



FINANCE, ASSETS, INVESTMENT AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

20 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Chairs Update
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This report provides an update to Members in relation to the areas covered under the Terms of Reference of the Finance, Assets, Investment and Recovery Committee.

MULTI STOREY CAR PARK – COPTFOLD ROAD

As councillors are aware, the payment system at the car park failed at the beginning of September and this failure escalated quite rapidly. As the current system was not operational, the Council took the decision to lift the barrier at the MSCP. This was to reduce the risk of users being trapped inside the car park due to limited resources to man the barrier manually, this resulted in a period of free parking. Whilst the car park was free, officers have been working to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. Attempts were made to bring the current system back online with the current provider however the system was not capable of doing this and the aged system requires replacing.

As an interim measure the Council has installed a QR code system that people can scan and use to pay. This temporary solution went live as of Monday 13th November, this date was chosen to ensure there is no disruption over the Remembrance weekend when staff were not available to assist.

The Council made social media posts advising of the changes that were coming into the place. Signage has been produced and has been placed at the entrance of the car park advising of the new payment method and throughout the other levels in the car park. A member of the parking service teams was present in the lobby of the carpark during the first week of implementation to assist the public on using the app to pay for parking. If users have been unable to use the app, they have been redirected to Chatham Way and William Hunter Way where they are able to pay by cash.

QR codes have been displayed at each pedestrian entrance and lift lobbies. Officers are regularly inspecting the QR codes to ensure they are the Council's QR codes mitigating the risk of fraud that is posed. Officers are also directing users to input the website address into their devices if users are not comfortable with scanning QR codes.

Regarding the loss of income during the period the car park was free, the Council is forecasting a loss of around £13,578. The loss of income is predominantly due to the daily payments. Instead of issuing refunds for season ticket holders, the Council has extended their permits by the period that the MSCP payment season was not operational.

Work is still progressing with the procurement of a new system. The final contract documents have been received and have been reviewed by legal. The new system will utilise ANPR technology and increase the safety of the car park by creating a more secure car park. The ANPR technology will open the barrier and the gates of the car park on exit when payment is made on exit. Season ticket holders and Beckett House residents number plates will be entered into the system so they can enter and exit the car park. This system will be installed and operational within the first quarter of 2024.

WILLIAM HUNTER WAY CAR PARK

Officers are currently preparing a final specification and tender documents to resurface and reline William Hunter Way Car Park. The works will comprise of rebuilding and resurfacing identified areas of the car park, repairs to damaged drainage systems, marking out a new layout to increase capacity. Officers are also looking at option costs for new entrance height restrictors, fencing and gates across the centre of the car park to address ASB in the evening, removal of some shrubbery and replacement of external fencing.

It is anticipated that the works will be carried out late January, depending on the weather. The car park will be closed in stages whilst work is undertaken so that disruption to users is minimal. If the car park is full drivers will be directed to Chatham Way car park as well as the MSCP. Communications will be circulated as soon as there is a start on site date confirmed.

BASILDON AND 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.

BRENTWOOD JOBS FAIR

The second Brentwood Jobs Fair was held on 11 October at The Brentwood Centre, in partnership with the Brentwood Jobcentre+. Over 250 visitors attended to speak with 36 local employers. The Jobcentre reported that 14 verbal job offers were made on the day and 28 people enrolled on training courses. The Economic Development is looking at dates in 2024 for another jobs fair, potentially combined with a skills/careers event.

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.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)

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
- **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):** No changes, 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.

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.

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.