

15 January 2018

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee

Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group Strategic Review and Re-naming

Report of: *Phil Drane - Planning Policy Team Leader & Interim Economic Development Manager*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public document*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** This report is to inform the Policy, Projects and Resources Committee of the outcome of a Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group strategy review following the appointment of a new Chair.
- 1.2** The review has resulted in a re-naming of the Group to “Brentwood Business Partnership”, revised purpose, aims, objectives and membership to reflect a longer-term vision for the group.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** That Members agree the content of this report and the strategic review and BBP Aims and Objectives as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2** That Members agree to the change of name and updated strategy as reported in Appendix A.

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1** On 18 June 2008, the Council’s Policy Board resolved to establish a Town Centre Steering Group (the Renaissance Group), its membership, remit and budget. The Group was to be independent of the Council, working with the community and local traders to enhance the quality of the Town Centre environment.

- 3.2** As an independent organisation, free of political influence, the group was set to achieve through social cohesion/capital and effective partnership arrangements. The aims of the group were to align with the direction of Council's Corporate Plans, both present and in the future.
- 3.3** Since its inception the Renaissance Group has continued to evolve, adapt and support the significant changes and challenges faced by the Town Centre and important retail areas such as Shenfield and promoting the strong independent trader offering. The group seeks to assist local traders and businesses with projects, events and initiatives to maximise footfall and sustain economic growth.
- 3.4** As new Chair in 2014, Clive Othen enhanced the Group's overall transparency and accountability with Brentwood Borough Council. The updated Terms of Reference took account of closer consultation with the Borough's retail areas and their initiation of bid funding for projects, the more efficient use of resources, communications, and budgetary control. The group membership was also re-structured to include Local Business Trade Clusters, which replaced the Traders Group.
- 3.5** Mike Hawkins took over as Chair in 2017 and the group implemented revised Business Trade Clusters for Brentwood East and West Ends. These followed the successful model of the Upper and Central Shenfield Trade Clusters and engaged with a greater number of traders and businesses in and around the High Street, including for the first time M&S and Sainsbury's. These acted as a springboard for high profile projects and events across Brentwood in addition to the successful and well-established Shenfield cluster led events, culminating in 2017 with the hugely popular Shenfield Christmas Fayre.
- 3.6** 'Blue Skies' thinking sessions were also held in 2017 to institute a root-and-branch review of the Group to provide clarity over its purpose and objectives, define the audience and core activity and look at a long-term vision. This helped to determine proposals for a new name and brand, which extensive feedback suggested was unrecognised and confusing.

4. Summary of Review Outcomes

- 4.1 Vision:** Brentwood will remain a thriving place and destination of choice for retailers, particularly independent retailers, but also other businesses and their respective customers, both residents and visitors.
- 4.2 Key Aim:** To increase footfall and encourage spend in the local area in order to enable business growth and help grow the local economy.

4.3 Key Audiences:

Internal -

- Brentwood Borough Council;
- Businesses in the Borough of Brentwood (many of which are Small and Medium Enterprises/independents and are in retail or with a visible business premise, but this is not exclusive);
- Large businesses/corporates, including for sponsorship opportunities; and
- Other business representative and partner organisations e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business (FSB).

External/ End User -

- Local community/residents;
- Visitors; and
- Media.

4.4 Key Objectives: see Appendix A

4.5 Name change to Brentwood Business Partnership: The name more accurately reflects the aims, objectives and membership of the Group, will help marketing and communications, widening the membership and give clarity of purpose for the Business Trade Clusters. It reflects the group's support for local business, and provides a collective voice to lobby for those businesses and make a positive difference to the area. The new name reflects a successful and growing partnership between Council Cross Party Members, Officers, Local Business Trade Clusters, Essex County Council, the Chamber of Commerce, FSB, Baytree Centre and Brentwood Centre.

4.6 A number of new name options were debated by the group, with Brentwood Business Partnership being selected as the preference. This reflects a simplification of the name to better communicate the groups purpose and relates to the existing online presence, which has an opportunity to grow using the Discover Brentwood platform. It is hoped that the name can be formally launched in early 2018.

4.7 Membership: To widen Brentwood Business Trade Cluster membership and increase partnership organisations including the Brentwood Centre, Havering College, visitor and night time economy businesses and former Brentwood for Growth member/s. There is also an aspiration to try and reinstate an Ingatestone cluster.

4.8 Finances: The partnership has sufficient reserves to fund activities for the next few years without the need for a grant from Brentwood Borough Council. Self-funding for cluster bid applications will increase to a 25% contribution and continued sponsorship and donations will be sought for events. Sponsorship of the partnership itself will also be sought to ensure increased self-sufficiency.

4.9 Communications, Website and Branding: The current stand-alone group website will be closed and moved to the Discover Brentwood “Business” section to increase visibility. The partnership will have its own section covering objectives, the bid funding application form, Trade Cluster details, projects, case studies and meeting minutes and contacts. Events will continue to be advertised on the Discover Brentwood “What’s On” section for visitors. Options for a new and more contemporary logo have been produced to fit better with Discover Brentwood. The new logo design, website transfer and updates of the site will be supported financially by group funding, as will a continued social media presence and PR function.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 The new name and re-launch will help identification and clarity of purpose for the group and give it greater visibility in the borough.

6. Consultation

6.1 Renaissance Group members and partners attended the Blue Skies sessions and contributed to the strategic objectives summarised above and in Appendix A. Research of other Town Teams and groups with a similar remit were also reviewed. All voted in favour of the name change.

7. References to Corporate Priorities

7.1 Economic Development is a key theme in the Council’s Corporate Plan Vision for Brentwood 2016-19. The partnership is a vehicle for the Council to support local businesses and drive economic growth.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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(Deputy Section 151 Officer)**

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- 8.1 The partnership has sufficient reserves, which the Council holds on its behalf, to fund activities for the next three years without the need for any additional grant allocation from the Council, however longer term funding arrangements do need to be considered. Staff resources that the Council fund to assist the group also should be taken into account. The Town Centres and Marketing Co-ordinator is the lead officer who supports the partnership which the Group benefits from.

Legal Implications

Name/Title: Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

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- 8.2 In light of the revised objectives and name change, the Terms of Reference for the group will need to be reviewed and approved.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 8.3 None

9. **Background Papers** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

- 9.1 None

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A: Strategic Review, Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group, December 2017

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