

## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Asset & Enterprise Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Russell Quirk**

Since July 2014 there have been two meetings of the Asset & Enterprise Committee, and a number of key decisions have been made, and detailed information provided on key issues affecting the Council.

The Committee discussed the following issues:

- An Asset Management Strategy was drafted and approved. The Strategy sets out the key actions for 2014/15 including; an asset challenge review; delivery of major projects; developing housing for social and private tenants; maximize revenue and capital receipts.
- The sale of Warley Training Centre for the development of 38 residential units of which 35% will be affordable has been approved on improved terms.
- The possibility of transferring the vacant site at Hallsford Bridge to HRA for the development of affordable residential units has been investigated.
- Options other than the sale of Old House are being examined to determine whether there better outcomes to the Council.
- The regularisation of the Advertising Hoardings at Ongar Road, Chatham Way & William Hunter Way and recovery of arrears has been satisfactorily achieved.
- The sale of Bell Mead, Ingatestone was approved to provide 14 residential units 5 of which are to be affordable units.
- A Health & Safety Review and an independent survey of the roof to the Hutton Community Centre has been undertaken to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and ensure the building is safe to use.
- A report was presented to the Committee on 17 September relating to the resolution of the Guardian Trustee position of the Council at Herongate & Ingrave Village Hall.
- Reports were presented to the Committee on the 17 September on the review of expired leases and un-actioned rent reviews and also the asset review as part of the Asset Management Strategy.

## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Graeme Clark**

### **Statement of Accounts:**

The Statement of Accounts was received on time and agreed at the meeting on 30 September. The deadline of 30 September causes practical problems each year and the Chair would like to thank all Officers and Ernest & Young, the auditors, for their hard work in meeting the deadline despite a number of last minute issues.

### **Internal Audit Plan:**

Members noted the plan and agreed that this was working.

### **Strategic Assessment of Risk Review**

Revision had been completed and presented at the meeting on 30 September. The revised risk register is clear, concise and more focused than previously.

There will be a Members' training workshop on risk on 30 October and the Chair encouraged as many as possible to attend as this is an area that all can contribute to.

### **Fraud Statistics:**

Fraud Statistics were discussed at both the July and September meetings. The Chair wished to thank Officers for all their work on following up referrals which have been proven to be illegal. A complete analysis was presented at the September meeting.

### **Scrutiny Work Programme:**

Members have agreed this but it should be noted that this is also flexible; so if additional work needs to be included the Chair will discuss further with Members.

First Task and Finish Group has completed work for LCTS and reported back on 30.9.14. Their recommendation will be presented to Ordinary Council in December.

Work on WHW and HCC is also in process with an additional meeting agreed for 28 October where items on these issues will be reported back.

The Chair would like to thank all Members and Officers who are working on these task and finish groups.

## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

### **Committee: Business & Town Centres**

#### **Chair: Councillor David Kendall**

A *Business Directory* is being developed in order to support businesses and progress the Economic Development agenda for the Borough. This will enable us to understand who our businesses are so that we can engage, support and communicate with them effectively to support their growth and development. The last business listing was undertaken as a hard copy directory in 2008 and is out of date. Half of the borough's businesses have already been contacted and the exercise will be completed in early 2015/6 (from next years budget),

A free *Brentwood Business Funding and Advice Event* is being held on Wednesday 29 October 2014 in partnership with Invest Essex's Innovation Programme at Hutton Poplar Hall. The event is an opportunity for businesses to find out about the different types of business advice, grants and funding that is available to support your business, and to network with other businesses. A range of exhibitors will be available on the day who can provide information and advice to support business covering areas such as grants, loans, business rate relief, business mentoring and advice, start-up support, European and Regional funding, bid writing and working with universities. There is the option of booking one of two sessions (2-4pm or 4-6pm).

A proposal has been developed to recruit four *apprenticeships* within the Council subject to the additional resources (£83,000) being agreed as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process.

Research is being undertaken to establish the feasibility of developing and supporting a *Schools Careers Fair* in February 2015.

A proposal has been developed to support *commissioning and implementing a visitor website*, subject to future resourcing for the on-going promotion and servicing of this website being resolved and determined by Council in March 2015 as part of the budget setting exercise.

Approval has been granted for the *introduction of a charge for night time parking* to commence from 20 October 2014. This will be monitored and the outcome will be reported back to the Business and Town Centre Committee in February 2015.

The *Brentwood Borough Council Renaissance Group* is developing *Business Trade Clusters* to deal with matters and issues at a local trade level and inviting Cluster representatives to attend BB Renaissance Group meetings. The Clusters will help to address the declining engagement with traders and their input into Renaissance Group projects, bids and decision making.

*A Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group website has been commissioned. This will provide a marketing and promotional tool for the Renaissance programme, including the ability to submit funding bids online and individual Cluster Groups pages.*

Business Trade Cluster bids have for *Small Business Saturday and Crown Street Market*. Bids are being developed for Shenfield Christmas Lighting Up Event and Ingatestone Christmas Victorian Evening. Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group will be supporting the calligraphy and presentation of *the Medieval Market Town translated charters*, and materials used, for permanent display at the Town Hall. Costs will be split between Renaissance Group bid funding, the Chamber of Commerce and private business sponsorship.

*A Friday High Street market has been successfully launched to complement the Saturday market and the development of a regular Saturday Community Market for Crown Street.*

Business and Town Centre Committee members have been asked to consider the proposal to *introduce Teenage Markets, Evening Markets and German/Continental style Christmas market for 2015.*

Renaissance Group is supporting the funding of the venue and promotional costs for *three Business Support Workshops* at Merrymeade House, supplied by Pro-actions, Business Improvement Specialists. The first topic is Marketing for Growth and an Introduction to Social Media on 11 November, followed by Business Planning and finally How to Move Your Business to the Next Stage in early 2015. This is being promoted widely including through the new Business Directory contacts.

## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Environment Committee**

**Chair: Councillor William Lloyd**

Since July 2014 there have been two meetings of the Environment Committee, and a number of key decisions have been made, and detailed information provided on key issues affecting the Council.

The Committee discussed the following issues:

- Education programme – this provided an update on the excellent work that is being carried out by depot staff, working with schools and promoting recycling to our residents through a number of road shows.
- MOT testing – it was agreed to develop a business case to implement an MOT service at the Warley depot, a further decision will be made by the Asset and Enterprise committee on a way forward for a number of entrepreneurial services, including MOT testing.
- Tree Warden scheme – the committee has agreed to develop the tree warden scheme, and a promotional campaign will commence to increase the number of volunteers participating, and working closely with the current countryside volunteers.
- Textile collections – the Council agreed that textile collections will be considered for our residents, but consultation will take place with local charities to identify any impact on them before a final decision.
- Fire Authority – it has been agreed that officers will develop further the partnership arrangements that were put in place for the winter gritting during 2013/14. Discussions will be held to identify other opportunities to enhance community services, and work closely with the neighbourhood action team.
- Closure of Crown Corner – the recycling centre at Crown Corner has been a problem for some time and has suffered from increased flytipping. A meeting with Kelvedon Hatch Parish Council confirmed their support to close the site, and discussions will be held with other Parish Council's, and local ward councilors to identify other sites that could be closed, or where new sites could be placed.
- Highway Maintenance - A positive discussion has taken place with Essex County Council regarding future road repairs, which could provide more opportunities for Members to be involved in discussions relating to highway repairs through the Local Highways Panel.

## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Finance and Resources Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Barry Aspinell**

### **Review of Elections:**

Members were presented with proposals for a review of the election process which would include;

- Reviews of the current cycle of elections;
- Polling day practices;
- Verification and count procedures;
- Impact of Individual Electoral Registration (IER);
- Possible marketing campaigns to promote electoral registration and voting.

The Committee agreed that any significant changes to the election cycle would need to be presented at Full Council for approval.

The Committee resolved to support a review of elections and a further report will be presented at the meeting on 29 October 2014.

### **Performance:**

In June Members of the Committee considered key reports on:

- 1) Provisional Outturn 2013/14
- 2) Annual Treasury Management Report 2013/14
- 3) Performance Indicators 2014/15

### **Organisational and People Development Strategy and Staff Survey:**

Members were advised of the outcomes of the Staff Survey carried out in February 2014.

Following the results of the survey the below actions have been undertaken;

- Manager's workshops held throughout June;
- Organisation and People Development Strategy has been compiled;

- Action Plan has been drawn up by Managers to support the delivery of the Organisation and People Development Strategy.

Members noted the results of the survey and supported the implementation of the Organisation and People Development Strategy.

A further Staff Survey will be carried out December/January.

#### **Revised Health and Safety Policy:**

The Committee agreed that following a revision of the Health and Safety Policy, to show current organisational and management structure, this Policy be approved.

Corporate Health and Safety continues to enhance employee safety within the council. This has been brought about through improvements to the on line accident reporting system enabling higher accountability, the continued production of risk assessments for high risk activities, employee training for lone working and ladder safety.

#### **Business Continuity and Emergency Planning**

After a full appraisal of the Business Continuity and Emergency Planning provisions in place, these are being thoroughly revised and remodelled to provide more specific actions needed to be taken by services and their managers when the need arises. Part of this work will include training for managers and staff.

#### **Communications Protocols:**

Members were advised of revisions to the Communications Protocols document, which outlined the increase of the use of Twitter as a medium for engaging with residents. Alongside this Members were presented with a new Communications Strategy for 2014/15, which aims to support delivery of the Council's strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2013-2016.

Members were also advised of protocols which should be adopted when using social media in a political sense.

Members also agreed that in addition to the recommendations in the report, the Public Information Panel would continue to be made up of three members – two from the administration and one from the opposition.

## **Future Work**

- Work has commenced on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) – this will start with a review of the current year budget which will be presented to Committee on 29 October 2014.
- A Residents Survey was undertaken earlier this year to provide much needed baseline data on customer opinions. This will also be presented at the October meeting.



## **Report to the Council 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Housing & Health Committee**

**Chairperson: Councillor Ross Carter**

### **Affordable Housing Strategy**

A key objective of the Housing and Health Committee is to promote the development of Affordable Housing in the Borough. To help us achieve a sustainable approach to the development of Affordable Housing for Brentwood, to provide much needed homes we require an Affordable Housing Strategy.

An Affordable Housing Strategy Workshop is to be held on 6 October 2014, facilitated by an independent consultant; to help Members and Officers agree the vision and decide the setting of priorities for Brentwood.

In the short term Officers and Members are identifying under used Garage and car park sites, to explore the possible future use for development of Affordable Housing.

### **Essex Landlords Accreditation Scheme**

The Essex Landlords Accreditation Scheme (ELAS) is a new scheme set up by Essex Local Authorities to promote and encourage landlords of privately rented homes to manage their properties to a high standard.

The scheme will be operated by Blue watch (part of the fire service) as an impartial organisation; to provide landlords with advice and confidence to discuss housing related issues regarding their properties and tenants. Blue watch will work closely with all of the local authorities in the scheme, helping to set and achieve the best possible level of management.

The launch of the ELAS took place at Kelvedon Park on the 25 September 2014 and was attended by the Vice Chair of Housing Cllr Vicky Davis and Cllr Hirst.

Housing and Health Committee on the 9 July 2014 approved permission for the Housing team explore the setting up of ELAS in Brentwood subject to our legal team reviewing the Contract and researching further information on costs to Landlords. An update and proposed implementation plan will be submitted to Housing and Health Committee on the 5 November 2014.

### **Annual Report to Residents**

In exchange for light-touch regulation from the Homes and Communities Agency, providers of affordable housing, have to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to working with tenants and leaseholder's to provide help and support to enable Residents to scrutinise the delivery of good housing management services.

The publication of the Annual Report although no longer a compulsory requirement; is recognised as best practice. Tenants Talk Back group have been working with Officers from the Housing team on the production of the Annual Report; the Annual Report is due for publication in November 2014.

### **Food Safety**

Food Safety enforcement continues to routinely inspect and sample from food premises. Over 96% of food premises continue to be broadly compliant with food law maintaining high standards for consumers within the borough. The Borough continues to sample foods for the presence of allergens within Chinese and Indian food takeaways in partnership with Essex County Council's Trading Standards.

### **Health and Safety Enforcement**

Health and safety enforcement is focusing on project interventions rather than routine enforcement as the main thrust of its actions to bring about compliance where high employee risk has been identified. Safety within care homes including window security to prevent falls from residencies above ground floor is one such example.

### **Fire at Thoby Priory, Mountnessing**

Environmental Health officers have been involved in a multi-agency response to the fire at Thoby Priory Mountnessing. The fire started in a large pile of wood waste on a site which was under investigation by the Environment Agency for illegal waste disposal. Since the fire started on 18<sup>th</sup> August there have been regular teleconferences involving Essex Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency, Police, Environmental Health and the Leader to update and discuss issues relating to control of the fire. We have been involved in dealing with concerns from local residents about air quality issues and have taken advice from Public Health England's advisors to initiate a programme of air quality monitoring in the vicinity of the site.

## **Report to the Council - 22 October 2014**

**Committee: Licensing**

**Chairperson: Councillor Liz Cohen**

The licensing team is working closely with and promoting the membership of BASLE (Brentwood Association for Safer Licensed Establishments). BASLE is the Brentwood Equivalent to PubWatch with an aim of discussing and working together to promote best practice within the local licensed alcohol and entertainment industries.

Some 60 plus premises have been visited over the last two months with all being invited to attend an open evening at the Holiday Inn on 6 October 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to re-enforce the benefits and purpose of BASLE and to introduce various members of the licensing team and other key responsible authorities to the trade members. By promoting free and open communication it is intended that all key stakeholders may be able to work together for the betterment of the borough.

There was an exceptional turnout with approximately 70 attendees who heard presentations from the Police, Trading Standards, and the Council's noise control and licensing teams. Contact details were recorded from all attendees to improve future two way communication. All agreed that this provided a valuable forum to improve safety standards and reduce anti-social behaviour by promoting best practice. This will also benefit the local economy. Further meetings of this nature are planned.

## **Report to the Council - 22 October 2014**

### **Committee: Planning and Development Control**

#### **Chairperson: Councillor Phil Baker**

On taking up the Chairmanship of the Committee, Cllr Mynott, Vice Chairman, and I met with all the planning and building control staff to reassure them of our commitment to improving the service and working together with staff. We intend to modernise the running of the service in line with many other authorities that have already done so, with a report coming to the next Council on changes to delegations, new committee terms of reference and updated protocols. These changes will increase the efficiency and consistency with which planning decisions are taken and also importantly improve staff morale. Even more significant is that I am advised that there is potential for up to £100,000 savings per annum, going forward, in the medium to long term. This has been an aspiration for the Planning Department for some time now and Phil Mynott and myself wish to drive this through under our watch.

The production of a new Local Plan is our top priority for the year and, subject to good progress with suppliers and partners, by the end of the calendar year, we should have a revised consultation draft, without a large strategic allocation at West Horndon, and that meets our full housing need. We have increased staff for this important project to give us a chance of having a submission draft approved by the Council by the end of April and adoption of the new Local Plan by the end of 2015.

Our other priority is customer service, where we are reviewing and improving our pre-application procedures and building upon a recent, strong increase in performance. I'm pleased to note in recent months, a steep increase in the number of both pre-applications and applications. This reflects continued strong developer interest and investment in our Borough and has contributed to the need for additional meetings of the Planning & Development Committee.

Lastly, we welcome Gordon Glenday, our new Head of Planning & Development, and ask that we all give our support to him in his new role and again thank Tony Pierce for his leadership over the past six months.