

19th March 2019

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee

Chair's Update Report

Report of: *Phil Ruck, Chief Executive*

Wards Affected: *All Wards*

This report is: *Public*

A new council year is about to start with many of the largest projects this council has ever undertaken coming to fruition. The Town Hall refurbishment is on track with residential units completed by mid-April and these will be marketed by Beresfords, while the commercial space will be managed and marketed by Sanderson Weatherall. The two companies came together to make a joint bid as part of the procurement for an Agent to manage the Town Hall long-term.

Council officers are expected to return to a new style working environment from June. This has been a mammoth undertaking with contractors Farrans rising to the task and a number of behind-the-scenes visits arranged for members and the media. A further on-site tour is set for April and *a full officer report is included with these papers and will be heard this evening.*

The Council's Asset Development Programme has made significant progress throughout the year. The Joint Venture procurement to secure an ambitious partner for the development of the Town Centre was completed effectively and on time. At this moment legal restrictions prevent a formal announcement of this partner but once the legal period has expired the project will be formally announced. This will be the biggest, single redevelopment of the Town Centre ever seen and will position Brentwood at the forefront of modern town centres by combining green spaces, residential, commercial, retail and cultural activities.

The Seven Arches Investment Limited completed its first purchase and has now secured its second. One Curo Park, St Albans, Hertfordshire was purchased for £4.965m, financed through a loan from Brentwood Borough Council and producing a yield of 5.5%. We had now added 44 East Street, Chichester – a prime TK Maxx retail site – to the portfolio for just over £7m producing a 6.4% yield. These are both bold investments and a first for Brentwood, which are already generating vital income streams. *A formal business plan for SAIL is before you tonight.*

The Town Hall refurbishment, Asset Development Programme and SAIL are three extraordinarily bold enterprises given that we are a relatively small borough council, running a tight ship.

Furthermore, the Leisure strategy includes a £7m new scheme for King George's Playing Fields, a new pavilion, splash pad and sky trail, café and inclusive play areas will be the largest renovation of the park since it opened and one that will benefit all residents. Leisure is complemented with our Corporate Enforcement which, through a programme of staff training, has ensured we can run community safety patrols through the borough – a presence that supports the night time economy, reassures residents and ensures Brentwood continues to enjoy its well-deserved reputation as a great place to live, work and relax. The Leisure Strategy will come before members in the new municipal year as a full business case with details of governance and management arrangements

The latest consultation for the Local Development Plan concludes on March 19 and the Duty to Cooperate discussion with neighbouring authorities continues as planned. Dunton Hills Garden Village received a £100,000 input from Government and work continues to develop and broaden the important education stream involving local school children and a new, standalone Dunton Hills Garden Village website too. Members of course had the opportunity to visit the area and hear firsthand some of the proposed schemes being considered.

This has been a year in which we have laid firm foundations for securing the future of the borough over the next 20-30 years. We have set and achieved our initial goals in record time and with maximum effect. This is no mean feat and reflects the hard work of members, officers and experts in bringing this vision to fruition.

We have ensured success by picking up the pace of work and raising expectations. This has set a precedent which has been demanding but has reaped dividends and these will benefit our residents both now and in the future.

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