

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 15th September 2021, BMI Main Hall

Present:

Councillor Salma Suleman (Chair)

Councillors Alex Aitken, Zaheer Khan, Chaman Lal, Simon Morrall and Darius Sandhu

Also Present:

Mark Gamble, East Birmingham Development Manager

Lloyd Broad, Head of European & International Affairs

Ozge Iskit, Interim Brexit Co-Ordinator

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND CHAIR

Noted.

3. APOLOGIES

Cllr Maureen Cornish

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Noted.

6. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Councillor Chaman Lal agreed as Deputy Chair.

7. ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the last formal meeting of the Committee on 24th March were agreed. The Committee agreed that minutes and actions from meetings that took place remotely on Teams during the pandemic and that were agreed in Teams meetings could be signed physically by the Deputy Chair Cllr Chaman Lal due to the previous Chair having since left the authority.

8. EAST BIRMINGHAM INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY – UPDATE

Mark Gamble, East Birmingham Development Manager gave an overview of the strategy and consultation process as part of his presentation and during discussion with members the following points were made: -

- An annual report is presented to cabinet and programme paperwork is available to keep up to date on the work of the Board. Updates can also be provided to committee as required.
- At the current stage a programme team is being mobilised to address various issues including skills and employment and as this comes on-board work will take place to match local people to jobs.
- An East Birmingham community anchor network has been established with the aim to create clear pathways into jobs for people in deprived communities. This will look at workforce planning and how opportunities are made available. This includes how jobs are advertised to attract residents in the city and the wider area and at the next update further information will be available to update the committee on specific projects underway.
- A Digital Inclusion Strategy and action plan has been agreed by cabinet. The East Birmingham team will be working with digital inclusion officers on how the team can lead on this work so that more people can access technology and provide people of all ages with the skills to utilise the opportunities available. This will also be part of the work in tackling isolation especially for older people.
- Connectivity around the city from the area and to the city centre is a crucial issue. To address this several options including the metro to the east (Solihull) is being implemented and the Birmingham Transport Plan also addresses some of the key issues. A study has also been funded to look at the specific East Birmingham to Solihull travel corridor.
- During the consultation period schools were contacted however due to the pandemic the engagement was limited. Going forward it is planned to engage with colleagues in schools, colleges and other education establishments to get more involvement and feedback specifically around topics of interest to young people and identifying pre-NEET young people. This will allow early engagement and to be able to identify and develop job and career opportunities and address the poor historical educational achievements of

some of the young people in the area. To this end the Council is working with the Police, University College Birmingham and voluntary organisations on the recruitment of local people to jobs and skills training for those of minority ethnic backgrounds and make available opportunities for the most deprived people in the area. It is anticipated that outputs of this work will be available in the next few months.

- The area is seeing a lot of regeneration especially with the metro and highway works in progress and this has caused disruption however more can be done to show the benefit in the long term to the community. More and thorough communication would be beneficial to ensure that the message is getting through to local people using local community groups and representatives such as ward members (through ward member forums).
- There are some key assets in the East Birmingham area including the Tyseley Energy Park that has both national and local significance in developing and providing low and zero carbon energies and is a sector that can be developed further with the owners to get the most of the asset.
- The construction sector has been particularly affected by a shortage of skills and is an area that does require further work in terms of how we can get our young people to fill the skills shortage gap being faced. South and City College have a construction facility based in East Birmingham and this can be utilised. Women in construction is a key issue and this will be addressed this with the Chair and committee at a future date.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. Mark Gamble to provide further information on the business case being developed to support those involved in the Birmingham Wheels site.

9. UPDATE ON BREXIT

The Chair welcomed Lloyd Broad, Head of European and International Affairs and Ozge Iskit, Interim Brexit Co-Ordinator who joined the meeting remotely and talked through the presentation circulated. During discussion with members the following points were made: -

- The EU resettlement scheme was commended however it was noted that the country is facing skills shortages particularly in relation to HGV drivers and farming which were jobs filled by many workers from eastern Europe. Members shared concerns about the plans to address this both locally and nationally especially with the immigration/visa points system that requires workers must be able to secure a set minimum salary to be able to work in the UK however many job areas do not pay this. It was explained that the government has been accelerating programmes to meet needs through speeding up training of its own citizens. It will however take many months to fill vacancies and some sectors are more exposed than others. If the recruitment fails to fill positions locally then vacancies will remain. However, this is where the employment programmes come into play to support local people to match this need.

- In relation to the skills shortages that the country is facing due to Brexit alongside covid pressures it was explained that it was very difficult to separate the two issues apart in terms of the impact and the specific losses felt in particular sectors. Officers will be keeping a close eye on the challenges in the long term.
- UK growth is increasing and ahead of other countries. The last 18 months have been challenging due to the pandemic and saw the highest unemployment figures since the 1980s. However European Social Fund (ESF) monies were used to support young people and vulnerable people in the city.
- Funding from government is allocated to combined authority areas and Birmingham is part of the West Midlands Combined Authority that will have the lead for distribution of funding. The city will keep a watch on what is being agreed and ensure that Birmingham receives its fair share.
- EU funding received by the UK was in the region of approximately £1.5 billion per year. The government has given a commitment to match values that have previously been received through the Shared Prosperity Fund. It is anticipated that further details of this will emerge as part of the autumn budget statement.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Morrall raised the effect of planning and licensing decisions on cultural, leisure and hospitality settings in the city centre with many new developments coming on board offering residential lettings and the subsequent effect of this on these sectors such as concerns relating to noise pollution and sound control. Cllr Morrall added that this would need to be looked at in the context of the Birmingham Development Plan and its refresh going forward and to see if anything could be done to safeguard venues before issues arise. As this item was scheduled for the October meeting and Cllr Morrall had tendered his apologies in advance for this date the Chair agreed to investigate whether there was capacity to change the meeting day/time to accommodate Cllr Morrall to take part in the discussion.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. The Chair agreed that scrutiny officers would look at what capacity there is to change the date or time of the October meeting.

11. DATES OF MEETINGS

Members noted all future meeting dates. It was highlighted that the November meeting date had been moved to 3rd November from 10th November.

12. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

13. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

14. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

The meeting ended at 11:48 hours