

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 16 th September 2020
Subject: Chairs report for Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	Wards Affected: All
Committee Chair: Cllr Chris Hossack	
Report of: Name: Greg Campbell, Director of Operations Telephone: 01277 312738 E-mail: greg.campbell@brentwood.gov.uk Name: Amanda Julian, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer Telephone: 01277 Tel: 01277 312705 E-mail: amanda.julian@brentwood.gov.uk Name: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk	FOR INFORMATION

Local Development Plan

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is undergoing examination-in-public following submission earlier this year. Initial questions were received from the planning inspectors in June. Responses have been prepared to these questions through the publication of several examination notes and topic papers. Examination hearing sessions are expected later this year, likely to involve some online elements either wholly or through a hybrid approach.

A key part of the LDP strategy for growth is to deliver Dunton Hills Garden Village. An update on this project was brought to PRED Committee in March (Item 430, 18 March 2020). This included work underway to prepare a detailed design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the garden village. Informal co-design has recently taken place, including online workshops, videos and youth activities. A draft version of the detailed design SPD will be brought to PRED Committee before it is published for public consultation. This will mean further engagement with communities and stakeholders.

Economic Development Strategy

Since March, the Economic Development Team has been focussed on the economic implications of COVID-19, most immediately business support. As we transition into recovery several measures have been put in place to enliven the local economy. Moving forward, objectives to formalise the Corporate Strategy aims for growing our economy are to be set in a new Economic Development Strategy, informed by commissioned evidence (Economic Development Study, March 2020, and Place Audits, September 2020). This will inform strategic priorities and where our resource is focussed, including any need for additional resources.

Essex Coast Recreational avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS)

The Essex Coast Recreational avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared, including versions presented to Planning and Licensing Committee prior to consultation. The Essex Coast RAMS is to mitigate the impacts of growth throughout Essex to protect the wildlife of the coast and increased visitor pressure. The final version of the RAMS SPD was brought to PRED Committee to provide a mechanism for.

Lower Thames Crossing

The Lower Thames Crossing Design Refinement consultation took place between 14 July and 12 August 2020. Amendments to the project in and around Brentwood Borough include routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders; electricity; and the need for additional land for utility works. A response was presented to PRED Committee covering previous consultation points raised (cumulative impacts of growth, Brentwood Enterprise Park, involvement of ASELA, etc), and the need for a joined-up approach between highways investment and development projects, such as Brentwood Enterprise Park.

King Georges Development

The work at King George's was paused due to COVID-19 and the three construction contracts re-examined to identify any amendments that needed to be included as a result. These are currently being finalised between Alliance Leisure Services and Brentwood Borough Council and once agreed a new date for commencement on site will be agreed.

Brentwood Centre

The Council is currently working with Brentwood Development Partnership (Joint Venture) on the master planning of the Brentwood Centre site which will include the Brentwood Leisure Centre building, the Football Hub development and wider opportunities that the site can offer to enable the Council to maximise any efficiencies on the development of built facilities on the site. The master plan work will set out the opportunities and constraints of the site will also inform any outline planning submission.

Remote Meetings

On the 23 March 2020, the Country went into Lockdown as a Pandemic regarding Covid19 was declared.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 received Royal Assent on the 25 March 2020, the first set of Regulations under the Act were made on 4 April 2020, which enabled Councils to hold remote meetings. The Act also suspended the 2020 Elections until May 2021, the requirement to hold an Annual Council was also suspended.

Democratic Services and IT officers worked together to ensure that meetings could continue remotely, that Councillors had the training and equipment they needed to be able to continue to participate in the Council meetings.

On the 29 April 2020, the first remote Extraordinary Council meeting was held via Teams, all 37 members attended. The meeting was simultaneous broadcasted via a live stream. It was resolved at that meeting that an Emergency Committee be established, to assist the Council with decision making. The first Emergency Committee was held on the 5 June 2020, to enable the Council to administer the Discretionary Business Grants Scheme. Officers had drafted a Discretionary Business Grants Scheme to determine which businesses will qualify for the discretionary grants and what level of money will be awarded, which needed urgent approval.

The Council has continued to hold Planning Committees, remotely. On the 22 July 2020, the Council held a second Extraordinary Council which was a hybrid meeting, with some officers and Councillors in the Chamber and others attending remotely. Through these difficult times officers working together with Councillors have ensured that the Council's has continued to operate in a transparent and democratic manner. Innovating and changing as the situation surrounding this emergency situation has changed.

Proposals for delivering legal services

A review of legal services has started to identify what model would deliver a better efficient and effective service for the Council. Now the service is split between two locum solicitors, a trainee and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD). To build resilience Birketts, a top 100 law firm, has been engaged via the Crown Commercial Services to assist the Council, there is added value in doing this as they will also deliver free training and secondment opportunities to assist in upskilling fee earners.

The present case management system is hosted by LBBD. At present fee earners must go via CITRIX into another email account to upload work to files. Or they must work exclusively from LBBD email accounts this has led to confusion in the past where the fee earners are employed. A case management system hosted in Brentwood would be linked to Brentwood accounts so no confusion could arise. A new system would also provide the reporting needed to ensure that legal services provided an efficient service for example being able to see the number of chargeable hours a fee earner has undertaken.

The next steps are to gather the information required to inform the modelling options for the service. More financial costing to be undertaken to ensure whichever model is chosen will deliver an effective service.

If the financial modelling allows it is envisaged a case management system will be in place by January 2021, with the project being concluded by March 2021.

In the mean-time Law and Governance has continued to ensure that the Council contracts are compliant with the latest legislation and procurement notices regarding GDPR and COVID-19 if applicable.

Further that they are working with enforcement officers to continue to protect the Boroughs green belt land.

Update on the Canvass

The Electoral Registration Office every year carries out a Canvass. This year after, review of how this process has been undertaken the Government passed legislation to change the way the Canvass is carried out, this is referred to as the Cavass Reform.

The elections office was badly water damaged on the 4 April 2020, with all the equipment that would be needed to ensure the effective delivery of the Canvass was damaged and needed to be repaired or replaced. Officers from across the services worked hard to procure the equipment, set it up and test it to ensure the first data matching date would be achieved on the 22 June 2020.

The data matching has now been completed and the Canvass has started, the Canvass will end on the publication of the Electoral Register. The officers concerned have co-ordinated and worked with a team of canvassers including carrying out appropriate risk assessments to ensure that this important piece of work is delivered on time.

Warley Playing Fields – Deeds of Trust

All relevant paperwork has been sent to Fields in Trust in relation to Warley Playing Fields. The Council is currently awaiting the legal contract from Fields in Trust to sign.

Green initiatives

The Council is working with Essex County Council on their Essex Forest Initiative (EFI). We will be reporting to a future PRED, likely October, where more sites will be identified for future tree planting.

Further the Council are in discussion with Thames Chase and a report will be made by Thames Chase on why this Council should be part of their project to the October PRED Committee

EC borough charging and pool cars

Two EV Charging points are now installed at the Town Hall, connection is imminent. A further 6 chargers are due for implementation in the South car Park once the two in the North are fully complete.

We have also ordered an electric vehicle for officers to use and offset omissions from their own vehicles.