

Minutes

Finance, Assets, Investment & Recovery Committee Wednesday, 13th September, 2023

Attendance

Cllr Kendall (Chair)	Cllr Laplain
Cllr Barrett (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)	Cllr Parker
Cllr Barber	Cllr Poppy
Cllr Bridge	Cllr Worsfold

Apologies

Cllr Lewis

Substitute Present

Cllr Aspinell (substituting for Cllr Lewis)

Also Present

Cllr Dr Barrett
Cllr Mynott
Cllr Mrs Pound
Cllr Rigby
Cllr Russell
Cllr Sankey

Officers Present

Kim Anderson	- Corporate Manager Communities, Leisure & Health
Stuart Anderson	- Facilities Manager
Greg Campbell	- Director - Policy and Delivery
Laurie Edmonds	- Corporate Manager - Economic Development
Zoey Foakes	- Governance & Member Support Officer
Claire Mayhew	- Acting Joint Director of People & Governance & Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Quilter	- Corporate Manager (Strategic Planning)
Jonathan Stephenson	- Chief Executive
Steve Summers	- Strategic Director
David Wellings	- Corporate Health & Safety Advisor
Richard Wilson	- Commercial Consultant
Sam Wood	- Corporate Manager - Finance

LIVE BROADCAST

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

141. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Lewis with Cllr Aspinell substituting.

The Chair asked that Cllr Barrett be Vice Chair for the duration of this meeting only.

142. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Finance, Assets, Investment & Recovery Committee held on the 12th July 2023 were approved as a true record.

143. Chairs Update

The report began on page 23 of the agenda and highlighted the work the Officers have done.

The Chair thanked Officers Laurie Edmonds together with Kaye Thurgood and Nish Patel for the success of the Brentwood BID.

The Chair highlighted the upcoming Brentwood Job Fair which is a bigger event than last year with over 30 employers signed up.

Following the success of previous Brentwood Business Showcase events, there will now be a South East Essex Business Exhibition taking place at the Brentwood Centre on 14th March 2024.

This week, Brentwood Borough Council were amongst 20 council's listed in a report by Moody's about local authorities with high levels of debt. What the report didn't have was any other context or commentary around our position.

To reassure members, our staff, and residents - the Council's medium term financial strategy is robust and our governance process is robust.

The value of our assets far outweighs our overall debt, and the returns we get on these assets provides additional income that we invest back into the services we provide.

We also have mitigations in place to reduce the negative impact of unforeseen economic events.

144. OneTeam Transformation Programme - Strategic Partnership with Rochford District Council - Quarter 2 Update

The purpose of the report was to provide a quarterly update on progress of the One Team Transformation Programme.

Following a discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

R1. That the Committee notes the progress of the OneTeam Transformation Programme.

Reason for Recommendation

To ensure that Members are informed of the progress of the OneTeam Transformation Programme.

145. ULEZ (Ultra Low Emissions Zone)

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

146. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Update August 2023

This report provided a summary of the projects and spend to date for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Cllr Kendall **MOVED** a new recommendation and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** this.

Members **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

R1: That a cross party workshop be introduced to the discuss UKSPF especially in relation to the third year funding and how it will be allocated.

Mrs Edmonds updated the committee that since the report was written, there are two further UK Shared Prosperity Fund updates to share.

With our Year 2 UKSPF E23 allocation, we have co-commissioned - along with Rochford District Council - a peer networking scheme to support start up businesses, growing businesses, businesses wanting to become more sustainable and businesses looking to innovate.

The £9k that is marked as TBC in the Year 2 budget within the report is now a confirmed expenditure.

The new scheme will be called GET SET GROW and will launch on Monday, 18 September. It will culminate in 'The Big Pitch' - a Dragon's Den style event - that will be held in spring 2024.

We have also used some of our E1 funding to purchase 5 new picnic benches for Crown Street, including 2 that are wheelchair accessible. They were installed earlier today.

147. OneTeam Health & Safety Policy

The purpose of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy (HSWP) is to fulfil the legal requirement to set out how the Council will manage its responsibilities in law and how this applies to all employees and Council partners. The HSWP sets out the approach the authority takes to the successful management of health and safety.

Through the Council's strategic partnership with Rochford District Council, officers have developed a joint policy for both organisations. This is developed as a leading statutory document that is pivotal to the Health & Safety and Wellbeing plan.

The HSWP is supported by a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy that provides more details on the specific goals of the organisation, along with how these will be achieved. Due to the complexity of health and safety there is also a diverse range of topic specific Policies, Standards, Procedures and Risk Assessments that detail what is required to ensure management and compliance across the organisation.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

For members to endorse the draft OneTeam Health & Safety and Wellbeing Policy attached in Appendix A.

Reason for Recommendation

By endorsing this statutory policy the Council is committed to ensuring there is always a positive and proactive culture towards Health, Safety, and the Wellbeing of its organisation.

By committing to Health, Safety, and Wellbeing, the Council will also be contributing to the National Health and Safety initiative; the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE's) new ten-year strategy: Protecting People and Places.

It recognises that the successful management of health and safety makes a positive contribution towards the achievement of the corporate strategy. It supports effective development of management systems, commitment to

continuous improvement, and service delivery to the community and our residents, in addition to meeting our statutory responsibilities as an employer.

The Council is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all staff, or others affected by its activities, so far as is reasonably practical. Staff are our most valued resource, and their health, safety, welfare, and overall wellbeing is of paramount importance and essential to the planning and delivering of quality services to our residents, visitors, and others. We are committed to preventing ill health and injuries, including those related to psychosocial risk and promoting people's well-being at work.

148. Hutton Poplars Lodge and Hutton Poplars Bowling Club

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On the date of the meeting, the Chair update the Committee that he received confirmation from Hutton Bowls Club that they were no longer continuing the Club due to low membership numbers. Due to this, R2 was no longer applicable for voting.

The Council would be supporting the Bowls Club in winding up the Club.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted on R1 and R3 and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to:

R1: The Council does not renew the lease on Hutton Poplars Lodge with the Bowls Club.

~~**R2: The Council gives the Hutton Poplars Bowls Club three months to explore and secure the funding for Option 2 as set out within the report.**~~

R3: The Council looks to market Hutton Poplars Lodge for commercial vendors.

Reason for Recommendation

The Council needs to ensure that the facilities that it manages are delivering value for money and meet the needs of the residents.

149. Leisure Contract - Brentwood Centre and Hartswood Pavilion in King George's Playing Fields

The Brentwood Leisure Centre and Hartwood Pavilion in King George's Playing Fields is currently managed by Everyone Active (SLM) and their contract is due to expire on 1 October 2023. The Council is looking to extend the contract until 31 March 2025 and during that period draw up the tender documents to go out in 2024 for a longer-term leisure contract. This short extension aligns with expiration of the Leisure Contract for Rochford District Council's leisure facilities. It is proposed to do a joint tender for the leisure facilities across Brentwood and Rochford from 1 April 2025. In order to inform the specification for the tender document both authorities Council needs to undertake a condition survey and feasibility study to understand the investment that the Council's and the operator will need to make over the term of the contract. A separate report is going to the Executive Group at Rochford District Council.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to:

R1: Agree to extend the existing Leisure Contract with Everyone Active until 31 March 2025.

R2: To appoint Sports, Leisure and Culture (SPL) consultants to undertake feasibility study and provide support with the procurement of a new combined leisure contract for the management and operation of the following facilities across Brentwood and Rochford: • Brentwood Leisure Centre • Hartwood Pavilion (including Splash pad and Adventure play) in King George's Playing Fields • Clements Hall Leisure Centre • Rayleigh Leisure Centre

R3: Refer the report to the Housing, Health and Community Committee for information

Reason for Recommendation

- Brentwood Borough Council needs to develop a robust and evidenced based a feasibility study on potential investment options at the Brentwood Centre.

150. Wedding Options out of the Town Hall

Currently Brentwood Borough Council has a wedding offer at the Town Hall on Thursday and Fridays and utilises Committee Room 1 and 2 and on occasions the Council Chamber to undertake weddings. It is proposed that officers look at Merrymeade House as an alternative venue for weddings out of the Town Hall.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED** to:

R1: Delegate authority for the Director of Assets and Investment to negotiate an agreement with Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services to manage weddings/civil ceremonies at Merrymeade House.

R2: Ensure that the change to the Wedding /Civil Ceremonies is clearly communicated to the public via the Council's website

Reason for Recommendation

There is a staff resource to manage these bookings, meet and greet the registrar and the couples undertaking the wedding/civil service as well as caretaker support to reconfiguring the committee room furniture. The income that is generated is split between Essex County Council and Brentwood Borough Council.

The ceremonies have been reduced to just two days a week due to the ongoing staff resource requirements, so by moving them out of the Town Hall a much better offer could be provided. Merrymeade House can accommodate a similar number of guests plus the wedding party. It is a Grade II listed building so is an attractive addition for the photographs and has a tearoom which could offer a wedding breakfast option as well.

It also offers Brentwood Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) an opportunity for an additional income stream which could reduce the core funding requirements from the Council going forward.

151. Response to National Grid Non-Statutory consultation on Norwich to Tilbury

The report considered the non-statutory consultation in respect of National Grid's Transmission's 400kv grid reinforcement between Norwich and Tilbury. The project was previously referred to as East Anglia Green. This project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

The report provided an overview of the project and its potential impacts on Brentwood borough. A draft response had been submitted to comply with the consultation deadline and is subject to committee approval in line with the recommendation (Appendix A of the report). The response objects to the proposed Norwich to Tilbury scheme on the basis that alternative options including re-routing and undergrounding need to be given more serious consideration, direct impacts on the delivery of Dunton Hills Garden Village (DHGV), and impacts on affected communities, Green Belt, heritage, landscape and ecology. This is consistent with other responses from affected local authorities, including Essex County Council (Appendix B of the report).

This non-statutory consultation remained the starting point for the project. There will be further statutory consultation in 2024. The Council requests further ongoing engagement with National Grid on the scheme to help resolve its objections.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to:

R1. Approve the response to the Norwich to Tilbury non-statutory consultation, as set out in Appendix A of the report.

Reason for Recommendation

- Officers consider that Brentwood should submit an in-principle objection to the scheme, as the alternative options have not been fully explored and considered versus the impact that the on land overhead pylons and cabling option may have on a variety of factors, as set out in Appendix A.

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152. Brentwood Borough Council response to the Basildon Borough Council Local Plan Issue and Options Consultation 2027-2042 - Officers Response

At 9.00pm, a vote was taken on Standing Orders and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes.

The chair adjourned for a 10 minutes comfort break.

The report sought approval on a formal response from Brentwood Borough Council (submitted as an officer's response pending approval from the committee) to the Basildon Local Plan, Issues & Options consultation (Regulation 18). The consultation ran from 27 June to 5 September 2023.

The officer response conveys broad support of Basildon Borough Council's aims in preparing a new Local Plan. The Basildon Plan is currently at the beginning stages of the plan-making process with no specific details on the strategic approach for the area.

The consultation focused more on seeking options on what the strategic strategy should be. The consultation document highlights the fact that as of now the standard method indicates that Basildon Borough Council has a housing need of 1,041 new home per annum, resulting in 20,820 new homes over the plan period. The consultation document seeks opinions on what is an appropriate level of housing to be delivered and makes reference that the plan could provide less housing depending on the outcome of the pending NPPF revision. The consultation document also refers to Basildon's gypsy and traveller's needs currently being 85 pitches and 3 travelling showpeople plots for those that meet the planning definition and an additional 93 pitches and 86 traveling showpeople plots for those that do not meet the definition. The officer response highlights the importance of Basildon Borough Council making every effort possible to meet these needs in full.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to:

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

Reason for Recommendation

Basildon Borough Council is currently working towards a new Local Plan, with a possible plan period of 2027 to 2042 (with the possibility of this being extended subject to this consultation outcome). The consultation document was an 'Issues & Options' Plan, which is at the very beginning stages of the Plan making process. The Issues & Options consultation document was out for consultation from 27 June to 5 September 2023. Basildon Council agreed to accept an officer's response to the consultation pending approval from the committee.

Brentwood Borough Council is duty bound to undergo the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on preparation of their local plans. In addition to being a neighbouring authority, both Basildon and Brentwood are members of the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA), and therefore ongoing joint working and discussion on cross-boundary planning matters, such as unmet housing needs, is discussed as part of the preparation of the South Essex Joint Strategic Framework.

153. Local Plan Review update

The Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033 was adopted in March 2022 following Examination in Public overseen by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. The appointed Inspectors in their final report recommended a number of Main Modifications in order to make the plan sound and capable of adoption. One of those included the addition of Policy MG06: Local Plan Review and Update. This Policy sets out that the Council's commitment to bring forward a partial update of the Plan with the objective of meeting the full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs. The review was required to commence immediately with submission of the review for examination within 28 months.

To facilitate the production of the Local Plan Review it is necessary to reconvene the Local Plan Member Working Group.

Reviewing the Local Plan will ensure that the Council continues to have an up-to-date strategic planning framework for the borough that provides control and certainty at the planning application stage and protects communities from speculative applications. It will also assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives, including climate change and placemaking ambitions, and support job creation and regeneration.

To support the preparation of any Local Plan there is a need to update relevant evidence including undertaking a call for sites.

Following discussion Cllr Kendall **MOVED** and Cllr G Barrett **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. Members voted and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** to:

R1. Approve that work is continued for the preparation of the Local Plan Review, including a focus on climate change and sustainability matters, with emerging work presented to a reconvened Local Development Plan Member Working Group and key stages brought to committee in due course.

R2. Approve that Local Plan supporting evidence is reviewed and updated where appropriate, including commencing a Call for Sites consultation.

Reason for Recommendation

National Policy requires that Local Plans as a minimum are reviewed at least every five years should be updated as necessary. The adopted Brentwood Local Plan requires under Policy MG06: Local Plan Review and Update that an immediate review is undertaken with submission of the review for examination occurring within 28 months of adoption. This was stipulated by the appointed Planning Inspector who oversaw the examination of the Local Plan as there was an identified shortfall in meeting housing needs. Therefore, it is imperative that the Council proceeds with this work to review the adopted Local Plan to ensure housing supply is maintained to meet identified needs.

In addition, there is a need to consider climate change and sustainability matters and reviewing the policies within the adopted Local Plan particularly given that the Council recently declared a Climate Emergency at Ordinary Council in June 2023.

To facilitate the production of the Local Plan Review it is necessary to reconvene the Local Plan Member Working Group which will allow for cross party discussion on the work as it is prepared. Key consultation stages such as Regulation 18 and 19 will be brought to committee for member approval in due course.

A Local Plan needs to be underpinned by appropriate and proportionate evidence; therefore, this will need to be reviewed and updated to support the Local Plan Review. There is an immediate need to undertake a Call for Sites in line with National Planning Practice Guidance so an up-to-date baseline is established on what development opportunities are available. Findings from any updated and emerging evidence will inform the preparation of the Local Plan which will be brought before the Local Plan Member Working Group

154. Vary the order of the agenda

Cllr Kendall **MOVED** to vary the order of the agenda and was **SECONDED** by Cllr G Barrett to take Urgent Business ahead of the exempt items on the agenda.

155. Urgent business

There were no items of urgent business. The Chair closed the meeting to the press and public.

156. EXEMPT - Brentwood Town Football Club Lease – Less than Best Consideration

At 9.30pm, a vote was taken on Standing Orders and it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes.

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.

A Motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Kendall and **SECONDED** by Cllr G Barrett to agree the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED**.

(Cllr Kendall declared a non registerable interest as his company had made a donation to the Football Club.)

157. EXEMPT - Seven Arches Investments Limited Quarterly report

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 report was for information only and no voting was required.

(Cllr Bridge declared a non pecuniary interest due to working with a previous colleague who had a connection to a SAIL owned property.)

The meeting concluded at 10:10pm