

Minutes

Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities
Policy Overview Committee
Thursday, 10 October 2019
Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge



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Members Present:

Councillors Richard Mills (Chairman)
Wayne Bridges (Vice-Chairman)
Nicola Brightman
Farhad Choubedar
Alan Deville
Jazz Dhillon
Scott Farley
Lynne Allen
Steve Tuckwell

Apologies:

Councillors Lindsey Bliss
Martin Goddard

Officers Present:

Nigel Cramb, Partnerships and Business Engagement Manager
Ian Anderson, Business Manager, Complaints and Enquiries
James Rodger, Head of Planning, Transportation and Regeneration
Ross Forsyth, Regulatory Services Officer
Luke Taylor, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Dr Darrell DeSouza, CEO and Group Principal at HCUC
Mr Neil Impiazzi, Partnership Development Director at SEGRO

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lindsey Bliss and Martin Goddard, with Councillor Lynne Allen and Steve Tuckwell.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Lynne Allen declared a personal interest in Item 5, as a member of the Hayes Town Partnership.

20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JULY 2019

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019 be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following alteration:

1. That “The Head of Planning, Transportation and Recycling confirmed that the benefit from the project was huge, with more jobs provided than were ever envisioned, and this was a huge difference, in comparison with other mixed-used sites in the Borough” replace the paragraph that stated “The Head of Planning, Transportation and Recycling confirmed that the benefit from the project was huge, with thousands of jobs provided - more than ever envisioned - and this was a huge difference, in comparison with other mixed use sites in the Borough”.

21. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was confirmed that all items were marked Part I and would be considered in public.

22. REVIEW C: LOCAL COMMERCE, EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS AND JOB CREATION

Dr Darrell DeSouza, CEO and Group Principal at Harrow College and Uxbridge College (HCUC), and Mr Neil Impiazzi, Partnership Development Director at SEGRO, were in attendance at the meeting to give evidence to the Committee.

Dr DeSouza noted that while he started his role in August, he had been a long-standing part of Uxbridge College as Vice-Principal, and was a resident of the Borough. The Committee was informed that Further Education was now starting to be recognised for its role in skills, and one of the recent examples of this was the forthcoming introduction of the new Technical Level (T-Level) exams.

The Uxbridge College (UC) has had a very good record for over ten years or more, and this is largely due to the breadth and width of the curriculum offered, with varied levels to suit the student.

The Committee heard that 70% of higher education learners at HCUC were in the subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), but there was a significant variety in levels of education at the colleges. Dr DeSouza noted that the aim of HCUC was to re-engage a very diverse number of students with education and help them with their career progression, and the investment in the campuses had helped provide a great environment for students to learn in.

Members were informed that, in addition to the College’s standard academic, vocational and technical provision, they also provided T-Levels (via a pilot scheme), higher T-Levels through the Institute of Technology (IoT) apprenticeship reform, and various projects in partnership with the Brunel University, the Borough’s commercial sector, and Hillingdon Council.

Dr DeSouza commented that HCUC would be part of the first tranche pilot for T-Levels in 2020/21, which would offer T-Levels in Digital and Early Years Education, with a planned expansion in 2021/22, which included a bid for four more subjects:

Science – Lab Technician, Healthcare Science, Pharmacy Services, and 2nd Digital T-Levels. These T level schemes, when fully rolled out, would offer specific employment focused qualifications in 15 sector areas. The T levels would require substantial employment placements to aid workplace skills, offering 45-60 day placements to help make students ready for work. Furthermore, there was a planned pilot transition program to build a pipeline for Level 2 learning.

Councillors heard that the Department for Education had awarded HCUC permission to establish one of twelve IoTs in the UK, in partnership with Brunel University London and major employers, Fujitsu and Heathrow. The IoT would be based in STEM provision, with over 3,000 learner enrolments. HCUC supported this drive for high value higher technical skills to begin changing the national mind-set regarding non-degree options in education, and would focus on Level 4 and 5 higher technical qualifications, including apprenticeships, with a small percentage at both Level 3 and Level 6 (degree) level.

The IoT aimed to target under-represented groups in order to gain wide participation, and are looking to use a dynamic process to construct the program by encouraging employers and specialists to engage with HCUC.

Responding to questioning from Members, Dr DeSouza noted that the nature of the STEM subjects provided meant that full-time students were predominantly male. Although efforts were being made to encourage females into these subjects, some of this gender imbalance in subjects comes from early age mind-sets and stereotypes, and this also resulted in other subjects such as health and beauty being predominantly female. However, Dr DeSouza did note that HCUC was hoping to tackle these stereotypes and rebalance mind-sets on the issue.

The Committee asked whether HCUC focused on preparing students for work and interviews, and were informed that there was an expectation that all students would receive careers advice and help with CV production. Members also heard that HCUC have a childcare provision, and the college were committed to supporting parent learners to enable them to participate and complete courses.

Dr DeSouza confirmed that HCUC wanted to involve employers in their programs, and this would take place in a number of ways, including helping to design the program or assessment panels, among others. A number of employers also liked the idea of employer champions for programmes, and this has led to interest from employers, although interest has largely been drummed up by the HCUC approaching employers to widen the net.

Members were informed that HCUC supported students with learning difficulties, and this could include anything from an internship, appropriately sourced work experience that suited the level of engagement required, work placement coaches, or work in the student shop to help those students who needed a higher level of support. The Committee heard that most students with extra needs were on the usual vocational programs, and the courses aimed to develop their skills while they learned at HCUC, but others went on to further studies or apprenticeships.

The Committee asked how the Council may be able to help HCUC, and Dr DeSouza stated that it would be helpful to encourage businesses understand that HCUC was providing agendas to get students ready for work, and it was worthwhile to take a chance on young people.

Responding to questioning, Dr DeSouza confirmed that HCUC liaised constantly with local schools to get their messages out, and while this would help to identify future students from schools and academies, more could be done and this could be something that the Council may be able to help with. Dr DeSouza noted it was often the case that learners came to HCUC after trying something different that they decided was not for them, and by approaching students before this they would be able to prevent any wasted years for students. It was also important to get this message out to students, as the default mind-set in the UK is for young people to study and take GCSEs and A-Levels, whereas new exams such as T-Levels may be ideal, but a recent study found that only 27% of those questioned even knew they existed, which suggested further promotion of the qualification was required.

Mr Impiazzi addressed the Committee and stated that SEGRO was a developer of warehouse and industrial property throughout Europe, which started in Slough over a century ago, and now had 1,150 customers. SEGRO builds large industrial warehouses up to one million square feet, urban, light industrial business parks, and airport-related properties. Mr Impiazzi commented that West London continued to be a key area for the company, and that SEGRO had holdings in Uxbridge and West Drayton.

The Committee heard that SEGRO support a lot of different sectors which major customers and well-known brands, but also through the supply-chain to these customers.

Members heard that one of SEGRO's first partnership projects in Hillingdon was the Bosch Training Centre. Mr Impiazzi advised that the Council's pragmatic approach to the project, which allowed a change of use on the site, helped to secure both a Premier Inn and Beefeater Restaurant on the Riverside Way site south of the town centre. This facility not only supported the Bosch development but assisted other companies in the Uxbridge area.

Councillors were informed that SEGRO continued to support opportunities for local people, either through work experience or paid employment, through their schemes. Mr Impiazzi explained that the experience gain in working in Hillingdon was invaluable in terms of assisting SEGRO's overall approach to employment. In the Stockley Close development, for example, SEGRO had previously just paid travel expenses for those on work experience, but as a result of that development, SEGRO now have a policy of paying a salary to those people who are on work experience.

Mr Impiazzi noted that it was a difficult time for employment space providers in London due to homebuilding, and the de-designating of industrial land for housing failed to recognise a demand for services and industry. As such, new, more sustainable approaches to the delivery of employment space had been required. As a result of this new approach, there has been an increase in multi-storey industrial

schemes, electrical vehicles, low-carbon schemes, renewable energy, “smart” buildings and cities and the transformation of existing buildings.

The Committee heard that multi-storey industrial schemes unlocked urban areas, and while the costs associated with ramps were high, the schemes created more floorspace on the plot.

Mr Impiazzi commented that opportunities to drive innovation were a necessity, and it was important to focus on the next generational skills, with one way to do this by focusing on a digital agenda. This agenda must inspire young people, and it is helpful to work alongside schools to give students exposure to opportunities and look at career path options.

Mr Impiazzi stated that “smart cities” technology was becoming more popular, and these created both sustainable places to live and work. Innovative land use, such as that that has taken place at the former Nestle Site in Hayes, was, in Mr Impiazzi's view, the future. At the Nestle Site, London’s first industrial housing scheme was agreed, including a business park and 1,300 homes, with 35% affordable housing and a green space for all local residents, and not just those who lived on the site. The project delivered both homes and jobs together, and due to good design, can reduce issues such as noise and traffic. Members also heard that the employment park would be completed next year, but the first phase of housing is already complete, though it would take over six years to be fully delivered. Mr Impiazzi stated he was very grateful for the support from the Council in the project, and that the scheme, considering its size, did not receive many objections from residents. The Committee heard that this was a project that both developer and the Council should be proud of.

The Committee were informed that SEGRO acquired the site and planned the scheme, before taking it to the market and, once the planning application was approved, the site was sold, in this case to Barrett Homes. Furthermore, due to funding from the Mayor’s Office, 40% affordable housing was now included in the scheme, which included a mixture of homes and tenures, with high environmental credentials. The Head of Planning, Transportation and Regeneration added that SEGRO were very positive on air quality issues, and had strong electric charging initiatives and green credentials.

Responding to Councillors’ questioning, Mr Impiazzi confirmed that SEGRO was still building smaller warehouse units, down to the size of 500 square foot, but the decision to build larger commercial units was based on what the market demanded. Mr Impiazzi commented that SEGRO wanted to be known for creating thriving locations, regardless of size.

Members questioned whether there could be a better use of the canals in the Borough, and heard that, and heard that SEGRO were going to look at the use of the Thames first, but seriously conversations were taking place about how to deliver sustainably to a city of London’s size. Mr Impiazzi noted that electric vehicles provided cleaner air but continued to cause congestion, so different means to deliver goods were being considered, and water or rail networks could both be alternatives, and the Thames was definitely underutilised.

Mr Impiazzi noted that in most cases, the construction phase of projects can be very quick. Some developments are prefabricated buildings, as a lot is constructed off-site elsewhere, and this increases green credentials as very little is built on-site.

The Committee heard that during the construction phase of a project every vacancy was advertised locally by SEGRO, via Job Centre Plus. Local schools are engaged to speak to young people about construction career opportunities too. SEGRO also offered paid work experience, and those young people who take paid work experience with SEGRO are also given their kit and allowed to keep this at the end. SEGRO were keen to support local supply chains and assist local business secure contracts on their sites.

Members were informed that for every phase of the Nestles development, SEGRO had committed funding to ensure that local people had the opportunity to secure employment. SEGRO would be working with the sites end users and the HCUC to ensure that local people had the skills required to compete with the employment opportunities created on the Nestles site. Furthermore SEGRO committed to guarantee an interview to everyone who meets the basic criteria for a job. It was noted that this went above and beyond S106 requirements. In addition to this, community funds are made available through S106 agreements, with up to £10-15k available each year to invest in local community projects. The Head of Planning, Transportation and Recycling confirmed that with regards to the Nestle site, S106 money was tied up in local elements by some 25 separate Heads of Terms, with most of this money reinvested locally.

Councillors asked whether SEGRO felt greater social responsibility following the collapse of Carillion, and Mr Impiazzi commented that this was devastating on the sector, particularly to suppliers and employees. The Committee were informed that SEGRO always looked to work with local communities, and were investing in areas of deprivation and looking after local communities, something that was helped by a strong working relationship with local authorities. Mr Impiazzi noted that this was part of SEGRO's DNA, and they were very proud to push this point, as they wanted to be known as a transformative business for local residents.

Members heard that SEGRO would like to do more in Hillingdon, and the Committee agreed that the Council must work out how businesses in the Borough can continue to collaborate more to create opportunities for local communities.

The Committee thanked both Dr DeSouza and Mr Impiazzi for their evidence, and agreed to continue the review to its next phase.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the evidence heard at the witness session.

23. SPORTS GROUND SAFETY REVIEW

The Regulatory Services Officer introduced the report regarding Safety at Sports Grounds.

The Committee were informed that the Local Authority develop a relationship with those clubs that do not require safety certificates at their grounds to ensure they still have a high level of safety, but this can be tough for clubs where funds are very limited. Members heard that there were two stands in the Borough which required safety certificates, and these were situated at Hayes and Yeading FC and the Gaelic Athletic Association.

Councillors noted that there were often not a huge number of fans at these stands, but on some occasions, the GAA would be very busy on event days. The GAA stand was granted a limited safety certificate for 1,200 people in May, but this had since been reduced to 600 people, and then again to zero people due to non-compliance.

Responding to Councillors' questioning, the Regulatory Services Officer confirmed that the Council worked with operations managers at these grounds to build a relationship, and in the case of the GAA, a traffic management plan would be built into the new safety certificate.

Members also heard that the Council did not contribute to private clubs, and as such the clubs built off their own back, and in some cases, with grants from the Football Association, which would be used to improve grounds. In the case of Northwood Football Club, there was now access to the Chrysalis Fund, which may have an impact on the club.

The Committee commented that the current number of inspections were suitable, and this should continue for the next two years.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Considered and noted the report regarding Safety at Sports Grounds; and,**
- 2. Recommended to the Cabinet Member for Community, Commerce and Regeneration that the same level of inspection is maintained during 2019/20 and 2020/21 for all sports grounds.**

24. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE UPDATE REPORT

The Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries introduced the report which provided information and analysis of complaints and Members' Enquires received between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 for services that fall under the remit of the Corporate Services, Commerce and Communities Policy Overview Committee.

Councillors were informed that the complaint numbers remained largely the same as previous years, and there had also been 142 compliments received from residents, although it was expected that this figure would go up in time. There was also a significant increase in Members' Enquiries, although those regarding Residents Services dwarfed all the other departments.

The Business Manager for Complaints and Enquiries noted that there were 837 Stage 1 complaints, and 85 of these were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, although only ten of these were upheld, which suggested that the

Council was getting decisions right in the vast majority of cases. The Committee heard that, in comparison to other local authorities, Hillingdon Council were doing well, although it was noted that neighbouring Boroughs such as Harrow and Hounslow do not publish their complaints figures.

Members heard that the bulk of complaints were contained in the report which was considered by the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee, and asked that this be shared with the Committee.

The Committee noted that while there were a number of compliments received, most were received from email, although some were received on cards or letters. Members stated that there was a lot of good feedback received by Group Leaders, and asked whether these comments should be passed on to the Complaints and Enquiries Department, and were informed that this would be very helpful. Councillors noted that in the future they would ask that any feedback received by Group Leaders be passed on to Officers.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the contents of the annual complaints report.

25. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee noted that there was a shortage of social housing, and questioned why the Council was disposing of The School House. The Democratic Services Officer noted that officers would be approached to provide a response to this question.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1. Noted the Forward Plan; and,**
- 2. Ask officers to clarify the reasoning behind the decision to dispose of The School House, Hayes.**

26. WORK PROGRAMME 2018/2020

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the work programme 2018 – 2020.