

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 26TH MARCH, 2024

MEMBERS: Councillors: Mahmut Aksanoglu (Chair), Hivran Dalkaya (Vice Chair), Nelly Gyosheva, Ahmet Hasan, Mohammad Islam, Hannah Dyson, Tom O'Halloran, and Edward Smith.

Officers: Laura Martins (Head of Inclusive Growth and Skills), Penny Halliday (Director of Meridian Water), and Harry Blake-Herbert (Governance Officer).

Also Attending: Cllr Chinelo Anyanwu (Cabinet Member for Public Spaces, Culture & Local Economy), and press.

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Joanne Laban and David Skelton, who were substituted by Cllrs Tom O'Halloran and Hannah Dyson, respectively. Apologies for lateness were received from Cllrs Ahmet Hasan and Mohammad Islam.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received regarding any item on the agenda.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED the minutes of the previous Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Panel meeting held on Tuesday 30 January 2024.

4. PARTNERSHIPS & SKILL GAPS AND FUNDING

Laura Martins, Head of Inclusive Growth and Skills, introduced and highlighted the key aspects of the report, including but not limited to: the council's existing skills and employment offer, how it is funded, how they are looking to address sectoral skills gaps and support residents in the borough, and successes achieved to date.

In response to Members' queries regarding skills gaps, officers advised that the main areas they were targeting were creative industries, green construction and health and social care. Officers would come back to Members with specific details as to the age range of those effected by skills gaps.

REGENERATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY PANEL - 26.3.2024

In response to Members' questions and comments relating to fallout rates, Cllr Anyanwu and officers responded that at their recruitment events, they gathered data from those in attendance, including the area they lived and their interests. The data collected was being followed up on to enable a better understanding of demographics and allow for more targeted engagement in the future. As part of the grant funding the council received, they were required to demonstrate that this data collection was being done. Businesses present at the first of these events fed back that one in ten of the 400 attendees had secured employment, and employers had signed back up for the second event which was attended by more than twice the number of people.

In response to Members' enquiries regarding the STEPs programme, Cllr Anyanwu and officers replied that in some cases, other outcomes needed to be overcome before residents could secure employment, such as food poverty and health and wellbeing, which the council were trying to support with. It was said that they were limited in terms of capacity as to the number of people they could work with, but had been signposting those with interest to the relevant services, and a number/ variety of positive outcomes had been achieved. There was set criteria as to who the programme could work with and how, and this criteria could be shared with Members. Officers added that following the end of that programme in December 2023, an evaluation had been conducted, and the data/outcomes of this could also be shared with Members.

In response to Members' questions relating to the Meridian Water skills academy, officers advised that it had been fairly successful since opening last year, with 19 courses currently being offered, such as brick laying. Construction at Meridian One was utilising the skills academy and looking at employment opportunities, including site management; and partners were getting involved in its promotion. Around 150 people had attended the academy, with the aim being for 500 people to attend each year as time went on and it became more publicised. The Inclusive Growth and Skills Service forum was said to be an avenue of encouraging/promoting the academy.

In response to Members' queries relating to future work streams and engagement with young people, officers responded that the service was working to identify gaps and see what funds could be secured that would allow them to deliver this. Cllr Anyanwu added that officers were looking to carry out more engagement, they were identifying areas to prioritise and wanted to target schools, but faced a challenge in the form of funding gaps.

In response to Members' questions and comments regarding other authorities, officers replied that they were working/ partnering with neighbouring boroughs, but the extent to which such collaboration could occur depended on the funding available. Some benchmarking had been carried out and information gathered, for example whether other councils were conducting mixed or phased single employment forums, as a means by which to ensure that the best methods were being pursued.

The Panel AGREED to note the report.

5. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted that the dates of future meetings would be confirmed following Annual Council on 15 May 2024.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

A resolution was passed under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 excluding the press and public from the meeting for the items of business listed on Part 2 of the agenda on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in those paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006).

7. MERIDIAN WATER UPDATE

Penny Halliday, Director of Meridian Water, introduced and highlighted the key aspects of the report.

Officers responded to Members' enquiries with regards to Meridian Water.

Members expressed that an update on this item should be considered for the 2024/25 work programme.

Following Part 2 discussions, the item/ report was noted.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their time and contributions and the meeting ended at 19:50.