

Minutes

Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee Wednesday, 24th November, 2021

Attendance

Cllr Hossack (Chair)	Cllr Mrs Pearson
Cllr Parker (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Poppy
Cllr Barrett	Cllr Wagland
Cllr Mynott	

Apologies

Substitute Present

Cllr Aspinell (substituting for Cllr S Cloke)
Cllr Kendall (substituting for Cllr Lewis)

Also Present

Cllr Mrs Hones
Cllr Barber
Cllr Bridge
Cllr Gelderbloem
Cllr Mrs Pound
Cllr Reed
Cllr Tanner
Cllr White

Officers Present

Phoebe Barnes	- Corporate Manager - Finance
Greg Campbell	- Corporate Director (Environment & Communities)
Russell Clinker	- Senior Asset Manager
Phil Drane	- Corporate Director (Planning and Economy)
Zoey Foakes	- Governance & Member Support Officer
Amanda Julian	- Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer
Nichola Mann	- Corporate Manager - Human Resources
Jane Mitchell	- Senior Procurement Officer
Jonathan Stephenson	- Chief Executive
Steve Summers	- Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive)

Jacqueline Mellaerts
Richard Wilson

Van - Corporate Director (Finance & Resources)
- Commercial Consultant

LIVE BROADCAST

[Live broadcast to start at 7pm and available for repeat viewing.](#)

183. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Lewis with Cllr Kendall substituting and Cllr S Cloke with Cllr Aspinell substituting.

184. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Policy, Resources and Economic Development meeting held on 30th September 2021 were approved as a true record.

185. Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan (2020-2033), Regulation 15

The 2011 Localism Act introduced new powers for local communities to produce neighbourhood plans, which can be used to guide and shape future development in an area. Once adopted a neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and it is used in the determination of planning applications.

Brentwood Borough Council approved the designation of the Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan Area in October 2017. The draft neighbourhood plan was published for consultation (Regulation 14) in September 2020. The Council responded to the consultation offering support of the neighbourhood plan but highlighted a that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report was needed to comply with the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Condition. An SEA Screening Report has since been completed (Appendix B), and the environmental bodies consulted as required by the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and guidance.

The neighbourhood plan was formally submitted to the Council under Regulation 15 (Appendix A). As set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, once a neighbourhood plan has been submitted and accepted by the Council under Regulation 15, the Council is then responsible for taking the plan through to adoption. Once adopted a neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and is used in the determination of planning applications alongside the Brentwood Local Plan and other material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework.

Jane Winter from the Parish Council came and spoke to the Committee on the plan. Cllr Hossack thanked Mrs Winter on the plan that had been received and would welcome neighbourhood plans from other Parish Councils or areas within the Borough.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the formal submission of the Ingatestone & Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan under Regulation 15.

R2. Permit the Council to undertake a consultation on the neighbourhood plan as required under Regulation 16.

R3. Grant delegated powers to the Corporate Director (Planning and Economy) to make modifications to the neighbourhood plan as identified within the Basic Conditions Statement and determined through the examination process.

R4. Grant delegated powers to the Corporate Director (Planning and Economy in consultation with the Chair of Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee, to authorise the neighbourhood plan referendum process (Regulation 19).

Reasons for Recommendation

The Parish Council had met all the criteria as outlined within the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (as amended), including the Basic Conditions, to proceed to Regulation 15, where the plan would now become the Borough Council's responsibility to take the neighbourhood plan through to adoption.

The Council is responsible for undertaking a consultation of the Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16). Once the public consultation has concluded and representations on the Neighbourhood Plan have been received, the Council should submit the Plan and any proposed changes considered appropriate along with the supporting documents to the Planning Inspectorate for examination on behalf of the Secretary of State. This is Regulation 17 stage. Submitted documents should include the Neighbourhood Plan, Basic Conditions Statement, SEA Screening Opinion Report, and Consultation Statement. The Council must also include details of the representations made from Regulation 16 and a summary of the main issues raised.

Delegated authority for the Corporate Director (Planning and Economy) is sought to make modifications to the neighbourhood plan as determined to be necessary through the examination process and authorise the neighbourhood

plan referendum. This is recommended as the most efficient way of progressing the Neighbourhood Plan towards adoption, consistent with planning practice guidance to undertake this work swiftly

186. Corporate Strategy 2021-22 Key Objectives Update

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-25 was agreed at Ordinary Council on the 22nd January 2020, (Min 353 refers). The Corporate Strategy sets out the council's ambitions for a 5-year period. An Annual Review of the plan was undertaken and Key Objectives for 2021-22 were approved by Ordinary Council on the 10th March 2021. (Min 723 refers).

This report sought to update members on the progress of the Corporate Strategy 2021-22 key objectives. The details of the update are set out in Appendix A.

Members discussed and asked questions based on the update within Appendix A.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

187. Procurement Strategy

This report asked Members to approve the Council's Procurement Strategy (the Strategy) for 2020 to 2025.

During the discussion, Members asked officers if some questions could be added/amended at the evaluation level to include questions on any association to Council Members and/or employees.

Members also wanted the wording "and contribute to the Council goals" included within the "Protecting our Environment" section of the policy.

Amendments would also be required in relation to the carbon neutral agreement inline with the Councils carbon neutral agreement.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the Procurement Strategy for 2020-2025.

R2. Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make amendments if required.

188. 2022-23 Budget Consultation Response

The report provided information on the budget consultation exercise for 2022/23 that was undertaken with residents and businesses. The purpose of

the report is for committee members to review its contents and consider the outcomes from the consultation.

This is for information only so no voting was required.

189. 2022/23 Medium Term Financial Forecast and 2020/21 Mid-Year Review

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the key financial management principles and budget assumptions. It is then used as the framework for the detailed budget setting process to ensure that the Council's resources are managed effectively to meet its statutory responsibilities and deliver the priorities of the Council, over the medium term.

The current draft forecast as outlined in the report is to aid Members in understanding the basis of what is known now, the financial trajectory of the Council and identifying actions that can be taken to address the continuing deficit of resources over expenditure. These actions may involve Members having to take difficult decisions to address the budget gap.

The report also provided the Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee with an update to the 2020/21 General Fund Revenue budget, Housing Revenue Account and Capital program as well as the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2020/21.

This is for information only so no voting was required.

190. Fees & Charges

The Chair deferred this item to the next Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee meeting.

191. Review of Local Council Tax Discounts

In March 2021, following a motion at full Council by the Labour group which was accepted in February 2021, PRED resolved to review Council Tax Discretionary Discounts and report options to a future PRED Committee.

In September 2021, Members reviewed the options available and agreed to consult with residents on three discretionary discounts to make amendments to the scheme of Council Tax Discounts and Premiums with effect from 1 April 2022, using discretionary powers granted by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

The report outlined the results from the consultation and proposed changes to the scheme.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1.

A) Remove the Council Tax discretionary discount for Empty and unfurnished properties from 1 April 2022.

B) Remove the Council Tax discretionary discount for Second Homes from 1 April 2022.

C) Not change The Council Tax discretionary discount for Empty & Uninhabitable properties from 1 April 2022.

Reasons for Recommendation

Properties that are vacant for long periods of time, can lead to problems with squatters, anti-social behaviour and have a direct impact on the amount of housing available in the Borough. The removal of these discounts would incentivise the owners to bring properties back into use and occupation with less delay.

Currently two local Council Tax discounts the Council were reviewing to remove are costing Brentwood Council £13,519 per annum, and the precepting authorities collectively £113,344 per annum. This would generate additional income to the collective Councils to reinvest within their services.

Legislation will still allow the Council to award discretionary support to people in exceptional circumstances and each request will be given due care and consideration and assessed on its own merits.

A vote was taken on Standing Orders and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to extend the meeting for half an hour.

192. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The report was to introduce the Council's updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (the policy) for 2021 to 2024. The Council has a statutory obligation to implement the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) provisions into its working practices which the updated policy does.

During discussion on the report, Cllr Kendall **MOVED** a recommendation which was **SECONDED** by Cllr Mynott that:

“All Members of Brentwood Borough Council buy into the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.”

A vote was taken and the motion was **LOST**.

Cllr Hossack **MOVED** a motion and was **SECONDED** by Cllr Parker that:

“Members note the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy”.

A vote was taken and the motion was **CARRIED**.

193. Staff Values and Behavioural Framework

The Council's Corporate Strategy is primarily delivered by our number one resource: people. The delivery of any strategy is dependent on people and their organisational culture. As part of encouraging a positive team culture and to consider how we can deliver strategic objectives, a staff Values and Behavioural Framework has been developed.

Following workshops led by a range of staff across the organisation and subsequent internal consultation, we have arrived at four corporate values:

- Nurture
- Belong
- Smart
- Dynamic

These values are defined and supported by behaviours (Appendix A).

It was recommended that Members endorse these values and consider how they might be formally implemented in Council policy and guidance regarding member/officer engagement.

The Chair thanked Mr Drane and officers for the work that had gone into this and contributing to how they want to operate as an organisation.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Endorse the Values and Behavioural Framework for staff, set out in Appendix A.

R2. Approve that the Council considers ways to integrate the values and behaviours as part of officer and member engagement, through the review of relevant Council policy and/or guidance, and to be reported back to Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

Reasons for Recommendation

Much effort has been made to identify and communicate these values, including ongoing work to achieve staff buy-in. It is important that Members endorse the framework as part of integrating the values in a positive Team Brentwood culture and to make them more prominent across the organisation.

There is an opportunity to consider how these values can be expanded to apply to Members when engaging with officers. Therefore, it is recommended that this be further considered and reported back to Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

194. Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-25 was adopted in January 2020 and outlined the Council's key corporate priorities and objectives. A key priority is to grow our economy. The report sought approval to adopt an Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025, which will complement and underpin the Corporate Strategy.

The Economic Development Strategy provides greater detail on how we will grow the economy, combined with other priorities to protect our environment, develop our communities, improve our housing, and deliver an effective & efficient council.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Adopt the Economic Development Strategy as set out in Appendix A.

R2. Approve that delegated authority be given to the Corporate Director of Planning and Economy, in consultation with the Chair of Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee, to make minor artwork and formatting changes to the Economic Development Strategy in advance of publication.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Economic Development Strategy 2021-2025 is critical to the delivery of the Corporate Strategy 2020-2025.

A vote was taken on Standing Orders and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to extend the meeting for half an hour.

195. Brentwood Business Growth Grant

Since November 2020, central government had provided £2.99m to Brentwood Borough Council as part of its Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund allocation. To date five rounds of Additional Restrictions Grants had been distributed totalling £2.72m.

With the remaining £250,000 of ARG funding, (Subject to final reconciliation) it is recommended that a new Brentwood Business Growth Grant is created to support local businesses who are looking to scale and grow within the Borough post-pandemic.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the Brentwood Business Growth Grant policy, set out in Appendix A.

Reasons for Recommendation

To create a level playing field, this new ARG policy encourages businesses of any size or sector to put forward growth projects for funding. Grant applicants will be asked to detail how their project will create new jobs, safeguard existing jobs, increase turnover and bring new skills into the businesses.

Businesses can apply for up to £10,000 of ARG funding to support their projects.

Backing Essex Business, fully funded by Essex County Council, offers up to 12 hours of free business support. Their advisers can assist Brentwood businesses with analysing viable project options before submitting their grant applications.

The Brentwood Business Growth Grant can be used by local businesses as matched funding to help them unlock further grants from organisations such as Low Carbon Across South Essex (LoCASE) or South East Business Boost (SEBB).

Increasing new jobs, safeguarding existing jobs, increasing turnover and bringing new skills into the borough helps meet the Council's corporate objectives.

196. Southend Local Plan, Refining the Options consultation (Regulation 18)

The report sought approval on a formal to the Southend Local Plan, Refining the Options consultation (Regulation 18). This conveys broad support of Southend's aims in preparing a new local plan. The Southend Plan was currently at the early stages of the plan-making process with little specific details provided on the strategic approach for the area.

The Refining the Options consultation document made it clear that Southend Borough was unable to meet its full housing needs. Southend had formally asked if Brentwood Borough Council were able to take any of Southend's unmet housing need. The proposed response highlighted the Brentwood Borough limitations to doing so being wholly within Green Belt. Both authorities are members of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) and there is ongoing joint working regarding cross-boundary issues such as unmet needs.

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the response to the Southend Local Plan, Refined Options consultation (Regulation 18), as set out in Appendix A

Reasons for Recommendation

Southend Council is at the early stages of the plan-making process. No policies or site allocations have been proposed as part of this consultation and so the proposed response focuses on high-level strategic issues.

It is considered appropriate that the Council express broad support for Southend Council's efforts to develop a local plan in accordance with national policy and guidance, and the commitment to continue collaboration through the duty to cooperate on strategic planning matters that affect South Essex.

197. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.

198. Exclusion of press and public

The public were excluded from the meeting for the item of business on the grounds that the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 was involved.

The Chair closed the meeting to press and public and continued the meeting in private session.

199. Hutton Community Centre - EXEMPT

After a full discussion, Cllr Hossack **MOVED** and Cllr Parker **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED**.

A vote was taken on Standing Orders and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to extend the meeting for half an hour.

200. Seven Arches Investments Limited 2020/21 Business Plan

The report presented the 2020/21 SAIL annual directors report and quarterly health check for Seven Arches Investments Limited (SAIL) to Committee.

The item was for information only and no voting was required.

The meeting concluded at 22.30.