

Minutes

Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee Wednesday, 9th September, 2020

Attendance

Cllr Hossack (Chair)	Cllr Kendall
Cllr Parker (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Lewis
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Mrs Pearson
Cllr J Cloke	Cllr Poppy
Cllr S Cloke	

Also Present

Cllr Aspinell
Cllr Mynott

Officers Present

Greg Campbell	-	Director of Environment
Russell Clinker	-	Senior Asset Manager
Amanda Julian	-	Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Philip Drane	-	Director of Planning and Economy
Laurie Edmonds	-	Senior Economic Development Officer
Zoey Foakes	-	Governance & Member Support Officer
Jonathan Stephenson	-	Chief Executive
Steve Summers	-	Chief Operating Officer
Jacqueline Mellaerts	Van	Director of Corporate Resources
Richard Wilson	-	Commercial Consultant

489. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for this meeting.

490. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Policy, Resources and Economic Development meeting held on 18th March 2020 were approved as a true record.

Cllr Kendall thanked the previous chair of this committee, Cllr Tumbridge on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group for the way the meetings were chaired.

491. Chairs update

The Chair started the meeting by apologising for a delayed start to the meeting (8pm start time) due to technical issues. Due to the delayed start time, it was agreed that Items 4 and 5 of this agenda would be deferred to the next appropriate meeting.

Members noted the updates provided in the Chair's report.

492. The Council's response to COVID-19

This item was deferred to the next appropriate committee due to the delayed start of the meeting.

493. Business and Recovery Plan

This item was deferred to the next appropriate committee due to the delayed start of the meeting.

494. 2019/20 Outturn Report

This report dealt with the 2019/20 provisional outturn report for:

- (i) The General Fund – paragraph 3.
- (ii) The Housing Revenue Account – paragraph 20, and
- (iii) The Capital Programme – paragraph 27.

The report also considered the earmarked reserves and working balance levels for both the General Fund and the HRA going forward into 2020/21.

In line with the Local Government Act 2003, the relevant CIPFA Codes of Practice and the Council's associated Treasury Management Policy and Practices; an Annual Treasury Management review of investment and borrowing activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2019/20 was required to be approved by the Committee (paragraph 30)

The key elements of the provisional outturn are:

General Fund

- 1) A breakeven provisional outturn has been achieved for 2019/20; compared to a predicted deficit of £213k.
- 2) Working balances remain at a level of £3,117k
- 3) General Fund earmarked reserves have reduced by £417k to £4,404k of which 43% are committed for future commitments and expenditure.

Housing Revenue Account

- 1) The Outturn reflects a deficit of £830k for 2019/20, compared to a forecast deficit of £417k; an increase of £413k on forecast.

- 2) The HRA working balance has been reduced to £1,071k as at 31st March 2020,
and
- 3) The HRA earmarked reserves remain at a level of £2,400k.

Capital

- 1) The Capital Outturn was £30.1m compared to a revised outturn of £30.5.
- 2) Slippage of £43.7m will be carried forward into 2020/21 which includes £27.5m for commercial activities.
- 3) The 2020/21 revised base budget is £54.3m

Treasury Management

- 1) The treasury activity is listed out in the report and the relevant prudential indicators.

The Chair informed the committee this was an information only item and requested members to note the report.

495. Economic Development Update/Place Audit Update

Place Audits of the retail centres in Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone had been commissioned in partnership with the Brentwood Business Partnership and Brentwood Chamber. Updates had been provided to previous meetings of the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

The work was commissioned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic and lockdown period delayed production of the work. This was due to the significant economic implications of the pandemic and need to consider these, and the need to re-prioritise the resources of the Council's Economic Development Team toward business community support.

The final draft Place Audit study is presented to members in Appendix A of the report. It provided various recommendations for Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone.

The outputs from this work would inform objectives to be set in the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy, consistent with the Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Chair informed the committee that a workshop group will be put together with a number of relevant stakeholders to consider all the recommendations put forward and for what is best for Brentwood. This was welcomed by a number of committee members.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve that officers consider all recommendations and advise members at a future Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee as to which they consider most viable and how to achieve them, as part of preparing a new Economic Development Strategy.

R2. Approve that officers specifically consider recommendations related to opportunities for improved marketing of Brentwood Town Centre to benefit the local economy, and report back to members at a future Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

Reasons for Recommendation

Members were presented with the final draft version of the Place Audit to measure performance and inform priorities for achieving economic growth in the borough. This is in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy priority to grow the economy.

The lessons of working with businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic, on projects such as Brentwood Open, reinforce the need to better promote places and businesses. The recommendations allow for more detailed work on what objectives can be progressed through the Council's emerging Economic Development Strategy and focus on promoting Brentwood Town Centre. This would aim to benefit businesses across the borough.

496. Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) focuses on the mitigation that is necessary to protect the wildlife of the Essex Coast from increased visitor pressure associated with new residential development in-combination with other plans and projects, and how this mitigation will be funded. The SPD forms technical planning guidance. The Essex Coast RAMS SPD is provided in Appendix A of the report.

The Essex Coast RAMS SPD accompanies the strategic approach to mitigation. The overall Strategic Document is provided in Appendix B of the report. It provides a mechanism for local planning authorities to comply with their responsibilities to protect habitats and species in accordance with the UK Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). It sets out a tariff to be charged for new residential development within the affected area that would contribute to the mitigation measures on the Essex coastline. The overall cost for the mitigation package is estimated to be £8.9 million up to 2038. The SPD formalises the arrangements for securing the developer contribution of £125.58 per dwelling.

The Essex Coast RAMS SPD had been brought to Planning and Licensing Committee at different stages of its preparation (12 March 2019 and 18 December 2019). Public consultation took place in early 2020. Following this, a consultation report was produced and minor changes made to the final SPD as a result. The consultation report is provided in Appendix C of the report.

This work had been undertaken through a partnership approach between the 12 Essex authorities affected and Natural England in an advisory role. A letter from Natural England to endorse the approach is provided in Appendix D of the report. Each of the Essex authorities affected were taking the Essex Coast RAMS SPD through their decision-making processes for adoption. A partnership agreement between the Essex authorities for the management and administration of the RAMS tasks and funds is being prepared. A draft version of the partners agreement is provided in Appendix E of the report.

An overall zone of influence from the Essex coastline has been determined following surveying and other evidence. This was made up of a number of zones from specific points on the coast. This zone results in the Essex authorities involved in the work. The zone of influence extends to a small part of the north-eastern corner of Brentwood Borough, including part of Ingatestone village. A map showing the extent of the zone of influence within the borough is provided in Appendix F of the report.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Jon Cloke **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the Essex Coast RAMS SPD for adoption (Appendix A);

R2. Delegate powers to the Director of Planning and Economy to make minor changes to the Essex Coast RAMS SPD if required, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Chair of Planning and Licensing Committee, and the Chief Executive; and

R3. Authorise that the Director of Planning and Economy put a process in place to implement, collect, monitor, and pay the tariff to the accountable body of the partnership (Appendix E).

Reasons for Recommendation

Local planning authorities have the duty, by virtue of being defined as 'competent authorities' under the Habitats Regulations, to ensure that planning decisions do not adversely affect the integrity of habitat sites. The Council is not obligated to prepare or adopt an SPD; however, a decision not to do so would not remove the Council's duties under the Habitat Regulations and would not remove the need to implement the RAMS, or another appropriate strategy, to avoid or mitigate the impacts of new housing on the integrity of habitat sites.

Failure to avoid or mitigate the impacts of recreational disturbance arising from new housing in the determination of planning applications would leave decisions vulnerable to legal challenge. The RAMS Strategy Document and accompanying RAMS SPD are intended to ensure the Council's obligations under the Habitats Regulations are effectively discharged. Therefore, the

recommendation is that the Council approve the RAMS SPD for adoption to form part of planning policy and inform the decision-making process for residential development in the small part of the borough within the zone of influence (part of Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing Ward, see Appendix F).

Each partner local authority needs to take the RAMS SPD to their relevant committee for approval to adopt. As such, some changes may be needed to the document as requested by partners through those democratic decision making processes. Therefore, it is recommended that delegated power be given to the Director of Planning and Economy to make minor changes to the SPD if required prior to it being formally adopted by all partners, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of Planning and Licensing Committee and the Chief Executive.

Processes will need to put in place to implement, collect, monitor and pay the tariff charged to the relevant residential development and then transferred from the Council to the accountable body of the partnership to administer the fund. As the partner authorities continue to work together to administer the RAMS it is recommended that the Director of Planning and Economy be given delegated powers to enable the Council to play its part in administering funds collected. Although the area of the borough affected is small and therefore funds to be collected in Brentwood Borough are projected to be low in comparison with other authorities in the partnership, a consistent process needs to be in place across the wider area. This includes finalising the Essex Coast RAMS Partnership Agreement, which requires further legal input.

497. Lower Thames Crossing Design Refinement Consultation

Highways England are again inviting views on the Lower Thames Crossing, a proposed new motorway connecting Essex and Kent through a tunnel beneath the River Thames to provide additional road capacity. Several design refinements to the scheme have been set out in this latest consultation. A draft response to the consultation has been submitted to meet the consultation deadline, as set out in Appendix A. This focuses on implications of development for M25 Junction 29 and the surrounding area.

The Chair notified the committee that he had put forward his own letter of representation which all others are able to do also.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the response to the Lower Thames Crossing design refinement consultation as set out in Appendix A.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Council has engaged with Highways England on the Lower Thames Crossing project to date. It is proposed that issues raised in previous consultation responses are maintained where relevant and/or unresolved.

A point is made to highlight the fact that Lower Thames Crossing proposals do not adequately consider cumulative growth in South Essex in terms of the opportunity to plan for required investment at M25 junction 29 and the wider highway network. In addition, proposals at Brentwood Enterprise Park are on the one-hand not considered because of the stage that the Local Development Plan is at, but on the other-hand is used to enable construction access through the site. This seems an inconsistent and unfair way to approach joint working given both Highways England and the Council are progressing projects to deliver development for the benefit of economic growth. A more holistic view of the projects would deliver added benefits and efficiencies.

The design refinements within Brentwood Borough mainly relate to proposals for new or improved routes for non-motorised uses (walking, cycling and horse riding) outside the highway network. Whilst this focus and investment is welcomed, proposals could be improved by combining this with other improvement schemes required by the delivery of new development in the area, such as Brentwood Enterprise Park.

498. Amendments to Off-Street parking Places Consolidation Order 2012

This report sets out two suggested amendments to the Parking Order, which will enable better management and availability for users of council car parks. In doing so it is recommended that the amendments will include making the Town Hall Car Park 'A' a public car park at the weekends, in the same way that other car parks are provided in the town. This will also make available two chargeable electric vehicle charging points.

Further, there have been issues with Hutton Country Park Car Park. There are presently no enforceable restrictions in place and therefore the car park is overly used by others and has minimal available space for legitimate users of the park.

It is proposed to amend the Parking Order at Hutton Country Park to allow parking for a maximum of two hours, with no return within four hours.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. To delegate authority to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Chair and Vice-

Chair of the Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee, to implement the amendments outlined in this report to The Borough of Brentwood (Off-Street Parking Places) Consolidation Order 2012.

Reasons for Recommendation

Town Hall Car Park 'A'

The proposal for the Town Hall Car Park 'A' will contribute to the long-term viability of the Parking Services and provide additional choice to park for residents and visitors to Brentwood.

Hutton Country Park Car Park

Introducing limited free parking, with no return within four hours, will have the beneficial impact of enabling greater access for more users of Hutton Country Park.

499. Exclusion of the Press and Public

The public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the items of business (11,12 & 13) on the grounds that the disclosure of exempt information as defined in schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

500. EXEMPT - Less Than Best Consideration - Brentwood Talking Newspapers

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

501. EXEMPT - Investment proposal A

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED.**

502. EXEMPT - Investment proposal B

Investment proposal B was taken together with the previous item – Investment proposal A.

503. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business and the Chair closed the meeting at 22:00.

