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Agenda Supplement 2

Dear Councillor

ORDINARY COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2024

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Wednesday, 13th March, 2024 meeting of the Ordinary Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item
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| 7. | <u>Committee Chairs Reports and Members Questions</u> (Pages 3 - 18) |
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Yours sincerely

Jonathan Stephenson
Chief Executive

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Agenda Item 7

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th March 2024
Subject: Chairs report for Audit & Scrutiny Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Darryl Sankey	

An update from the Audit & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 23rd January 2024:

Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25

Cllr Hirst requested that pre scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategy be referred to the Constitution Working Group and for the Monitoring Officer to review the opportunity for Audit & Scrutiny Committee to pre-scrutinize the Treasury Management Strategy. Members requested the Strategy be brought to the next A&S meeting for post scrutiny. The Chair agreed.

Internal Audit Progress Report:

This report informed the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of progress made against the 2023/24 internal audit plan. Members raised some concerns to be addressed.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of senior officers present at the meeting to answer the questions raised following the reports brought before them and requested the attendance of relevant officers at future meetings.

Treasury Management Update:

A report gave an update on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to December 2023 noted by the Committee.

Report on the progress of work to deliver improvements to the Development Management and Enforcement service:

In July 2023, a report into the delivery of the wider Development Management services at Brentwood and Rochford was completed. That report contained a number of recommendations, which are now being actively progressed through an Officers Planning Improvement Board chaired by the Strategic Director responsible. A report was tabled to the Committee and noted by the Committee in order to update Members on the progress of this work and to seek comment on the on-going improvement programme.

Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24:

The Constitution requires that the Audit & Scrutiny Committee agrees its Scrutiny work programme at each meeting of the Committee. A report provided an update of the current scrutiny work programme. It was resolved unanimously that the Committee considered and agreed the 2023/24 Scrutiny work programme to include the scoping of the work in relation to Implications of the appointment system for Recycling Centres.

Appendix A

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 March 2024
Subject: Chairs Report for Licensing Committee and Planning Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Philip Mynott	

Fees and Charges – Licensing

The Licensing Committee approved the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.

In addition to planning applications determined, the following items were debated and approved:

Response to the Thurrock Local Plan, Initial Proposals (Regulation 18) Consultation:

A report sought approval of a formal response from Brentwood Borough Council to the Thurrock Local Plan, Initial Proposals (Regulation 18) consultation. The consultation ran from 18 December 2023 and closed on 19 February 2024. The response conveyed broad support of Thurrock Council's aims in preparing a new Local Plan. The Council expressed concerns regarding the limited engagement that had taken place with neighbouring authorities, such as Brentwood Borough Council, and lack of information on how Thurrock plans to meet their development needs. Committee members voted to approve the response to the Thurrock Local Plan, Initial Proposals (Regulation 18) as set out in with the agenda.

Fees & Charges – Planning

The Planning Committee approved the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25.

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Appendix B

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th March 2024
Subject: Chairs Report for Clean & Green Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Barry Aspinell	

Cllr Aspinell updated the committee on the installation of the covert cameras purchased as part of Project Minerva to be used to tackle fly tips. The first camera has been installed with three more due to be installed shortly.

5G Public Petition – Response

The petition outlined an area expertise that the Council has limited knowledge of, and influence upon, but may wish to still consider the possibility of lobbying. The concerns are centred on potential impact to human health, rather than broader environmental concerns, and therefore it would be appropriate for the petition to be further considered by the Housing, Health and Community Committee. Committee members agreed unanimously that the Committee to note the content of the report, and to refer the petition to Housing, Health & Community Committee for further scrutiny if the European Court of Human Rights accept appeal.

Allotments

The Clean & Green Committee in September 2023 agreed that Officers in consultation with the Horticultural society identify new sites and seek to undertake a review of the existing allotments site to determine capacity and unmet demand.

The society believe that should any additional resource be made available to invest into the allotments, priority should be given to investing in existing sites seeking to maximise their potential, recognising the burden the additional administrative resource would represent for the Society should the further new sites be created.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund identified potential funding for Allotment maintenance. It is anticipated that the CIL report will be presented to Members at Council by September 2024. There is, therefore, an opportunity for the members to consider the allotments requirements in the debate and decision-making process of that Council meeting.

Waste Strategy - Options Modelling

The report set out different options of waste collection service that are to be modelled to predict a range of outcomes: recycling rates; the gross and net cost of the collection service; the whole system collection and disposal costs; and carbon emissions.

These model outcomes were assessed against a set of criteria where further options can be modelled if required.

Members agreed to note the content of the report, specifically the options proposed for modelling and to agree the proposed assessment criteria.

Garden Waste Wheeled Bin Collection Service - Bin Stickers

The Council offers residents a chargeable garden waste collection service. The service had approximately 6,500 customers who pay £60 per bin each year for the provision of a 240 litre brown wheeled bin which is emptied fortnightly, other than for the two weeks over the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Collections are currently made from all brown bins that are presented on the scheduled day as there are no visual indicators on the bins to show that accounts have been paid, and therefore that the containers should be emptied.

This can result in collections being made from residents who no longer subscribe to the service but have retained the bin from a previous year's subscription which has elapsed, or who have purchased or acquired their own containers. The report sought approval for the introduction of stickers to be placed on the wheeled bins giving the collection teams a very clear indication which bins should be emptied.

Members agree to approve the introduction of a stickering system for the garden waste wheeled bin service.

Clean and Green Rewilding Options and Trial Sites – Update

The report provided revised options for sites brought forward by Clean and Green Committee for the trial of "rewilding" areas of parks and verges.

Members agreed unanimously to agree the revised trial sites detailed below for rewilding and to agree the change in management for these areas during the trial period.

The Great British Spring Clean

The Great British Spring Clean is the nation's biggest mass-action environmental campaign. In 2024, the campaign returns from 15th March to 31st March.

The promotion of the Great British Spring Clean provides an opportunity for the Council to highlight the works that it undertakes and raise the awareness of littering campaigns.

It is proposed that as part of the campaign the Council takes an active role by: firstly, promoting its own volunteer litter pick days with the County Parks; and secondly, diverting existing resources to deliver a deep-litter picking and cleaning of the 'gateways' to the Borough.

Members agreed unanimously to approve the cleansing schedule of 'gateway' sites and to approve the promotion of the Great British Spring Clean and provide support

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Appendix C

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th March 2024
Subject: Chairs Report for Finance, Assets, Investments and Recovery Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Kendall	

At the FAIR Committee meeting on 7th February 2024, members discussed:

Workforce Overview 2021-22, 2022-23 & 2023-24

The purpose of the report was to provide an organisational overview of workforce information and data in respect of Brentwood Borough Council (BBC).

The report provided information with regards to resource levels (by Directorate) and provided an overview of the health of the organisation, using data available to include regional and national benchmarking.

The report included data up to 31 December 2023.

Q3 2023/24 Budget update report

The purpose of the report was to set out the forecast revenue and capital budget positions as at period 9 for 2023/24 and to give an overall financial update.

The commentary of the report does not attempt to cover all budgetary changes but draws attention to the key factors affecting net expenditure differences.

The General Fund is forecasting a balanced budget, this means the income generated covers the council's expenditure. The result of a balanced budget is the general fund working balance will remain unchanged.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is currently forecasting a surplus position of £756k. The main cause of this underspend is due to utility bills falling. We are predicting an underspend of £632k for premises related costs, £423k specifically for utility bills. If this £756k underspend materialises it will increase the HRA's working balance or stored in to reserves to pay for future developments. The director of Housing and CLT are exploring ways to prioritise some urgent works in 2023/24 to reduce this underspend by 31st March 2024.

The overall capital programme is forecast to underspend by £40.7mil. £20mil of this is due to the delays around the regeneration fund. The total underspend will be considered as slippage into next year's programme.

The current financial backdrop poses further financial risks to the Council's budget. It should be noted that the Local Government Association has issued a statement "The lack of funding for local services in the Autumn Statement has left councils facing a growing financial crisis and 1 in 5 council leaders & CEO are very or fairly likely to issue a section 114 in this or next financial year". This statement can be found on LGA website: www.local.gov.uk.

For Brentwood, there are further financial risks to pay inflation forecasts as well as cost pressures from the current high rates of inflation. The high inflation rates, increasing bank rates and national living wage pressure will have further impact onto the ongoing budgets.

Whilst the Council is not anticipating the need to reduce any services, the financial position will have to be monitored over the year and will make the MTFs for 2024/25 and beyond even more of a challenge

Members agreed unanimously to note the report.

Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-29

The report and appendices set out all the relevant information in support of the Council's Budget for General Fund services and Council Tax for 2024/25, together with financial forecast information through to 2028/29. Also included is information on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2024/25 and the Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29.

Members agreed:

To approve the General Fund Budget 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy
To approve a proposed Council Tax increase of 2.99% for 2024/25, the charge of Band D property increases to £210.70 per annum for Brentwood Council services only.

To approve the HRA budget 2024/25 including the 30-year HRA Business Plan within Appendix B.

To approve a proposed increase to rents of 7.7% for 2024/25.

To approve the Capital Programme 2024-29 in Appendix C.

To note the Fees & Charges Schedule in Appendix D.

To approve the Pay Policy Statement in Appendix E.

(appendices can be found in the agenda of FAIR Committee – 7th February 2024)

Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

The report and appendices set out all the relevant information in support of the Council's Treasury management strategy for 2024/25.

Members agreed unanimously to approve the council's Treasury management strategy for 2024/25.

At the FAIR Committee meeting 28th February 2024, members discussed:

The Chair gave further updates:

Following feedback from residents and Councillors, timings of the overnight residential parking will change from 7pm-7am to 7pm-8am.

The Chair, Cllr Kendall took part as a panellist on The Big Pitch. The Big Pitch was the finale event for the UK Shared Prosperity Funded GET SET GROW business support scheme. Ten businesses from across Brentwood borough and Rochford district were given the opportunity to pitch for a theoretical £10,000 investment in a "Dragon's Den" style session. All of the presentations were strong but the judges

agreed that the winning pitch came from Leanne Madden, a Brentwood-based entrepreneur who has started a retrofit company. Kudos also goes to Matt Carr from Eco Edge, another Brentwood entrepreneur, who came in second place.

The Big Pitch was delivered by the new Economic Development OneTeam, which is comprised of Laurie Edmonds as Corporate Manager, Paula Chapman as Senior Economic Development Officer and Nishat Amin as Economic Development Officer. The Chair thanked the Economic Development team for their work on The Big Pitch.

Coptfold Road Multi Storey Car Park – Ms Barnes confirmed that works are commencing on wiring and foyer doors. Testing has been successful although there is a slight delay in aligning the finance system and should be live early April.

William Hunter Way Car Park – the contract has been awarded for resurfacing with work to start after the May Bank Holiday. This will be 10 weeks of work but will be phased in order to keep the car park open and operational.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund update

The report provided a summary of the projects for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) since the last report to the Finance, Assets Investment and Recovery committee on 13 September 2023.

The report included an update on our UK Shared Prosperity Fund spend for 2023/24 and a look ahead to projects for 2024/25.

Mrs Edmonds gave the committee a further in depth update that the E6 (culture) and E10 (sports) grant scheme has now closed. 36 applications from organisations across the borough have been received, requesting just over £1 million pounds for local project delivery. As there is only £388k to distribute, clearly not all applications will be successful.

The E1 High Streets Shop Improvement Grant scheme is live. Ten businesses from across Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone have received grants so far, totalling just under £15k. We have more applications being processed and expect to distribute the remaining £15k of the grant scheme in the coming weeks.

85% of the E6 funding and 75% of the E10 funding will be distributed via the grant scheme. The remaining funding will give the council the opportunity to directly commission projects, such as the Strawberry Sports Festival and refurbishing the heritage boards outside Town Hall.

In reference to E1, a team of officers, including Economic Development, Street Scene, Grounds Maintenance and Community Safety are working at pace to create a long list of Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone capital and revenue improvements, some of which will need to be costed by Essex Highways. The focus will be on projects such as refreshing street furniture, more greening of the high streets and improving wayfinding signage. We will work closely with the Brentwood Connected Business Improvement District to seek opportunities for match funding.

Members and other key stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on works before they are undertaken. There is also the option of topping up the Shop Improvement Grant Scheme to empower more high street businesses to refurbish their shop fronts and make accessibility adaptations.

The feedback from participants of the GET SET GROW scheme has been extremely positive so we would like to extend the scheme to support even more businesses. Some of the new peer support cohorts might include sole traders looking to expand by taking on one or more new members of staff, young entrepreneurs, silverpreneurs and neurodivergent entrepreneurs.

In terms of reporting, we have created capacity within the team to collate the key performance indicators and financial information that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requires on a regular basis.

Amendment to the existing Policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

To approve the amendment to the existing policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief required as a result of a change in legislation effective from 1 April 2023. The change is in relation to backdating of discretionary rate reliefs. Members agreed to approve the amendment to the existing policy for the granting of Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief.

Decisions were agreed in private session concerning: Pay by Phone contract, Hutton Poplars Bowls Club and Hutton Football Club Pavilion. In relation to Hutton Football Club – Cllrs Aspinell and Kendall are due to meet with the club on 18th or 19th March 2024.

Appendix D

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 13 th March 2024
Subject: Chairs Report for Housing, Health and Communities Committee	
Committee Chair: Cllr Dr Barrett	

Asset of Community Value: Prince of Wales

A valid nomination has been received by Mountnessing Village Council on 26 January 2024 in relation to the land. Members agreed unanimously to list the land known as Prince of Wales, as indicated on the site map in Appendix B of the report, as an Asset of Community Value.

Asset of Community Value: Shenfield Library

A valid nomination has been received by Shenfield and Hutton Morning WI on 1 February 2024 in relation to the land. Members agreed unanimously to list the land known as Shenfield Library, as indicated on the site map in Appendix B of the report, as an Asset of Community Value.

Community Event and Engagement Programme 2024-2025

Currently the Council's organises Strawberry Fair, Family Fun Days, Lighting Up Brentwood and Shenfield Christmas Fayre. There are also a number of community engagement events with partners that utilise the Community Connect Trailer through the year. The proposed planned community event and engagement programme for 2024-2025 is subject to Members agreement and is also subject to the annual budget setting process. Members agreed unanimously the proposed Community Event and Engagement Programme for 2024- 2025.

Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Strategy

At the 15 December Housing Health and Community Committee the draft Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Strategy was presented to Members of the Committee for any comments. The final strategy sets out the five-year plan to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Brentwood and reduce the health inequalities at every stage of residents' lives.

The Strategy set out the partnership approach to influence the wider determinants of health to make the biggest difference in our communities. The Strategy had been co-produced by board members, those with lived experience and informed by what the relevant data is telling us.

In developing the Strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered the health and wellbeing outcomes it would want to see in Brentwood, how it links to other local

strategies and plans, data and insight from partners and feedback from residents and those with lived experience. It is also important to recognise the needs that emerged from the COVID 19 pandemic.

Members agreed unanimously to note the final Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Voluntary Sector Grants – Core Funding

The Council allocates discretionary core funding to key Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations that provide support to our local residents. This enables the Council to ensure that we have a strong and resilient VCS which supports the Council's priorities. The Council needs to ensure with the limited amount of funding available that the processes and principles of funding are applied fairly and transparently, and they are effective in providing targeted support to those most in need.

Members agreed unanimously that:

That Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services is funded for 2024-25 and that a further report come back to the relevant Committee once the outcome of the Essex County Council VCS infrastructure model has been determined.

Brentwood Community Transport is funded for 2024-25 and that a further report come back to the relevant committee once the outcome of the joint work with Essex County Council, Basildon Borough Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Brentwood and Basildon Alliance and Brentwood Community Transport has been concluded with the recommendation and next steps agreed.

That Citizens Advice Brentwood is funded for 2024- 25 to enable alignment with the other core funding arrangements at Brentwood Borough Council and bring back a further report to the relevant committee to look at longer term funding models.

Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP)

The Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP) is made up of two distinct elements, 1) the regeneration of Brookfield Close and Courage Court, Hutton to develop 62 zero carbon homes alongside Harewood Regeneration which consists of 40 new zero carbon homes, and 2) the development of a range of smaller HRA sites to deliver further affordable homes on further council owned sites.

The Council's Corporate Strategy 'Brentwood 2025' commits to Introducing "innovative Carbon reduction and absorption schemes", "identify opportunities for low emission and green developments" and using 'brownfield sites efficiently, such as council owned garage sites, to provide affordable homes..."

Members agreed unanimously to:

Progress the Brookfield Regeneration Main Contract through a selected Framework to Direct Award (two stage tender) in accordance with the agreed budget.

Progress the Harewood Regeneration Main Contract through a selected Framework to Direct Award (two stage tender) in accordance with the agreed budget.

Authorise delegated Authority to the Strategic Director and Director of Assets and Investments in consultation with the Chair of HHC Committee and Section 151 officer to enter into PCSA (Pre-Contract Service Agreements) on both Harewood and Brookfield Regeneration sites in accordance with the agreed budget.

Seek resolution of recommendations 1, 2 and 3 at Ordinary Council on March 13th 2024.

Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP) – Adopted strategy

The Affordable Homes Strategy 2021-2028 was approved by EE&H committee in July 2021, it lays out the vision, principles, governance, delivery mechanisms, and viability assumptions that support the delivery of new homes both on sites already in the pipeline but also future phases.

The Delivery Programme (SHDP) which is borne out of the ‘Strategy’ is currently made up of two distinct elements, 1) the regeneration of Brookfield Close and Courage Court, Hutton to develop 62 zero carbon homes alongside Harewood Regeneration which consists of 40 new zero carbon homes, and 2) the development of a range of smaller HRA sites to deliver further affordable homes on further council owned sites.

The Council’s Corporate Strategy ‘Brentwood 2025’ also commits to Introducing “innovative Carbon reduction and absorption schemes”, “identify opportunities for low emission and green developments” and using ‘brownfield sites efficiently, such as council owned garage sites, to provide affordable homes...”

Members agreed unanimously to update the adopted Affordable Homes Development Strategy 2021/28.

Resident Engagement

In 2022 Housing conducted a soft launch for the new Tenant Talkback resident engagement options. As we moved through 2023, we conducted several events with stakeholders to find which types of events worked best and where.

As we approach April 2024, with the introduction of the new Housing Consumer Regulations, we are entering a phase of more frequent and varied resident engagement which is in line with the Resident Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2027.

The Resident engagement action plan 24/25 (Appendix 2) provides further detail on what has already been done, what is planned for this year and the longer-term vision for resident engagement beyond 2024/25.

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