business – including its statutory and regulatory functions – and know how to access the services they need.

3.11 The portal, development of which is overseen by the Digital Board, will be consulted on in April 2018, providing an opportunity for feedback on its content and usability. A full launch is planned for June 2018.

3.12 In addition to the portal, a monthly business e-newsletter is sent out to a mailing list of Brent businesses promoting relevant services, showcasing local businesses, and publicising upcoming events.

### **Programme of activity**

3.13 The above cross-cutting functions are designed to steer and communicate a programme of activity to be delivered in 2018/19. This programme is summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 - Programme of activity*

<b>Projects</b>	<b>Intended impact of action</b>
Town Centre Management	Decreased vacancy rate in Town Centres.  Increased footfall in Town Centres.  Programme of activities in each Town Centre including cultural calendar, events, marketing, environmental improvements.  9 Town Centres with a dedicated manager are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Wembley High Road and Ealing Road</li><li>- Neasden and Church End</li><li>- Harlesden and Willesden Green</li><li>- Kilburn, Burnt Oak, and Cricklewood</li></ul>
Workspace supply and	New, affordable workspace secured via S106 agreements (including 1,800sq metres in Wembley Park and 1,065sq metres in Alperton, for example).

demand management	<p>The launch of the Granville Centre workspace in May 2018, enabled through Greater London Authority, council, and South Kilburn Trust investment.</p> <p>Support for businesses affected by Permitted Development, drawing on a range of resources to facilitate searches for commercial property in Brent.</p> <p>Businesses directed to relevant sources of information regarding available workspace in Brent, enabling retention or attracting new business.</p>
Supply chain access for SMEs	<p>Local SME suppliers access new contract opportunities following 3 'Meet the Buyer' events to be held across 2018/19. Business support will also be available to SMEs to help them bid for tender opportunities.</p> <p>3 sectors have been selected for the events in 2018/19, relating to key sectors in the borough by size.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Construction</li> <li>➤ Health and Social Care</li> <li>➤ Manufacturing and Distribution</li> </ul>
Workforce skills and employment	<p>Apprenticeships placed in local businesses following brokerage by Brent Works.</p> <p>40 young people secured apprenticeships via Brent Works Apprenticeship brokerage in 2017/18 and Brent Works' target for 2018/19 is a further 50 opportunities to be filled.</p> <p>Business-led training and experience provided by Brent Start and the College of North West London's Sector Based Work Academies.</p> <p>Wider courses for businesses being developed and provided by Brent Start.</p>
Access to Finance	<p>Alternative financing initiatives supported. E.g. £200k has been invested by Brent in Funding Circle (crowdfunding platform) with a discount for Brent businesses. Other options are being considered.</p>
Social Value	<p>Local supply chain opportunities are created (the Social Value Policy applies to all contracts over £100k). This in turn creates jobs for local residents.</p> <p>Developers are also being engaged via Section 106 Planning Agreements and will be invited to the Meet the Buyer construction event planned for 2018.</p>
Inward Investment	<p>Brent place marketing package developed to promote the Borough of Culture and key areas of Brent (subject to Business Board approval).</p> <p>Close working with WLA Inward Investment programme to promote Brent as part of the wider West London economy. Capital West London Inward Investment launched Feb 2018; with Councillors Butt and Tatler in attendance.</p>
Infrastructure	<p>West London Orbital rail line feasibility study commissioned with support from all West London boroughs.</p> <p>West London Orbital rail supported in Mayor's Transport Strategy.</p> <p>Brent engaging with Broadband providers to understand how they can assist in futureproofing the Borough's digital infrastructure, which includes eliminating broadband 'not spots' and significantly improving broadband speeds - potentially achieving 1000Mbps through Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) connections.</p>

	<p>Brent supported TfL Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) bid for fibre broadband reaching into Park Royal, and is developing its approach to inform future funding bids.</p> <p>Brent is working with the GLA to host the first West London Full Fibre Network workshop on 27 March 2018.</p> <p>The Local Plan will also encompass the aspirations of the Borough in supporting infrastructure to benefit economic growth and the residents of Brent.</p>
Events Programme	<p>Promoting closer links between the Council and business community.</p> <p>Publicising and promoting successful local businesses.</p> <p>Socially responsible businesses are recognised.</p> <p>Programme for 2018/19 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Small Business Saturday (including 6 awards for SMEs in Brent)</li> <li>➤ Meet the Boroughs (in partnership with Park Royal Business Group) – over 70 businesses attended the event held in February 2018.</li> <li>➤ Living Wage Week</li> <li>➤ West London Business Awards (led by West London Business, hosted at Wembley Stadium)</li> <li>➤ Pride of Brent business facing awards (this year included the ‘Business contribution to the community’)</li> </ul>
Regulatory Support	<p>Existing programme of activities in each service area contribute to a strong offer to local businesses (e.g. Planning, Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Building Control, and Pest Control).</p> <p>Regulatory services are easier to engage with making Brent an attractive place in which to do business – assisted by the Brent for Business online portal.</p>

## 4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The current programme of activity is being delivered within existing resource. New projects put forward by Brent Business Board may require financial consideration.

## 5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising out of the contents of this report.

## 6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising out of the contents of this report.

## **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 Consultation will take place on a project-specific basis.

**Report sign off:**

**AMAR DAVE**

Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment