



# Minutes

---

## Ordinary Council Wednesday, 13th March, 2024

### Attendance

Cllr Barrett (Mayor)	Cllr Marsh
Cllr Haigh (Deputy Mayor)	Cllr Mayo
Cllr Aspinell	Cllr McCheyne
Cllr Barber	Cllr Munden
Cllr Dr Barrett	Cllr Mrs Murphy
Cllr Bridge	Cllr Mynott
Cllr M Cuthbert	Cllr Naylor
Cllr Mrs N Cuthbert	Cllr Parker
Cllr Mrs Francois	Cllr Poppy
Cllr Mrs Fulcher	Cllr Mrs Pound
Cllr Gelderbloem	Cllr Reed
Cllr Gorton	Cllr Russell
Cllr Hirst	Cllr Sankey
Cllr Kendall	Cllr Slade
Cllr Laplain	Cllr Wagland
Cllr Lewis	Cllr Worsfold

### Apologies

Cllr Mrs Davies	Cllr White
Cllr Heard	Cllr Wiles
Cllr Rigby	

### Officers Present

Phoebe Barnes	- Director - Assets & Investments
Zoey Foakes	- Governance & Member Support Officer
Marcus Hotten	- Director - Environment
Lauren Stretch	- Director of Housing
Matthew Stickley	- Interim Democratic Services Manager
Steve Summers	- Strategic Director
Tim Willis	- Interim Director - Resources
Emily Yule	- Strategic Director

**LIVE BROADCAST**

[Live broadcast to start at 7pm and available for repeat viewing.](#)

**434. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs: Davies, Heard, Rigby, White and Wiles.

**435. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Wagland declared a registerable interest in relation to Motion 3 regarding the Local Highways Panel and would leave the Chamber when this item was being discussed.

**436. Mayors Announcements**

*“Since we last met in this chamber for an Ordinary Council, there have been some sad losses to this Borough, and I start my announcements this evening by paying tribute to:*

*Ron Chapman, a local jeweller, who created much of the Mayoral Civic Regalia including the impressive mace before me back in 1993 when this Council became a Borough. He sadly passed away at 96 years old and we thank him for his contributions to our civic life.*

*Peter Franklin who was a real regarded former Shenfield Councillor elected back in 2002, who left us late in January. Several former Councillors and civic leaders have expressed how highly they thought of him.*

*And it is with great sorrow that we lost, just last week, Alderman Alan Davies. Alan served as a Hutton East Councillor first elected in 1990, as well as being one of my predecessors as Mayor of Brentwood. When Alan was a Councillor, he chaired both Planning and Policy Committees, was a great advocate for his community, and, frankly, he was just a good man.*

*While I never served with him as a Councillor, I was honoured to have proposed him as an Alderman, and he made a surprisingly large impact on my own approach to being a Councillor through his kindness and encouragement. I know several members here feel the same. I believe all of our thoughts are with Cllr Mrs Davies and her family at this time.*

*Please, can we all stand and pay our respects with a minute of silence?*

*In January, I had the honour of attending Holocaust Memorial events in and outside of the Borough to represent our community in remembering the lessons of the Holocaust. These were very moving events, where I heard personal and family stories of the impact of these terrible events while noting the challenges still being faced by the Jewish Community. It is so important that we remember the Holocaust - and the other genocides which have followed it – and work to make sure never again, really means never again.*

*On a lighter note, I was also delighted to be able to support our Montbazou and Landkreis Roth town twinning associations at fundraising events.*

*In February, I hosted a Charity Curry Night in aid of my chosen charities. Thank you to those who attended for your support. I was pleased to raise almost £700 at this event.*

*On Monday of this week, I was honoured to raise the Commonwealth Day flag which was presided over by His Majesty King Charles III as King and Head of the Commonwealth.*

*I look forward to seeing many of you at my upcoming Charity event on 23rd March – Swinging Sixties night at the Army Reserve Centre and Brentwood's Civic Dinner on 5th April where I will be delighted to officially bestow the honorary title of Alderman and Alderwoman, as well as the Civic Awards and the installation of the first Mayor's Cadet for Brentwood.*

*To those not standing for election in May, I thank you for your contribution in the Chamber and over the past municipal year – and for those up for re-election, I wish you all the appropriate level of luck. For everyone here - thank you for your respect, appropriate conduct and efforts to make a better Brentwood for everyone.*

*Lastly, as this is her last Ordinary Council meeting, I would like to thank Emily Yule for all her hard work over the last 18 months and wish her all the success in her new role."*

Members in the chamber gave words of condolence following the Mayors announcements.

Cllrs Russell and Aspinell gave thanks to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor over the past municipal year.

#### **437. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous Ordinary Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February were **AGREED** as a true record.

#### **438. Public Questions**

No public questions were received.

#### **439. Memorials or Petitions**

No memorials or petitions were received.

#### **440. Committee Chairs Reports and Members Questions**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution a brief written report by each committee Chair and the Leader covering their area of responsibility will be circulated with the agenda for each Council meeting.

Any member may ask a Chair or the Leader a written or oral questions on:

- (a) any matter included in a Chair's or the Leader's written report; or
- (b) any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Council's area and which falls within the area of responsibility of the Chair's committee.
- (c) Questions to the Leader's report, should do not be a question that can be answered by a Committee Chair.
- (d) No question should be put to the Chair or the Leader if it relates exclusively to a ward, operational or resident matter that could have otherwise been resolved by reasonable use of the casework system.

The period allowed for the Leader's and Chairs' reports, written and oral questions and answers will not exceed **60 minutes** without the leave of the Mayor and such leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

**Cllr Poppy put a question to the Leader:**

This was either in a leaflet or something you said in this Chamber - you are working towards achieving zero carbon and will promote green transport across the Borough, more electric vehicles charging points, on and off-road cycle and pedestrian routes and Community Bus schemes. What contracts have you had with Brentwood Community Transport what and did you have a view in the budget or since the budget to increase their grant that we give them.

**The Leader asked Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities to respond:**

We had our community grant scheme presented at Monday's Housing, Health and Community Committee where we agreed to continue funding the Brentwood Community Transport. In this case because Essex County Council haven't come up with their long-term strategy for Community bus schedules so we just continued on from last year matching last year's funding. We hope that there is actually a work package going on across Essex County and Brentwood and Basildon where we look at this holistically across all three organisations to get people to different hospitals and places but we are funding from Brentwood Community Transport going forward.

**Cllr Wagland put a question to Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities to respond:**

What conversations have taken place with the NHS regarding identifying a suitable site for the surgery facilities in Ingatestone.

**Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities responded:**

There has been three member conversations with the Brentwood Alliance that take over primary care and the output of that was discussed at the Housing, Health and Community Committee on Monday. Unfortunately it does appear that the NHS across the borough isn't proposing any new GP surgeries apart from the one in Dunton Garden Village and that unfortunately is the situation which is the NHS decision. We would like to see increased GP surgeries to match the need of the borough but unfortunately NHS is not proposing any additional ones.

**Cllr Kendall put a question to Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green:**

Some members have some serious concerns about the litter issues in the Borough and I was checking back in the records and we had a litter bin review at the Environment, Enforcement and Housing Committee in December 2021 and I wondered if the Chair of Clean and Green can tell us what specific action was taken following that review.

**Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green responded:**

I can't tell him you what happened, it hasn't come to the Clean and Green Committee this year. There's been no report on that so far - I understand that it did go to the committee meeting Councillor Kendall referred to back in 2021, that committee was chaired by Councillor Pearson and I believe Councillor Russell took over in combining some of those issues into the committee the next year. I don't know what happened maybe someone could tell me.

**Cllr Hirst put a question to Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green:**

My residents remain very concerned about the state of the Shenfield Railway Bridge particularly around the pigeons issue which is clearly a health hazard in that area. I know it was raised at the recent Clean and Green Committee but could I ask the Chair to confirm that the regularity of deep cleaning underneath the bridges will be raised to two twice weekly and can he also confirm when the meeting that he talked about with members and National Rail is going to take place to make sure that the grid work underneath the bridge is repaired.

**Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green responded:**

This issue has been going on when you were the County Councillor Cllr Hirst for that Area.

Cllr Hirst raised a point of information: When I was County Councillor I did have meetings with National Rail and we did get the situation solved at that time - this has got worse in the last year - he needs to deal it.

councillor Aspinell continued that he would like to understand what Councillor Hirst in his capacity as County Councillor did when he was a County Councillor because I was a County Councillor for the other side, and the other side of this area was covered by Councillor McKinley. I cannot tell you when the date of the meeting unless any officers have been informed today because we're still waiting on a meeting with Network Rail. I can tell you as you've known and you've read it in the report, a price of £84,000 has been mentioned by Network Rail as to how much it will cost them to put netting under the bridges that County Council as Councillor Hirst knows is responsible for the transport in Essex. I know we clean the pavements and it was inspected by our officers they were satisfied that it was meeting the standards and they were cleaning it more than once a week - maybe even three times a week. It was at a standard that they were satisfied with.

Cllr Hirst responded: to be clear I actually dealt with this a Borough Councillor rather than a County Councillor although I was both at the time. What we had done was we had the grill work put up underneath the bridge that covered the full level of the pathways, not the roadway in the middle, that is now broken it needs repairing. It is not impossible to get Network Rail to cooperate and do it.

***Councillor Mynott declared in interest as a trustee of Brentwood Community Transport which was earlier discussed.***

**Cllr Parker put a question to the Leader:**

The Leaders report was only received 24 hours ago – there had previously been comments about the agendas being late whilst we was in Administration. Why when they issued the agenda and it's not a full agenda, although we may expect one part of it to be late there's always that problem but this was virtually the whole agenda.

**The Mayor responded:**

Your comments are noted and they are fair. Constitutionally there isn't necessarily that breadth of the exactness but it is acceptable practice that they are delivered in advance. In this circumstance it was not an acceptable timing that has been noted by Officers and by Chairs as appropriate.

**Cllr Laplain put a question to Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Housing:**

I'd like to thank him for assisting one of my residents in The Gables with an urgent issue that they've been waiting on Axis in relation to repairs. I would

like to ask, this particular elderly couple have been waiting on Axis to attend and it's not a trivial matter. They often get Axis appointments that are failed and for them it causes a great deal of stress and anxiety and I just hope that that's not kind of a general condition of Axis and the way they're approaching this.

**Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities responded:**

At the meeting that we had on Monday with the Housing, Health and Community Committee, this feedback was actually given by a number of members to Axis. In that meeting we felt that there was an unacceptable number of failed appointments going on with Axis. They have received that feedback and we look forward to them improving we continue to give that feedback to them. For any individual cases, you can contact me directly.

**Cllr Barber put a question to Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Housing:**

At the Planning Committee yesterday, we had an item Highwood Close where an application from this Administration brought forward an application with a loss of 19.4% in biodiversity as opposed to the target which is recommended of 10%. Can Cllr Dr Barrett on behalf of the Administration explain why that application was brought forward in opposition to the stated aims of this Council.

**Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities responded:**

I'm afraid I don't have the exact detail of the Planning Committee that happened yesterday and the biodiversity cost you described - I'll take that offline and reply to you another time.

**Cllr Barber put a question to Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green:**

At the start of the Council year, it was stated that some of the initiatives would have benefits for example an increase in the frequency of grass cutting. Given that we see around the Borough many overflowing litter bins and back in July of last year there were high number of areas where grass wasn't cut properly, can the Chair of Clean and Green give us any locations in the Borough where either the frequency of litter bins has been increased or grass cutting has been increased.

**Cllr Aspinell, Chair of Clean & Green responded:**

I don't want to take up time listing all the roads and the individual bins that have been looked at so I will give you a full update when I get it from Offices of every single one that's been done.

**Cllr Kendall put a question to the Leader:**

Does the Leaders share my concerns about the proposed development on the borders with West Horndon on the Thurrock side of the border and the huge number of houses. There is talk of 8000-10,000 homes being built on that border. Does he share my concerns and what does he think the implications are for the residents of West Horndon.

**Cllr Aspinell, Leader of the Council responded:**

It came as a surprise to me and one of the reasons why some of my Leaders Report was late was so I could add this to it but I only had the meeting with the Leader of Thurrock and Basildon yesterday. To have this land on our door step will have a great effect - I'm not normally lost for words but I did ask questions. I asked what do they hope to get out of the meeting - the meeting was called by the Leader of Thurrock, Basildon and their Chief Executives with our Chief Executive. There was some developers involved but we were told that this was part of their plan so Thurrock actually put this site approximately 100 hectares of prime Green Belt land the other side of the Railway line in West Horndon in their local plan for development. I was told by the Leader of Thurrock that there needs to be a rapid results - they're looking for rapid decisions in September this year they are telling us that an application is coming forward for right opposite the station in West Horndon – not only is this green belt but it is one of the most flooded areas in the Borough but it is a flood. I asked all the relevant questions. They wanted us to be aware of it and our Officers to have been made aware of it and so that we can have a discussion with our neighbours. 8,000 to 10,000 houses was likely to be the first or second phase of this and there could be up to 20,000 houses in that area with our Dunton Hill project. I share the concerns of those of the residents of West Horndon but I'd like to ask my colleague Cllr Mynott (Chair of Planning) if he would expand on that.

**Cllr Mynott, Chair of Planning added:**

It has been mentioned in the relatively brief Planning report in the Chair's reports the great concerns that I've got is that neighbouring authorities as part of the local plan process have a fundamental duty to cooperate and the situation that we're currently in is that as far as I'm concerned, I'm not speaking on behalf of our Planning team, but I'm concerned it's very difficult even to see that there has been an insufficient level of dialogue between Thurrock and its neighbours on these sizable proposals. We have Dunton Hills Garden Village proposal down there which we have gone through methodically over a very long period, worked out detail of that area, worked out the detail of the potential consequences on local infrastructure and the idea that a neighbouring Authority could drop that on us at the last minute without any proper explanation without dialogue is clearly not cooperation. Cooperation means working together so as far as I'm concerned at this point not only have they not had a proper dialog in terms of their duty to cooperate, they have fallen down completely because there's been no cooperation and I think it's probably worth Thurrock Council them taking on board the fact that when it comes to their local plan going to an inspector's hearing, if they



haven't cooperated with local authorities who are their neighbours local authorities who are raising fundamental objections to their local plan. And if that's happening, then the inspectors may take a view of their local plan - I'm sure they don't want to be in that situation. I'm sure they would want to cooperate with Brentwood at the moment. The consequences for the infrastructure that's been discussed in terms of Dunton Hills are extraordinarily disruptive and problematic so we hope that going forward we actually do get some cooperation - not just dialogue and then we might get to a better situation.

**Cllr Bridge put a question to Cllr Mynott, Chair of Planning:**

On the subject of Thurrock's duty to cooperate, because we did actually agreed at a planning meeting a couple of meetings back that we were going to send a letter to Thurrock in response to the local plan in which we actually highlighted the failure of the duty to cooperate. Did we ever get a response back from Thurrock to the letter and specifically addressing the issue of the failure on their part of the duty to cooperate because you're right, it's a complete disgrace the way they've handled it so far.

**Cllr Mynott, Chair of Planning responded:**

As far as I'm aware we haven't but that may be my lack of awareness. The meeting where we discussed that is obviously not that long ago - they're talking in terms of rapidity and all sorts of ways which is curious in terms of the plan process and certainly if their application is coming forward in terms of some kind of timetable that Cllr Aspinell was mentioning, it's very difficult to understand how that would be happening only after a local plan had been adopted. In terms of the specific question that you've asked, I don't know the answer to that at this point. I'm assuming that there's been none but on Friday there will be a Strategic Planning meeting with myself and the Vice Chair and we certainly raise it at that point and if we've got anything back from them, we can give that information out - if we haven't we can give that information out as well.

**Cllr Bridge put a question to Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities:**

A follow up to the answer he gave to Cllr Wagland, if the NHS have specifically said they are not looking to build any new surgeries in the Borough except Dunton Hills Garden Village, that does raise the question considering the suggestions that have been floating around in the past. My question to him on that is have the has the NHS ever seriously to our knowledge wanted to build new surgeries in other parts of the Borough and if they have, when did they change their mind.

**Cllr Dr Barrett, Chair of Housing, Health and Communities responded:**

I don't know is the answer to what their Vision was a couple of years ago. What I can say to now is that they have asked us to work with and look at bookable space - not necessarily GP surgeries but bookable space so this is space that relieves pressure from the GP surgeries. We are looking at sites across the Borough where we can provide that bookable space for treatment or administration that can take out take pressure away from GP surgery to allow them to use their space more effectively.

**Cllr Naylor put a question to Cllr Mynott, Chair of Planning:**

Do you have any concerns about what Thurrock Council are proposing by West Horndon and can you explain whether this was in their local development plan and whether there has been any consultation between the Brentwood local development plan and the Thurrock local development plan and what this does to the green belt in that particular area for West Horndon.

**Cllr Mynott, Chair of Planning responded:**

This was discussed at the Planning Committee which Cllr Bridge touched on. The response that we gave to the consultation that was a regulation 18 consultation was part of their local plan process. I have to say I found that also odd in itself because the regulation 18 consultation is a relatively late stage of a local plan - it's definitely not within a couple of months of a local plan being finalized but it's also normally the case that a local Authority has more clarity than was being expressed by Thurrock and that we were responding to. The presentation that came to planning we're talking about nine different and very significant different options in terms of how they would build and what they might do. It felt like a very early stage of thinking about a local plan process rather than a late stage but to answer the question about as to whether it's in their local plan, it is in that sense in their local plan that's why it's being talked about now, but the sequence of events is very difficult to understand along with the other things I think I probably answered the other aspects of that question already.

**Cllr Aspinell added:**

At the bottom of my report I mentioned the discussions I've been having with the cabinet members for highways. I've met with both the cabinet members this year for highways and asked them specific things and at this stage I'd like to welcome Cllr Lewis back, because this was I think the Councillor who is very passionate. I've been speaking to the cabinet members and I've outlined to the first Cabinet member Cllr Lee Scott, that the possibility that Brentwood could have its own dedicated pothole repair team and we would contribute if the Council agreed to a fund that providing that figure. It was mentioned by the cabinet member, which I thought was reasonable but then the cabinet member said he'd take that away and discuss it with his officers. The Cabinet member has changed, the new Cabinet member came in and I put the same thing to him, he said that sounds like a really good idea - I'll take it away get back to you. He has sent me an email saying whilst being

principle it was great and that it be a good idea that Brentwood would get a dedicated pothole team if we paid for one, but unfortunately other areas of Essex may not agree with that and that there may be potholes in other areas across the County in greater need so could not provide a dedicated team. I wasn't in agreement with that but I accepted that. The information I give you tonight is that this morning I got an email from the cabinet member to say that due to the new undertakings at Essex County Council, the £12 million has come out of reserves to help in the repair potholes we are going to get a dedicated team for Brentwood and we don't have to pay which is a good news story.

**Cllr Bridge put a question to the Leader:**

Cllr Parker has already alluded to the late arrival of the reports. There has been a tendency over the last few weeks I've noticed for things to arrive late; for meeting invites for example to a site visit a few weeks ago that was on a Thursday afternoon only being sent to members on the Monday. I raised an email question at that point reminding people that we are not supposed to be full-time employees at the Council. Does he agree with the sentiment that things should be organised to facilitate the fact that some of us do have full-time jobs and it's actually fundamental to proper local democracy and local governance that we don't make the role of Councillor only really accessible to those who are either retired or have independent means of living.

**Cllr Aspinell, Leader of the Council responded:**

I could not agree more with those sentiments and as you know when we were setting the budget earlier this cycle, members were talking from your side about members allowances and that there would be no absolute need for raising allowances and you wanted an assurance from us there and then that we wouldn't be doing it, even though we weren't setting it. I do totally agree with you - I can only apologise we have had staff shortages and we have had problems that has been addressed this year and I hope that that area of our Council will be increased for next year.

***Cllr Hirst declared an interest as within the Leaders report due to his role as the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.***

Cllr Hirst put a question to :

I did not see the funding of four police constables as per the agreement with Epping Forest District Council in the budget that the council has put forward.

**Cllr Aspinell, Leader of the Council responded:**

It's not - because I did not receive anything from the Police as to how much we would need to raise. There are other ways other to raise that funding but as I did not hear back from the police I had nothing to give to my colleagues when setting the budget.

**Cllr Barber put a question to the Leader:**

Un your role as Leader and as Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, how many meetings have been held since May of last year.

**Cllr Aspinell, Leader of the Council responded:**

I don't have that information in front me.

**441. Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP) - Main Contracts**

At the Housing, Health and Community Committee on the 11th March 2024 Members considered a report on the Council's Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP). The report was contained within the agenda and subject to approval is recommended to Ordinary Council for consideration.

Officers provided a verbal update to Ordinary Council on the outcome of the of this item from the Housing, Health and Community Committee on the 11th March.

The motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Dr Barrett and **SECONDED** by Cllr Mayo. A vote was taken by a show of hands and was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

**R1 to progress the Brookfield Regeneration Main Contract through a selected Framework to Direct Award (two stage tender) in accordance with the agreed budget.**

**R2 to progress the Harewood Regeneration Main Contract through a selected Framework to Direct Award (two stage tender) in accordance with the agreed budget.**

**R3 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.**

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To continue the implementation of the adopted Strategic Housing Delivery Strategy and scheme programmes for Brookfield and Harewood Regeneration.

#### **442. Appointment of the Tier 2 Chief Officer**

The report sought the Council's approval to appoint the joint Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive). This role is a OneTeam appointment and will also be subject to the required approvals by Rochford District Council (RDC).

The motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Aspinell and **SECONDED** by Cllr Mrs N Cuthbert. A vote was taken by a show of hands and was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

**R1 - To appoint the Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive) as set out in the Confidential Appendix A.**

**R2 - That the Monitoring Officer be given delegated authority in consultation with the Constitution Working Group, to make any required changes to the Constitution to give effect to the recommendations in this report.**

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To appoint the joint Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive) following the resignation of the current postholder, who leaves the Council in April 2024. This will ensure there is continuity in the role and a sufficient period of handover in this critical role.

#### **443. Constitution Working Group**

The Council is required by Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000 to keep its Constitution up to date.

In August 2023, the Council began a review of its Constitution. The report outlined the recommendations from the work undertaken by the cross-party Constitution Working Group (CWG). A summary sheet of the amendments is attached at Appendix E of the report.

The Constitution Working Group had reviewed four chapter of the Constitution, remaining chapters would be revised and updated accordingly.

Any proposed revisions need to be adopted by Ordinary Council.

The motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Laplain and **SECONDED** by Cllr Bridge. A vote was taken by a show of hands and was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

**R1. That the Council approves the changes to its Constitution recommended by the Constitution Working Group as set out Appendix A - E of the report with effect from 22nd May 2024.**

#### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Section 37 of the Local government Act 2000 required that the Council has in place a document, known as its Constitution, which should be regularly reviewed.

The Council is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect (Article 12.1(a) Duty to Monitor and Review the Constitution).

#### **444. Update on Priorities for 2023/2024**

The report sets out an update on the progress of the priorities set by the Administration for 2023/2024 to date.

This item was for information only so no voting was required.

#### **445. Notice of Motion**

##### **Motion 1 – Received 14th February 2024 @ 10:52**

**Mover: Cllr Dr Barrett**

**Seconder: Cllr Aspinell**

The council notes

- The obligations it owes to the Armed Forces community within the Borough of Brentwood as enshrined in the Armed Forces Covenant; that the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage in the provision of services and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most.
- Brentwood Borough Council, along with all other local authorities in Great Britain, has proudly signed the Armed Forces Covenant.
- That in the course of their service in His Majesty's Armed Forces, some members of the Armed Forces Community, by virtue of the often dangerous and risky nature of their work, or environments in which they are required to operate, become wounded, injured or sick in such a way that affects their life in a permanent or significant way.
- That a number of military compensation schemes exist to recognise and compensate Service Personnel and sometimes their families, for the hardship, inconvenience or ongoing impact conditions such as PTSD, limb loss, hearing loss etc.
- Military compensation can be awarded through the War Pension Scheme (WPS), Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) or through a veteran's occupational Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS), known as Service Invaliding Pensions (SIPs) or Service Attributable Pensions (SAPs). Compensation awards under these schemes may also include supplementary payments. This compensation often interacts with benefits issued through Local Authorities and may impact a veteran's entitlement to such benefits.
- That whilst some benefits such as Universal Credit rightly disregard military compensation as income, others administered by or subject to the discretion of Local Authorities, do not always do so, meaning that some veterans must give up their compensation in order to access essential financial support.
- A 2022 Freedom of Information request by the Royal British Legion showed that only one in five (20%) of Local Authorities in Great Britain rightly disregarded all military compensation when assessing local benefits claims for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants.

The council resolves

- That no member of the Armed Forces Community should be forced to give up their military compensation to access the same welfare support as their civilian counterparts.
- That all compensation paid under any of the relevant military compensation schemes should be treated as such and not regarded as income when the Local Authority assesses applications for benefits over which they exercise discretion: Council Tax Support scheme, Housing Benefit, Discretionary Housing Payments and Disabled Facilities Grants. Rather it should be treated as intended, as a compensatory payment made in recognition of the often significant and life changing service or sacrifice an individual has made in the course of their service in our nation's Armed Forces.
- To support the Royal British Legion's call for all forms of military compensation to be disregarded as income in the assessment and administration of locally administered benefits over which this council exercises discretion.

Cllr Dr Barrett added: *That a report be presented to the next Finance, Asset and Recovery Committee on the options for implementation and any impacts of this motion.*

Members voted by a show of hands and this was **CARRIED**.

**Motion 2 was deferred.**

**Motion 3 – Received 23rd February 2024 @ 17:31**

**Mover: Cllr Gorton**

**Seconder: Cllr Munden**

In Essex, Local Highway Panels are made up of a representative number of Members from the County and the individual Borough, City or District. They also have Parish representatives where appropriate. The Membership criteria are set out in the Terms of Reference. While incorrectly stated on the Essex Highways website, a decision was made in May 2023 that for Brentwood, the LHP would only have representatives from the County Council.

The LHP Members meet on a quarterly basis to discuss and consider Highways concerns within their local Borough, City or District boundaries. The Panels are designed to prioritise local concerns and make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for the implementation of highway schemes that meet the concerns of local people. The meetings are not open to the public except by invitation.

Motion

The Council notes:

1. The Brentwood Local Highway Panel is currently made up of the four County Councillors who represent Brentwood's County Divisions.
2. That the make-up of the Panel is at the discretion of the Chair, in consultation with the Essex Cabinet Member for Highways.

This Council believes:

1. A collaborative relationship with the County Council on opportunities for Highways improvements is beneficial.
2. That individual Borough Councillors will be made aware of opportunities for Highways enhancement, which could be submitted directly to the Panel without an increased workload for the County Councillors.
3. Openness on what schemes are being considered and decisions made helps better inform democracy, increases trust in politics and helps make better decisions.

This Council resolves:

1. To request a mechanism for Borough Councillors and Parish Councils to submit schemes, in an appropriate format, to Highways Officers so that they may be raised at the Local Highway Panel.
2. To request the opportunity to observe, either live or recorded, the decision-making process and debate over new schemes at Local Highway Panels.
3. To request that we receive prompt minutes, actions and updates on Local Highway Panel meetings and decisions.

*Cllr Wagland left the Chamber and did not take part in the debate or voting due to a registrable interest.*

A recorded vote was requested by Cllrs Mynott, Russell, Laplain, M Cuthbert and Kendall.

**FOR:** Cllrs Barrett, Haigh, Aspinell, Dr Barrett, M Cuthbert, N Cuthbert, Fulcher, Gorton, Kendall, Laplain, Lewis, Mayo, Munden, Mynott, Naylor, Sankey and Worsfold (17)

**ABSTAIN:** Cllrs: Barber, Bridge, Francois, Gelderbloem, Hirst, Marsh, McCheyne, Murphy, Parker, Poppy, Pound, Reed, Russell and Slade (14)

The motion was **CARRIED**.

**Motion 4 – Received 26th February 2024 @ 08:08**

**Mover: Cllr Kendall**

**Secunder: Cllr Naylor**

In Europe, only the UK and authoritarian Belarus still use archaic single-round First Past the Post for general elections. Internationally, Proportional Representation (PR) is used to elect the parliaments of more than 80 countries. These countries tend to be more equal, freer and greener.

PR ensures all votes count, have equal value, and that seats won match votes cast. Under PR, MP's and Parliaments better reflect the age, gender and characteristics of both local communities and of the nation.

MP's better reflecting the communities they represent in turn leads to improved decision-making, wider participation and increased levels of ownership for decisions taken.



PR is already used to elect the parliaments and assemblies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It's use should now be extended to include Westminster and local government in England.

In Scotland a proportional voting system was introduced for local elections in 2007. We believe a similar system should be introduced for local elections in England. Town Halls would benefit from increased political diversity and a clearer link between votes and seat share could be a major boost to people's political engagement and sense of place.

Brentwood Borough Council therefore resolves to write to H.M. Government calling for a change in our outdated electoral laws to enable Proportional Representation to be used for UK General and English Local elections.

A recorded vote was requested by Cllrs Laplain, M Cuthbert, Naylor, Mynott and Sankey.

**FOR:** Cllrs Barrett, Haigh, Aspinell, Dr Barrett, M Cuthbert, N Cuthbert, Fulcher, Gorton, Kendall, Laplain, Lewis, Mayo, Munden, Mynott, Naylor, Sankey and Worsfold (17)

**AGAINST:** Cllrs: Barber, Bridge, Francois, Gelderbloem, Hirst, Marsh, McCheyne, Murphy, Parker, Pound, Reed, Slade and Wagland (13)

The motion was **CARRIED**.

#### **446. Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The Mayor closed the meeting at 10pm.

This page is intentionally left blank

<b>Committee(s):</b> Ordinary Council	<b>Date:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Leaders Report, Cllr Barry Aspinell	

Along with other Members, I attended a planning briefing on the 14<sup>th</sup> February to discuss land North of Shenfield, one of the sites approved in our Local Development Plan. The developing consensus from those attending the briefing indicated that this particular site needs considerable work in developing an approach that delivers on its LDP objectives and we shall be looking to our new Director of Planning to take this forward.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March, I attended a meeting with the Chief Executive along with the Leaders and Chief Executives of Thurrock and Basildon to discuss the *West Horndon Project*. This is a development proposal that Thurrock have in their Local Development Plan with a planning application expected to be submitted by September for 2,000 homes on the Thurrock side of West Horndon Station. This forms part of their overall scheme to deliver 8,000 – 10,000 new homes. Basildon were present as they share a border with Thurrock close to this project. As Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, I raised the major infrastructure improvements that would need to be put forward, not least the problems of building and developing on a green belt, flood plain. The major concern to Brentwood Borough and our West Horndon residents is the terminology ‘rapid development’ and ‘rapid planning application approval’ being used, which seems out of kilter with the need for appropriate consideration of these proposals.

When we took over control, while not a direct Brentwood Borough Council responsibility, I met with the Cabinet Member for Highways to discuss a whole range of issues affecting our borough, one of those issues was the poor condition of our roads due to the increasing number of potholes that seemingly remain unrepaired. I shared concerns that when they are eventually attended to, the repairs prove to be very temporary, reverting to their unwelcome condition within a few short weeks.

I had proposed that, pending Brentwood Council ‘s agreement, we could explore an arrangement whereby Brentwood retained a dedicated pothole repair team for the town’s exclusive use. As this was a ‘first time ’proposal the Cabinet Member found it an interesting and engaging idea and agreed to give further consideration.

Following the successful introduction of the Brentwood Business Improvement District (BID) a collective fund of £2 million over five years will be available for local businesses and other partners to initiate projects that will range from the improvement of Ingatestone, Shenfield and Brentwood High Streets to organising the celebrations that are so well received Plans for Christmas are already underway and promise to be bigger, better and more exciting than ever before!

Preparations are also well underway in transferring our wedding service from the Town Hall to Merrymeade House. This new arrangement will provide a more tranquil surroundings for such occasions.

I have been speaking to the Police regarding the potential for a dedicated team of officers who would focus solely on Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone under a similar arrangement currently enjoyed by Epping Forest Council. I am still awaiting a response despite several approaches to them. On a positive note, I am informed that the Epping arrangement has reduced all levels of crime in their area significantly and as such I intend to press for a similar outcome in Brentwood.

We have also undertaken a Peer Review, which in Brentwood's case has been conducted by Councils from around the country who are in a similar position, i.e., one team of officers holding the responsibility of running two separate councils. The outcome of this Review will be fully reported in due course, but I think it's safe to say we came out with a whole host of compliments and a few suggestions where certain procedures could be improved. We can even be proud that some of this Joint Administration's newly introduced initiatives have been taken away by our reviewing councils for implementation in their own workplaces.

The Peer Review report is clear in defining each council's strengths and weaknesses, in my opinion, to ignore such a process is incredibly disappointing and pays little regard to the advice provided that will help us to improve our delivery and approach for residents.