

EALING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP (EBP)

Wednesday, 6 February 2019, 7:00 pm – Liz Cantell Room – Ealing Town Hall

MINUTES

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS PRESENT

Andrew Dakers (Chair)

EALING COUNCILLOR MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Bell	Leader of Ealing Council
Councillor Jasbir Anand	Cabinet Portfolio Holder — Business and Community Services
Councillor Alexander Stafford	Shadow Cabinet Portfolio Holder — Business, Communities, Prosperity and Employment

REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL BUSINESS/ORGANISATIONS

Jackie Ashmenall	Christ the Saviour Church Warden and West London Citizens Co-Chair
Richard Morse	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Hanger Hill Ward Panel Chair
Shakuntla Josh	S J Marketing

EALING COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT

Maria Campagna	Head of Corporate Finance
Mwim Chellah	Democratic Services Officer
Nick Rowe	Head of Local Tax and Accounts Receivable
Carol Sam	Economic Regeneration Senior Manager
Arshad Yunis	Business Rates Manager

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting, and welcomed those present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Johnson, Mahfouz, Nagpal, and Ross Brown (Director of Finance).

3. Urgent Matters

There were none.

4. Matters to be Considered in Private

There were none.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

6. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Ealing Business Partnership considered the minutes of the meeting held on 6th February 2018.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th February 2018, be agreed as a correct record.

7. Budget Strategy 2019-2020

The Chair informed the meeting that, due to the low turnout, questions from businesses present will be taken during and/or after each presentation. The slot for the roundtable discussion (Agenda Item 10) would include discussing the impact on Ealing of the UK's departure from the EU ("Brexit"). This followed a request by Ms Lucy Taylor, Ealing Council Director of Regeneration and Housing.

The Chair then invited Maria Campagna, Head of Corporate Finance, to present the Budget Strategy 2019-2020.

The meeting considered a PowerPoint presentation on the Council's Budget Strategy 2019-2020. Subsequently, the Ealing Business Partnership was invited to provide comments and express views regarding the proposals.

Members requested that the presentation be appended to the minutes. (The presentation has been attached as Appendix 1.)

The Chair invited questions from attendees.

The Chair sought further clarity on savings raised from various initiatives by the Council.

The Leader of Ealing Council, Councillor Julian Bell, advised that at a time when Council finances were reducing and demands rising, especially in relation to social care costs, the Council had continued to meet its obligations – having a positive impact on residents and businesses. The Council's response to these financial challenges was its Future

Ealing outcomes-based programme, through which it was exploring how to transform services. This included changing its culture to enable residents who were willing to get more involved to do so. Two examples of savings proposals agreed, as part of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS), were the proposed changes to Neighbourhood Services (including libraries and children's centres). This was within the limited resources available that protected outcomes for the most vulnerable and engaged citizens through a community library offer. Furthermore, efficiencies were actualised by deleting posts as well as reducing the Council's senior management structure, the Corporate Board, from 5 to 3 positions. More measures, to identify efficiencies and reduce costs, would continue to be considered and undertaken.

Resolved: that the Budget Strategy 2019-2020 be noted.

8. Business Rates Update 2019–2020

The Chair invited Nick Rowe, Head of Local Tax and Accounts Receivable, to present the Business Rates Update 2019–2020.

The meeting considered a PowerPoint presentation in relation to Business Rates collected by the Council. Members also requested that the presentation be appended to the minutes. (The presentation has been attached as Appendix 2.)

Jackie Ashmenall, Christ the Saviour Church Warden and West London Citizens Co-Chair, enquired whether the "community hub" at Dickens Yard, being used by the church, would be required to pay business rates.

Officers advised that sites for community use, including churches, were not rateable.

Officers reported that income from business rates was forecast to decline in the short term (due to loss of commercial floorspace) but this would be broadly offset by an increase in council tax revenues (due to more housing being built).

Resolved: that the Business Rates Update be noted.

9. Discussion on the Future of the Ealing Business Partnership

The Chair informed the meeting that he had been evaluating different ways in which the Borough and business community could "connect" more effectively. The EBP's effectiveness had been significantly reduced by the constant churn of people that attended meetings, making it difficult to take any issues raised forward.

Over the past few months, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), West London Business and two Ealing MPs (Stephen Pound – Ealing North, and Rupa Huq – Ealing Central and Acton) had run two successful breakfast forums with local businesses. There were between 25 to 40 people attending on each occasion, with a mix of businesses of different sizes and sectors. At the most recent meeting, there was input from City Hall (Rajesh Agrawal, Deputy Mayor of London for Business), and Ealing Council (Councillor Peter Mason, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning and Transformation — substituting for Councillor Julian Bell, Leader of the Council). This

meant business concerns that needed the input of the different tiers of government could be addressed by appropriate leaders at the same fora.

The Chair recommended that the EBP could now be wound up and replaced with two different engagement mechanisms:

- 1) continue with the new Ealing business breakfast forum, inviting a cross-section of partners working to engage a diverse mix of businesses 3 to 4 times a year —
 - 1.1) and the statutory Budget Strategy as well as the Business Rates Update consultations considered at the first of these meetings each year; and
- 2) replicate and adapt a “business board” model that had been piloted in Brent over the past two years. This would entail the creation of a Business Board that would be predominantly businesses (of different sizes), with senior officer and councillor input. The focus would be on an agenda that aligned areas that the Council’s economic development/ regeneration unit was resourced to work on, with steer/ input from the business representatives. Task and finish groups would subsequently be set up for business representatives to provide input and support officers on specific projects.

The Chair noted that Opposition Party input would also be valuable to ensure cross-party participation. Moreover, it was suggested a link to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should be established.

Members were requested to study the Chair’s recommendations and provide any feedback to the Chair and Council Leader.

10. Table Discussion and Feedback

The business community inquired how the impending withdrawal from the EU (“Brexit”) would impact the Borough.

The Leader of Ealing Council, Councillor Julian Bell, advised that councils in London had been requested to have contingency plans in place. This was in particular reference to the possible loss of staff of European origin, should they opt to return home after Brexit. Furthermore, in terms of food trading standards, the Government had provided £100 000 to the Council to enable food standards officers check food imported from Europe (and elsewhere). This was in the event that the UK left without a formal trade agreement with the EU after existing the bloc.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair advised Members that the next meeting was, provisionally, scheduled for Wednesday, 12th June 2019.

The meeting finished at 8:30pm.

ANDREW DAKERS (CHAIR)