

<b>Committee(s):</b> Ordinary Council	<b>Date:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
<b>Subject:</b> Chairs Report for Finance, Assets, Investments and Recovery Committee	
<b>Committee Chair:</b> Cllr Kendall	

### Update on UKSPF Fund

Further to the decision taken at the 13 September FAIR meeting, a UKSPF workshop was held on 24 October at Town Hall. There was cross party consensus on the recommendations presented to members:

- **E1 (high streets):** Adjust the Year 3 allocation to 50% capital/50% revenue to ensure that legacy projects can be delivered through direct commissioning and launching a shop improvement grant scheme
- **E6 (culture):** Keep the Year 3 capital/revenue split as is, with a view to launching two grant schemes totalling c£200k and ringfencing c£40k for direct commissioning of local projects
- **E10 (sports):** Adjust the Year 3 allocation to 70% capital/30% revenue to ensure that legacy projects can be delivered through two grant schemes totalling c£185k and ringfencing c£60k for direct commissioning of local projects
- **E23 (business support):** Revenue-only business support schemes will be directly commissioned

A second round of UKSPF grant funding will launch on 11 December for capital grants between £10,000 and £60,000 and for revenue grants between £5,000 and £50,000 to support arts, culture, heritage and sports projects delivered between April 2024 and March 2025. The full guidance and expression of interest forms can be found on [www.brentwood.gov.uk/funding](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/funding).

A grant scheme will be launching in January 2024 to enable high street businesses in Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone to make shop front and accessibility improvements.

A UKSPF report will be brought to the March FAIR meeting.

### Update on South Essex Business Expo

Over 160 exhibitor stands have been booked for the South Essex Business Expo. The level of interest from businesses is so strong that the organiser, Networking Essex, is going to build a marquee to the side of Brentwood Centre to create additional floor space.

### Brentwood Speed Networking

Working in partnership with the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce, the council will be holding a Speed Networking event on 24 January 2024 at The Old Brentwoods Club. The format will enable participants to meet a lot of people in a short space of time, with the objective of finding like-minded businesses they would like to connect with further.

### Adoption of planning obligations SPD

The draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was first brought to the Planning, Resource and Economic Development committee on 23 November 2022. The Planning Obligations SPD was consulted on for six weeks from 8 December 2022 to 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Since then, the planning policy team has considered the comments received from the consultation and some minor amendments have been. Officers are seeking the approval of members to formally adopt the final version of the Planning Obligations SPD.

The Planning Obligations SPD will sit alongside the Brentwood Local Plan 2016-2033, and provide additional guidance on the council's approach towards seeking planning obligations required to make development schemes acceptable in planning terms. It identifies topic areas where planning obligations may be applicable depending on the scale of development and sets out the required obligations or contributions. Once adopted the SPD will be a material consideration in respect of all relevant planning applications.

### Fees and Charges

Fees and charges made by the Council for various services are reviewed on an annual basis by the relevant Committee relating to the services provided.

Recommended amendments to the fees and charges are incorporated into the budget setting process to take effect from the following financial year. Fees and charges to be approved will cover: Parking, office accommodation, design and print and economic development.

### Housing write offs

In July 2023 the Council introduced a new Former Tenant Debt Recovery Agency to assist with the collection of all former tenant debts. This triggered a review of all outstanding debts.

Following this review, a number of accounts have been identified as requiring write offs for debts where all avenues of recovery have been exhausted, the debt is statute barred (6 year old debt) rendering it unrecoverable for legal action or the debtor has passed away and there is no money in the estate to cover the debts.

### Basildon & Brentwood NHS Alliance

Officers are in the process of arranging a meeting with the Basildon & Brentwood NHS Alliance to discuss NHS funding and section 106 agreements to meet the health needs of our Local Development Plan. Further information will come back to a future committee.

### Meeting with Transport For London

Following a letter sent from the Leader of the Council on its objection to the expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone, TFL have offered the opportunity to meet with them to discuss the expansion of this zone and where and how improvements to rail and bus networks could be improved for Brentwood residents. The council are seeking a meeting with TFL in early January 2024 to discuss these matters.

### National Grid Norwich to Tilbury project and proposed Government subsidy for those living near power lines

The Norwich to Tilbury project is a proposal by National Grid to reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between the existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk, and Tilbury in Essex, as well as connect new offshore wind generation. Draft proposals include a new power line around and through the east of Brentwood borough. The project was first proposed in January 2022 followed by two non-statutory consultations, the most recent in summer 2023. FAIR Committee approved a response to the consultation on behalf of the council in September (Item 151, 13 September 2023). A statutory consultation is expected in 2024 when more details will become available for comment.

Separately, as part of the Autumn Statement the Government has recently announced a subsidy for people living near planned pylons and electricity substations to receive up to £10,000 off their energy bills over a decade (£1,000 per year for 10-years).

This is based on the outcomes of the Transmission Acceleration Action Plan that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero published in November 2023 in response to the Electricity Commissioner's report on accelerating electricity transmission network build.

Recommendation CB2 of the Commissioner's report set out the need for residents in close proximity to new overhead power lines to receive a defined direct payment. In response, the Government's action plan proposes a scheme of electricity bill discounts and states '*Whilst the exact scheme design is still under development, we estimate this could offer, for example, up to £10,000 per property (£1,000 per year, ~£80 per month, over 10 years)*'.

The action plan explains that the Government has already published a consultation on community benefits for transmission network infrastructure in March 2023. The Action Plan goes on to explain that further work is needed to design the detail and implementation of the overall scheme. They intend to publish guidance on wider

community benefits in 2024 which will be voluntary whilst they explore options for a mandatory approach.