

West London Economic Prosperity Board Minutes

Friday 3 July 2020

NOTE: This meeting was held remotely

PRESENT

Members

Councillors Stephen Cowan (Chair, Hammersmith & Fulham), Julian Bell (Ealing), Graham Henson (Harrow), and Shama Tatler

Other Attendees

Councillor Helen Rowbottom (Hammersmith & Fulham), John Hooton (Barnet), Paul Najsarek (Ealing), Tony Clements (Hammersmith & Fulham), Niall Bolger (Hounslow), Cath Shaw (Barnet), David Francis, Benaisha Daruwalla, Matin Miah (West London Alliance), Andrew Dakers (West London Business)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Curran (Hounslow), Rajawat (Hounslow), Thomas (Barnet), and Butt (Brent)

2. ROLL-CALL AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Attendance (listed above) was confirmed by roll call. There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The previous meeting held on 26 February 2020 was inquorate so notes of the meeting were circulated.

RESOLVED

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. WEST LONDON ECONOMIC RECOVERY - EVIDENCE AND EMERGING ACTION PLAN

Niall Bolger (Hounslow) introduced the item and noted that the report was in response to the extreme economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board had commissioned Oxford Economics to look at the impact of the pandemic to inform the economic recovery of West London, along with the latest London Economic Outlook published by the Greater London Authority and the most recent data on the economic impacts of Covid-19 locally, regionally and nationally.

He commented that the recommendations and actions in the report were practical, deliverable, and achievable – but they required Government support.

The Chair thanked everyone involved for producing the report. He echoed a point in the paper that the goal was not just to return to ‘normal’ – but rather to a better, greener, and fairer society.

Cath Shaw (Barnet) covered the report’s findings and recommendations in detail. She noted that the data showed that West London would be the worst affected London region, partly due to Heathrow and its network of smaller businesses.

The paper contained ‘priority asks’ in three areas:

- Build on our strengths – Heathrow, Imperial, White City, housing and growth delivery – and scaling up existing initiatives like the Skills Escalator
- Flexing existing funding streams – The apprenticeship levy, Community Infrastructure Levy, Section 106 funding, and aviation funding streams could be used creatively to support communities
- Invest in the future – London needed to position itself as crucial for economic recovery for the UK.

Members made the following points:

- Furlough numbers in the region were considerable and there was a cliff edge in October. We should strengthen the ask to Government here.
- There was concern that the upcoming planning reforms (i.e. converting commercial into residential) would have a negative impact on high streets.
- An issue was raised around small businesses that didn’t have access to credit. Could we provide grants or interest free loans?
- The Government seemed to be overlooking established economic development and investment structures like the Economic Prosperity Board, Hammersmith & Fulham’s Industrial Strategy Board, and the Mayor of London’s Recovery Board.

The Chair noted that the Government had only allocated London £22m of the £900m recovery fund, despite London being the engine of the UK economy.

London's recovery was essential for the economic wellbeing of the Country as a whole.

Councillor Bell commented that the recovery should address the climate emergency – adding that the lockdown had given many people a new appreciation of clean air and the parks and green spaces in their local communities. There was an opportunity around retrofitting buildings which would address the climate emergency, support low carbon housing, and create new jobs.

Andrew Dakers (West London Business) addressed the Board and said he welcomed the recovery plan and the practical focus of the actions and recommendations.

John Hooton (Barnet) also welcomed the report and made the point that the Treasury's investment in the economy to support this recovery should also support the shift to a low carbon economy.

The Chair summarised the discussion and said there was a strong consensus across region about how we lift this economy. He expressed disappointment over the small amount of money given to London as part of the recovery fund said and the Board should redouble its efforts to lobby Government on this issue.

Cath Shaw noted that the region needed to be prepared for both when funding came through and when the furlough scheme ended in October.

The Chair asked if members agreed to hold more regular meetings during this period, with the next meeting to be held in August. Members unanimously agreed.

He suggested that a meeting be held to discuss how to lobby the Government. The region needed to make strong economic arguments about how investing in London gives a greater return for the whole Country.

Councillor Helen Rowbottom (Hammersmith & Fulham) suggested taking the report to the Industrial Strategy Board for buy-in from them.

RESOLVED

1. To note the actual and forecast economic impact of Covid19 on West London.
2. To consider and agree the direction of travel for the West London economic recovery planning work.
3. To endorse the emerging package of 'offers and asks' outlined in the report, and delegate authority to officers of the West London Alliance and member boroughs to work with partner organisations to refine this package and seek to influence Government and others to ensure its effective delivery.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that dates would be circulated after the meeting.

Meeting started: 11.00 am
Meeting ended: 11.45 am

Chair

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