

Report to Brentwood Borough Council's Policy, Projects and Resources Committee meeting 15th January 2018

Renaissance Group's activities during 2017. I was elected as Chairman of the Renaissance Group (RG) on 30th January, following in the footsteps of Clive Othen, who had introduced a restructuring of the Group and had discovered medieval royal market characters for the Borough, which have since been displayed in the Town Hall.

We implemented the additional Cluster arrangements – Brentwood East and West ends. Those, taken together with the existing Shenfield Clusters, provided the springboard for a full programme of high-profile public events. For the first time, two of the major retailers in the town, M&S and Sainsbury's became enthusiastically involved, playing roles as Cluster Leaders. The events included Easter Egg Hunts in Brentwood and Shenfield, the Brentwood Arts Trail, Children's Literary Festival, Crown Street French Market. Shenfield's Summer Fayre, Halloween event and hugely popular Christmas Fayre were all great successes. We also hope to reinstate the Ingatestone Cluster in 2018.

Strategic Review and Re-naming of the Group. We instituted a root-and-branch review of the Group's purpose, aims and objectives, even its name which extensive feedback suggested was unrecognised and even confusing. A number of 'Blue Sky' Sessions were held and the strategic review process is now complete. We are renaming ourselves **Brentwood Business Partnership (BBP)**, and have proposed revised terms of reference (a copy of which is attached, and is subject to review by Brentwood Borough Council Legal Department). We are in the process of putting together a revised communications strategy, including a new logo. We are closing down the RG website, and BBP will be included on the **Discover Brentwood** website.

Summary of BBP Aims and Objectives

- Promote Brentwood to visitors as a place to visit (by working with the leisure and tourism sectors to increase length of time in Brentwood and therefore increase spend).
- Encourage local people to shop and do business locally in Brentwood by engaging the local community and encourage local spend.
- Offer marketing support to SME's/retail/independent businesses which do not have the required resources.
- Support local businesses through the provision of advice and skills training.
- Attract funding and sponsorship from a number of sources to enable events and additional public realm improvements.
- Create a vision and point of differentiation of the Brentwood offering as against other destinations.
- Raise the awareness of all that Brentwood has to offer (there is more than just TOWIE)
- Help make Brentwood a safe and appealing place to live, work and visit.
- Support and empower businesses to grow and sustain their businesses.
- Work with business partner organisations such as Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses and Bay Tree Centre
- Help co-ordinate businesses to have a collective voice to lobby to make a positive difference to the area
- Complement the Council's overarching vision for Brentwood by helping provide a holistic vision for Brentwood by working with other sectors and bringing everything and everyone together in partnership

BBP Re-Launch. A re-launch event is to be held at the Brentwood Centre on Wednesday 7th February 2018 at 6 pm which we plan to use to raise the profile of BBP and emphasise Brentwood's commitment to making the Borough a destination of choice for visitors and residents alike. A major media campaign will accompany the launch to help achieve these objectives. We hope Councillors will be able to attend to support the re-launch.

Finances. We made no bid for a grant this year as we have reserves which can be called upon for funding our activities for the next 2/3 years. We have had two funding accounts – Revenue and Capital; but it has been agreed that they may be combined, with the total being available for all BBP projects. The public events mentioned and planned for the future are mainly the initiatives of the Clusters, who bid for funding from BBP, but they must make a 25% contribution to the overall cost of the event. In addition, sponsorship is often obtained (the Easter Eggs were all donated, and thousands of pounds have also been voluntarily donated by local businesses to the events this year). There are some centrally-funded projects such as website maintenance, public realm improvements etc.

We will also be seeking sponsorship of BBP itself. Our intention is to become increasingly self-sufficient, but of course our purpose as a Partnership complements that of the Council itself and we may well need to apply for grant funding in the future, if the financial position and activities warrant it.

Membership of BBP. Membership of BBP has largely been local retail businesses, as well as business organisations, such as Chamber of Commerce and FSB. However, we are widening membership. The Brentwood Centre is now a member, and we will be looking to include representatives from other sectors, such as the local college, the visitor/night-time economy and a major business - for example from *Brentwood for Growth*. I know the members of BBP would wish me to acknowledge the excellent support we have received from Council Executives and staff – as well as from Councillors

BBP Future Prospects. The Group has come through the review process full of enthusiasm for the future prospects for BBP and the work it can do to help Brentwood prosper. The positive support of the Council in helping BBP to achieving this is welcome

Mike Hawkins

Chair

Brentwood Business Partnership (formerly Renaissance Group)

December 2017