

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 8 October 2019
Subject: Chairs report for Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	Wards Affected: All
Committee Chair: Cllr James Tumbridge	
Report of: Steve Summers – Interim Chief Executive	Public
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Economic Development

Planning for the 2019 Brentwood Business Showcase is underway, with all sponsorship and exhibitor packages now fully booked. This year's Showcase will be held at the Brentwood School on Thursday 31 October. We are pleased that new out of Borough businesses like Enterprise will also be attending, and we are working to make the most of this to ensure we are seen as a place to invest. Speakers will include a range of business experts and inspirational entrepreneurs. Delegate registration is now open via Eventbrite and the event website www.brentwoodbusinessshowcase.co.uk. Members are encouraged to support the event by attending the Showcase to network with businesses based in Brentwood and outside the borough.

The Economic Development team commissioned a Podcasting & Video for Business workshop, which was delivered in July. Ten businesses attended the training session. In September, the Council supported the inaugural Brentwood Business Briefing, an educational and engagement event co-hosted by the Brentwood Business Partnership and Brentwood Chamber of Commerce. This networking evening attracted 80 companies from Brentwood and across Essex. A report will be commissioned on the economy of the Borough to be brought back to a future meeting of Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee. This report will also inform the revised Economic Strategy that is being developed for 2020-2023. Temporary accommodation.

Local Development Plan

Public consultation concluded on the Pre-Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) in March 2019. In total there were 767 respondents (people/organisations) who made 4,283 representations (comments) in response to the consultation. Of the representations, 510 were made online via the Council's website, 1,741 were received by email, and 2,028 were received in writing. The number of representations received in writing meant that it took longer to manually process than hoped. However, all representations have now been processed and are available to view on the Council's website via the Local Plan consultation portal.

There were four residential site allocations that received the majority of representations, situated in Blackmore (R25 land north of Woollard Way, and R26 land north of Orchard Piece), and Shenfield (R18 land off Crescent Drive, and R19 land off Priests Lane). Concerns relating to the impact of development in these areas resulted in the approval of amendments to the Plan, reducing the sites in Blackmore by 20 homes and the sites in Shenfield by 50 homes, and redistributing these losses to Dunton Hills Garden Village.

On 11 September 2019 the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee approved these amendments subject to a focused public consultation prior to submission of the Plan. The committee also approved a revised Local Development Scheme (timetable) in light of this. The Plan is to be submitted by the end of 2019.

Brentwood Town Centre Design Guide

The Design Guide underwent public consultation earlier this year with a view that the document be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Representations received have been considered and amendments made to the Design Guide, which has been presented to the Local Development Plan Members Working Group. The final document is due to be brought to Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee in November.

Seven Arches Investments Limited (SAIL)

A revised governance structure has been approved by the Committee for providing funding to Seven Arches Investments Limited (SAIL). Opportunities continue to be identified by the company and the new process is intended to ensure these can be responded to and that transparency is provided. SAIL's accounts for 2018/19 were presented to the Committee and showed the company reported a profit of £322k due to upward revaluations of its investment properties.

Green Initiatives

Following agreement at the recent PRED cttee a procurement process will be undertaken to determine the most effective provider of Electrical Vehicle Chargers at the New Town Hall which will also include the provision of a borough wide feasibility document.

Further the Council will:-

- Work with a partner to develop the lighting survey for general fund properties which will identify carbon improvements and efficiencies.
- Assist local green businesses and those who want to go green by signposting to grants or other useful information
- Reduce the use of single use plastics through implementing procurement methods and other actions which promote and encourage alternatives to single

2018/19 Outturn, 2019/20 Budget Monitoring and Treasury Management Update.

On 10th July 2019 meeting, The Committee received the 2018/19 Provisional Outturn as well as the year end Reserve position. The overall deficit reported on the General fund was £188,000 and the Deficit reported on the HRA was £138,000 which were made up of many variances across all services.

The General Fund reported Members noted concerns on overspends on certain line items with the 2018/19 Outturn report and asked for these budgets overspends to be explained and informed of cost control measures adopted to reduce future overspends. These specific line items were addressed on 11th September 2019 where the Committee received the latest update to the 2019/20 General Fund Revenue Budget, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Program that was agreed at Council on 27th February 2019. It was based upon actual expenditure and income from April to July and predicted a forecast for the end of the 2019/2020 financial year.

The report also gives an update regarding Treasury management & investment activity for 2019/20 and in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy.

The General Fund is currently forecasting a £267,000 deficit.

The Housing Revenue Account is forecasting a net operating deficit of £267,000.

The Capital Programme is forecasting to underspend by £9.539m; the updated position includes slippage brought forward from 2018/19.

Whole Council Elections

On 10th July the Committee were advised of the Council's power to change its electoral scheme to whole Council Elections. Brentwood Borough Council operates an election scheme by thirds, holding a Borough election three years out of four. Members were asked to consider the report and that a detailed paper with financial consequences of a four year election cycle and the steps required to move from 1/3 to all out elections. Members were then presented with a further report with as much information officers had been able to collate.

Currently high-level costings assume whole council elections would cost in the region of £94,000 per cycle. Potentially this option would generate a saving in the region of £116,000 and £145,000 over a four-year cycle (£29,000-£36,250 pa).

In the year Brentwood Council implement Whole Council Elections there would be an additional £20,000 pressure. This is due to the Council would have budgeted for a 'Third election' at a cost of £75,000 as opposed to a 'Whole Election' which costs £95,000. Therefore, no saving would be realised until 2024. The risk of holding additional standalone By Elections, due to the longer gap in Local elections, would be greater. This would be an additional cost to the council, that would reduce any saving. However, further investigation and analysis would need to be conducted by officers to ensure assurance on these financial proposals. A detailed business case would need to be worked through. Although this item was for information, it was discussed that group leaders consult with their groups to gauge opinion as to how they wish to

proceed and to report back to the Chair, as to whether a further item is required for decision.

South Essex Parking Partnership

The Committee gave delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the chair of PRED to enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Chelmsford City Council, the Lead Authority for the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) for the Council's enforcement officers to provide additional parking enforcement patrols. The intention is to provide additional resources that will allow the Council's enforcement officers to be able to provide patrols outside of normal office hours covering a range of duties whilst fulfilling our obligations as outlined in the SLA.

The SLA will be for a period of one year with an option for both parties to agree to extend up to 31st March 2022 when the current SEPP Joint Committee Agreement expires.

Under the terms of the SLA the Council will receive an annual sum of £33,000 for providing a minimum of 76 enforcement patrols.

Town Hall lease for Residential units

It was agreed in principle to let the 19 residential units at the Town Hall on floors 2 and 3 to the Council's wholly owned company, Seven Arches Investment Limited. (SAIL). The precise terms to be consulted with the Chair and the Leader. SAIL will then continue to work Beresford's, appointed by competitive tender process, to manage and market the units.

Current negotiations are ongoing between the Council and SAIL and so final terms have yet to be finalised. No units have been currently let and will not let be out until the appropriate leases are in place.

Brentwood Centre

A feasibility will be undertaken on the Brentwood Centre which will inform the overall master planning for the Brentwood Centre site. At Extraordinary Council on 30 July 2019 members agreed the business case for the King George's Playing Fields improvements which included a recommendation for officers to appoint a contractor to undertake a feasibility study for the development of a football hub on the Brentwood Centre site. The works will identify preference of a refurbishment or a rebuild and to identify the indicative costs for each of these options. The feasibility works at this stage will provide high level options for the Council to consider which will need to be agreed by Members before more detailed works are commissioned, dependent on the preferred options coming out of this first stage. A Cross Party Working Group will be established to look at whether the material function of the Brentwood Centre remains the same, that the core components are still relevant and to also look at other options to ensure that a viable facility mix is developed as part of the overall master planning which will be key to the future success.

Citizens Advice South Essex Limited

Brentwood Council Solicitors have prepared a draft lease to Citizens Advice South Essex (CASE) for ground floor office space in the Town Hall and this has been sent to the solicitor acting on behalf of Citizens Advice for approval.

A separate report is being presented to the Assizes House Trust on 8 October to consider the surrender of the Citizen's Advice Bureau's lease on 8-12 Crown Street and to consider options for possible redevelopment.

King George's Playing Fields

A planning application has been submitted in respect of the new development on King George's Playing Fields. This is due to be considered at the December Planning Committee.