

GREATER BRIGHTON ECONOMIC BOARD

10.00am 7 FEBRUARY 2023

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Mac Cafferty (Chair) Appich, Ash-Edwards, Cooper, Neocleous and Jones

Business Partners: Trevor Beattie, Joanna Havers, Dean Orgill, Dan Power, Prof. Roseneil, Andrew Swayne

PART ONE

17 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

17a Declarations of substitutes

17.1 Councillor Neocleous was present as substitute for Councillor Parkin.

17.2 Joanna Havers was present as substitute for Prof. Humphris.

17b Declarations of interests

17.3 There were none.

17c Exclusion of the press and public

17.4 In accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Board considered whether the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any item of business on the grounds that it is likely in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during it, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act.

17.5 **Resolved-** That the press and public not be excluded.

18 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

17.1 **Resolved-** That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as the correct record.

19 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

19.1 The Chair provided the following communications:

“It is hugely disappointing that no Local Authority in the city region was successful in round 2 of the Levelling Up fund. Five excellent projects were put forward from across Greater Brighton that would have generated huge benefits to those communities, and I share in the collective disappointment that none of these bids have been taken forward by Government.

Unfortunately, I think this illustrates once again that the entire government decision-making process for allocating funding is deeply flawed. It is an appalling waste of council resources and staff time and creates huge uncertainty.

The Levelling Up announcement comes at a time when council’s face extremely difficult decisions on their finances following years of council funding cuts, combined with unprecedented demand for our services, the highest inflation in a generation, the impact of a crippling pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

While the Government’s ambitions to level-up regional disparities across the UK is something I think we would all agree in principle, the key to achieving this is through greater fiscal devolution that provides certainty and allows us to plan spend over a long period. This would support regeneration in our areas and allow us to take an evidence-based approach to investment and regeneration that will result in the best return for the region’s citizens, businesses and wider economy.

These points were made by Brighton & Hove’s Chief Executive, Geoff Raw, to the Housing, Communities and Levelling Up Select Committee at the end of last year during an evidence session into their inquiry into Levelling Up funding.

Further coordinated representation to parliament and government on these matters should continue to be made so that the city region has a voice in the Levelling Up agenda. I would welcome a more grown-up relationship with Government, which would see greater fiscal devolution at a local and city region level so that we can take the decisive action needed.

What this latest announcement also demonstrates, and something we have discussed as a Board many times before, is the importance of not relying on Government support and to feel empowered to act where we can in moving forward with projects that support the city region economy and our transition to net zero.

With that in mind, I want to take the opportunity to highlight some of the work that is progressing and where the city region is already leading the way, through collaboration, pooled resources and partnership. This is especially true of our Net Zero work.

The Board is already making great progress on building resilience, sustainability and carbon reduction through the GB10 pledges. With officer support now in place, the next priority is to develop the Transition to Net Zero Action Plan, which will bring together all of the Board’s workstreams relating to climate change, sustainability and resilience into a coordinated action plan which will support the region transition to a net zero economy.

The next phase of the Greater Brighton Food Plan is progressing, with a tender exercise underway to commission specialist support to properly cost and develop investment plans for the city region food system. A Task & Finish Group has also been established to drive the Food System Transformation agenda, develop partnerships and align core work in this area, ultimately resulting in agreed investment plans for the city region food system.

The work of Hydrogen Sussex also continues at pace and I welcome the extremely positive engagement with the Hydrogen strategy from all partners and congratulate everyone involved with the progress made to date. We will be hearing more about the emerging strategy and route map later in the meeting.

Work is also progressing on the Creative Industries Strategy, a joint commission between Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex Partnership. Consultants were appointed at the end of last year and work has begun in earnest on the data gathering and stakeholder engagement aspects of the work. Roundtable events with all Local Authorities and industry representatives will be taking place over the next month.

With the Creative Industries also identified by Government as having a significant role to play in the levelling up agenda, the strategy will enable us to strengthen the city region's position and maximise existing and potential opportunities to unlock growth. A report is expected to be ready by the end of April and the strategy and delivery plan will cover the period 2023 – 2028”.

20 THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR GREATER BRIGHTON

20.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that provided the results of the research and analysis undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies (IES) into the impact of the economic turbulence in Greater Brighton and made proposals in response to those findings.

20.2 The following matters were raised during discussion of the item:

- Observations on the high housing and childcare costs in the region that affected the employment market
- The need to understand what sectors re-skilling would be best targeted toward
- The need for better data on the employment sector

20.3 Resolved-

- 1) That the Board notes the findings and recommendations of the report by IES on the current economic outlook for the city region.
- 2) That the Board tasks the Greater Brighton Programme Board to look at actions and interventions that can be made by Greater Brighton to support businesses and residents through the cost-of-living crisis, as well as opportunities for economic growth and aligned funding bids.
- 3) That Board agrees to set aside circa £20,000 to commission work on a city region dashboard and regional analysis, with specific focus on skills, housing and business support. The expectation is that a quarterly report will come to the Board with an update on the economic outlook with a focus on a key priority area and proposed recommendations for interventions.
- 4) That the Board agrees a letter should be sent by the Chair, on behalf of the Board, to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, calling for more support for businesses in the city region and sustainable funding, to address inequalities and local imbalances within the region, in line with the Levelling Up agenda.
- 5) That the Board acknowledges the response from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, attached as an Appendix and welcomes the offer of officials from the Department visiting the city region.

21 GREATER BRIGHTON HYDROGEN STRATEGY

21.1 The Board considered a report of the Chair, Greater Brighton Officer Programme Board that presented the Greater Brighton Hydrogen Strategy, funded by the Greater Brighton Economic Board (The Board), and asked for the Board's endorsement of the findings, analysis, and action plan, which will form the basis of future work to promote and support a hydrogen economy in the city region.

21.2 The following matters were raised during discussion of the item:

- That the region was well positioned to benefit from growth in the sector and a focus on skills and training in the area would strengthen that position
- Possible uses for hydrogen beyond fleet
- Hydrogen was unlikely to be rolled out at scale in the near future

21.3 Resolved-

- 1) That the Board notes the findings of the Greater Brighton Hydrogen Strategy (Appendix 1) and agrees that this should form the basis of future work on hydrogen in the city region.
- 2) That Board agrees to receive a future report outlining proposals for Hydrogen Sussex to become a self-sustaining organisation.

22 GREATER BRIGHTON INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

Resolved- That the Board note the report and the Investment Programme Update at Appendix 1.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am