

# West London Economic Prosperity Board Minutes

Wednesday 26 May 2021

## **PRESENT**

### **Members**

Councillor Stephen Cowan – Chair (Hammersmith & Fulham)  
Councillor Dan Thomas (Barnet)  
Councillor Muhammed Butt (Brent)  
Councillor Graham Henson (Harrow)

Councillor Bassam Mahfouz (representing Peter Mason, Leader of Ealing Council)

### **Other Attendees**

David Pack (West London Alliance)  
Andrew Barry-Purssell (West London Alliance)  
David Francis (West London Alliance)  
Tim McCormick (West London Alliance)  
Anthony McNamara (West London Alliance)  
Andrew Dakers (Chief Executive, West London Business)  
Bill Boler (Creative Enterprise Zone West, West London Business)  
John Hooton (Chief Executive, Barnet)  
Cath Shaw (Deputy Chief Executive, Barnet)  
Tony Clements (Strategic Director, Economy, Hammersmith & Fulham)  
Alan Lunt (Strategic Director for Regeneration, Brent)  
Niall Bolger (Chief Executive, Hounslow)  
Sarah Scannell (Planning, Hounslow)

*NOTE: This meeting was held as an informal remote meeting*

## **1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Curran (Hounslow) and Peter Mason (Ealing).

There were no declarations of interest.

## **2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2021 were approved.

## **3. WEST LONDON ECONOMIC RECOVERY - UPDATED EVIDENCE BASE, PROGRESS AND A PROPOSED REFRESH OF BUILD & RECOVER PLAN**

David Francis (Director, West London Alliance) introduced the item and gave a short presentation on the report. The report set out the key findings from updated analysis undertaken by Oxford Economics to understand the economic impact of the pandemic in West London, building on initial work produced in spring 2020 and providing updated forecasts for the sub-region's economic recovery.

The presentation showed that while the wider London economy had fared better than the UK as a whole, West London had been impacted more severely with a GVA drop of 10.7% - equivalent to £8.1bn or all growth since 2013. West London was forecast to lose 48,600 jobs across 2020 and 2021. And while Oxford Economics expected jobs to return to previous levels by 2023, they warned that if no action was taken, there was a risk that people would become less competitive in labour market and were unable to get back into work.

The presentation also highlighted the following points of progress in delivering the Build and Recover plan:

- Delivery of the Job Entry: Targeted Support scheme to help those out of work for more than 3 months back into employment
- Local recruitment to mass vaccination hubs
- Launch of an online tool to improve understanding of how skills provision responds to need
- Developing of a West London 'no wrong door' approach to the skills and employment system
- Work underway to develop a West London approach to skills academies, working with partners in further and higher education
- A large-scale programme of retrofitting developed through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme
- Development of a toolkit for low carbon and sustainable procurement
- Work to scope an emissions measuring framework

Councillor Thomas noted that there were jobs available in areas like retail but businesses were struggling to employ people and asked if there were any insights on that point. David Francis suggested it may be due to barriers such as cost of travel, confidence to change sectors or travel hesitancy around the pandemic. David Pack (West London Alliance) noted that the hospitality sector was suffering from a skills shortage which could be tackled with a sector skills academy approach – working with FE colleges to look at interventions. Councillor Thomas supported that approach. Councillor Cowan emphasised the need for practical solutions to get people into jobs quickly.

Councillor Butt welcomed the comprehensive report. He agreed there needed to be a focus on supporting people into different types of employment. He expressed concerns around the end of the furlough scheme and said there needed to be systems in place to enable people to transition into new opportunities.

Councillor Mahfouz said he wanted to focus on the unequal impact of the economic fallout of the pandemic. He felt it was right to focus on the green recovery and opportunities for young people. West London also needed to ensure its recovery addressed the growing inequalities in society and suggested there should be specific programmes for the groups worst affected. For example, Ealing were looking at reskilling programmes and employability workshops for older Asian workers at Heathrow and targeted approaches for young Black men in Acton.

Councillor Cowan agreed and said addressing inequality had been central to the conversation from the beginning. The Board wanted to make sure everyone was lifted up – that was the mission that West London Alliance (WLA) had been charged with.

David Francis said WLA were actively working with people on ground and had already supported over three thousand people back into work. Improving the interface between FE colleges and employers was key to this.

David Pack added that a ‘no wrong door’ approach was important. There was a lot of support out there, but it was not always well used, joined up or easy to access. WLA officers and partners would be working up a West London ‘no wrong door’ approach over the summer as more funding became available.

Councillor Cowan noted the West London Economic Recovery Taskforce was also in place to bring together key stakeholders – big corporates, local government, the NHS, and more to improve links and open up more opportunities for local people.

Councillor Henson thanked officers for the report. He noted that the recruitment partnerships set up with the NHS for the Covid-19 response had shown the way with very positive outcomes. He raised concerns about the large number of smaller businesses and independent shops that had been significantly affected by the pandemic. He also suggested linking with the DWP to get them to signpost people to the work West London Alliance was doing.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Board:

1. Noted and commented on the actual and forecast economic impact of the pandemic on West London.
2. Considered and agreed the proposal to refresh the sub-regional areas of focus under the overall Build and Recover plan for economic recovery.

3. Noted work underway to develop a strategy to make West London's case to government and to broaden business engagement in the West London Economic Recovery Taskforce.

#### **4. WEST LONDON SCREEN INDUSTRIES OPPORTUNITY**

David Francis (Director, West London Alliance) introduced the item noting that the film and screen industries had an established and growing presence in West London and were one of the sub-region's key growth sectors, currently employing an estimated 100,000 people both directly and through supply chains.

Work was being undertaken by the WLA and West London Business, working with the GLA, London & Partners, the Department for International Trade, and the industry itself, to better understand the sector's two key constraints – suitable space and a pipeline of skilled workers – and develop actions as part of supporting West London's economic recovery.

Bill Boler (Creative Enterprise Zone West / West London Business) gave a presentation on the proposals. He highlighted the opportunities created by the rising demand for content from both traditional media and the new streaming services. West London was an important film and television cluster and all boroughs benefited from the work.

The areas of focus were:

- Develop skills locally
- Increase studio space
- Promote networking and innovation
- Promote sustainability

Councillor Butt noted that he had recently visited Garden Studios in Harlesden and was incredibly impressed with the amount of space put back into use. He was working to get apprenticeships in place and employment opportunities. He felt West London could be the premier hub for film and TV; there was a vast opportunity for local residents and a need to bring the various elements of that together.

Councillor Henson suggested the West London Councils could have a common approach or offer to film and tv to simplify the process for film companies. Bill Boler agreed there were areas for a collective approach. Regeneration teams were working together in some areas. He said political support for the approach to skills would be useful.

Councillor Thomas emphasised the need for strong relationships between local arts colleges and studios. When people graduate there should be placements and apprenticeships available. Bill Boler said he was making progress in making connections between colleges, universities and businesses.

Councillor Cowan suggested WLA look at ways to provide affordable, flexible studio space and land for the film industry. There was also a role in connecting schools with businesses – creating opportunities for networking (formal and informal). Councillor Cowan requested a paper on options on what local authorities could realistically do to help improve the availability of space for the sector, including making it easier to film and setting land aside for studio space.

**ACTION: David Francis**

**RESOLVED**

1. That the Board noted and commented on the work underway to address two key constraints to the growth of the screen industries in West London and the proposed actions and interventions in development.

Meeting started: 2.30 pm  
Meeting ended: 3.30 pm

Chair .....

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