

Chair's Report to Ordinary Council - 4 February 2015

Committee: Asset and Enterprise

Chair: Councillor Russell Quirk

Since the last Council there has been one meeting of the Asset & Enterprise Committee, 21 January 2015, and a number of key decisions have been made, and detailed information provided on key issues affecting the Council.

The Committee discussed or were updated on the following issues:

- Old House: Investigations are progressing into the refurbishment and conversion of Old House to provide 6 residential units.
- Westbury Road: Approval was obtained to investigate the options to redevelop this car park for a mixed retail and residential scheme.
- Multi-Storey Car Park: Approval was obtained to further review the prospects of alternative and more valuable uses the car can be put to.
- Herongate & Ingrave Village Hall: Head of Legal Services is writing to the current co-opted trustees to schedule a public meeting of local residents to seek confirmation that the building should be demolished or alternative viable option.
- Hutton Community Centre: expressions of interest being sought from community groups interested in running the Centre. Proposals to be submitted by 9th February. A special Committee Meeting is scheduled to occur on the 18 February to consider the expressions of interest received.
- Bell Mead: a planning application has been submitted by the purchaser
- Warley Training Centre: negotiations are on going with the developers
- Hallsford Bridge: a pre app meeting between the purchasers and planning has occurred and negotiations are progressing
- Town Hall: Council (10 December) approved the refurbishment project. The design and procurement processes have commenced.
- William Hunter Way: Consultation completed, procurement of development manager progressing as is the planning development brief.

A further Asset & Enterprise Committee Meeting has been scheduled for the 19 March 2015.

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Committee: Audit & Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Graeme Clark

The Audit and Scrutiny Committee met on 28 October, 26 November 2014 and 27 January 2015. Task and Finish Groups continued to deliver the Scrutiny work programme.

Audit

Risk Management: Sue Fretwell, Strategic Risk Consultant, Zurich Risk Engineering UK attended the Committee in October. 16 members attended the training which was webcast so that members who did not attend could benefit from the training. A Strategic and Operational Risk Review was received at the January meeting.

Annual Audit Letter: The 2013/14 Annual Audit Letter was received at the November meeting. The Council received an unqualified opinion on the 2013/14 financial statements including the Statement of Accounts.

Annual Certification Report 2013/14: The External Auditor's annual report in respect of the Certification of Claims and Returns was noted by the Committee in January.

Fraud Statistics: Members were provided with details of the work of the Fraud Investigation team for the period November 2014 through to December 2014.

Internal Audit Progress Report: Progress against the internal audit plan agreed at the Audit Committee in March 2014 was reported to the Committee. A full report on Car Park and Golf Club Income was received at the January meeting.

Customer Services Transformation – Customer Contact Centre: The Committee received a status report on the progress of the contact centre against the original business case. The recommendations of the Committee informed a report to the Finance and Resources Committee 14 January 2015 on the Customer Access Strategy.

Corporate Complaints Monitoring and Freedom of Information Requests: As part of its quarterly monitoring role, the Committee received a report from the Head of Customer Services in January.

Scrutiny

Budget Scrutiny: The Committee created a Task and Finish Group to review the four areas of the Budget: Proposed Savings, Proposed Budget Investment, Working Balance & Reserves and Council Tax. The findings of the group were presented to the Committee on 27 January and recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the Finance and Resources Committee on 11 February.

ICT Resilience and Business Continuity: The Committee received a report about the impact of ICT on Business Continuity in October. In January, a comprehensive report on Business Continuity was received.

Report of the William Hunter Way Task and Finish Group: The Lessons Learned Report was created by the William Hunter Way Lessons Learned Task and Finish Group of Councillors Clark, Kerlake and Mynott. The report recorded and shared lessons learned from the William Hunter Way Project 2005-2014.

William Hunter Way Procurement: The Committee considered an urgent request to prioritise a task and finish review on William Hunter Way Procurement. Cllrs Clark, Barrett, Hones and Kerlake undertook the review. The group set its own scope and reported its findings. The report recommended training for Councillors on public procurement procedures and that the Monitoring Officer should refer the report to the Constitution Working Group.

Report of the Hutton Community Centre Task and Finish Group: A presentation on the findings of the Task and Finish Group was delivered by Cllr Barrett, Cllr Mrs Hubbard and Cllr Ms Sanders to the Committee.

Annual Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Review: The Committee received an update on the work of the partnership over the year and details of crime figures relating to the CSPs strategic priorities were presented along with details of activities undertaken by the partnership. The Committee heard that during the reporting period, Brentwood had achieved the highest reduction in all crime across the County.

Scrutiny Work Programme: The Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to review the process for setting Hackney Carriage Fares and to advise on a future programme for tariff setting.

The Chair and Vice Chair would like to thank all Members and Officers who are working on task and finish groups. An additional meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee will take place on 9 March 2015.

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Committee: Business & Town Centres

Chair: Councillor David Kendall

The first stage of developing *A Business Directory* has been undertaken to support businesses and progress the Economic Development agenda for the Borough. This will assist us to understand who our businesses are so that we can engage, support and communicate with them effectively to support their growth and development. A Task and Finish Working Group is now being set up to examine the options for on-going development of the directory.

Following agreement at the Business and Town Centres Committee on 16 December, the follow actions are underway:

- commissioning ACAVA to undertake a *feasibility study for possible artist studios* to be developed in the Baytree Centre, in order to support and strengthen retail and town centre vibrancy. A meeting is to be held with interested local artists on Saturday 7 February 2015 at the Town Hall.
- authority delegated to the Heads of Borough Health, Safety & Localism, Street Scene, Housing and Planning and officers of the Council that were nominated to *issue Fixed Penalty Notices under section 53 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014*
- commission, develop and organize a business speed networking event in March 2015. A provisional date for this event is Wednesday 18 March 2015 at De Rougemont Manor, Warley.
- *the final Economic Development Strategy and Work Plan 2014* published on the Brentwood Borough Council website

With regards to *Crossrail and the Parking Petition* that has been received, the Committee resolved that:

The Head of Street Scene liaise with Ward Members and with South Essex Parking Partnership and representatives of Crossrail throughout the construction phase to reduce disruption to businesses and local residents. Delegated authority is given to the Head of Street Scene, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Business and Town Centres Committee, and local Ward Members, to make decisions relating to urgent and unforeseen traffic management issues during the construction phase. Officers carry out further detailed work on long-term options for Shenfield in consultation with other agencies. To make Hunters Avenue and Friars Avenue car parks into free shopper's car parks, with a 3 hour maximum stay, with no return within 4 hours on and from 1 April 2015 until completion of the construction.

From 1 April 2015, a maximum of 30 spaces be made available for season ticket holders in the Council's Shenfield car parks. Through the construction phase would be provided in the NCP car park with none in the Council's car parks.

Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group management team has met with the Trade Cluster Leaders and website provider to review 2104 projects and start planning 2015 activities and projects to support and promote local businesses and the economy. Bids continue to be submitted and evaluated for agreement by Renaissance Group in the final allocation of the remaining £57k balance for the 2014/15 budget.

Community Safety

The Community Safety Team:

Tracey Lilley, Community Safety Manager
Daniel Cannon, Community Safety Assistant

Apart from the day to day responsibilities of working on making sure Brentwood remains a safe place through our partnership working the team have:

- Alongside our community partners we have continued to promote Keep Safe and now have over nearly 150 local residents signed up to the scheme.
- Plans are moving forward with the Senior Safety Roadshow. With our partners we will hopefully be delivering from Feb 2015. The plan is to visit existing local groups, sheltered schemes, Parish Councils and provide crime prevention and safety advice.
- The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Door Chain Project launched in October is going from strength to strength with nearly 40 door chains fitted to vulnerable elderly residents' homes free of charge so far. Feedback received has been fantastic with an 80% return rate and 100% satisfaction. An email received 20th Jan:

Thank you for your recent letter. Robin and Dave from MenShed came today and fitted my door chain. I would like to say I could not have asked for nicer men; they were quick, clean, efficient and friendly. I was most impressed and glad to have the extra security when I answer the door.

- We are currently running another Firebreak and another is planned for March. The project continues to be one the most effective projects we commission for young people.
- We have a youth conference taking place on 18th March at Doddinghurst Road Church. Year 9 pupils from local schools will have the opportunity to take part in a fantastic day where they will receive presentations from Essex Police on topics such as internet safety, crime, sexual exploitation. They will also hear from Essex County Fire & Rescue Service of fire safety. In the afternoon they will see a play about alcohol and drugs which will be followed

by workshops. The day will close with a talk from an ex gang member and hopefully a young man who is currently serving a life sentence for murder and how his actions not only impacted on him and his family but also the victim and their family.

- We attended an event at Colchester Football Stadium recently which was organised by the PCC. We exhibited and promoted the work we are doing locally which was well received.
- The Community Safety Partnership also launched their Community Safety Consultation in October. So far we have received over 100 responses from the website and almost 50 postal replies.

72% said that burglary was either not a very big problem or not a problem at all.

74% felt that anti-social behaviour was not a problem in the borough

90% of the responses believe that domestic abuse is not an issue.

- We continue to produce our CSP newsletter after every CSP Strategy Panel Meeting which is proving very popular
- We are now working on our draft Community Safety Commissioning Plan 15/16.

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Committee: Community

Chair: Councillor Karen Chilvers

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

A report was considered by Members at the 17 December Community Committee to provide an update to the Council's safeguarding policy and procedures. There will be Member and staff training rolled out in February through to March.

Assets of Community Value

The Council has received a number of nominations to list Assets of Community Value which have now been listed. The disabled car parking area within William Hunter Way car park which was nominated by Brentwood Access Group. The amenity green in Iris Close, Pilgrims Hatch which was nominated by the Flowers Estate Residents Association.

A nomination was also received by Hopefield Animal Sanctuary to list the land that they currently occupy. This was determined by a special Community Committee on 27 January 2015.

In Kind Policy

The In Kind Policy has also been agreed by Members at the Finance and Resources Committee on 14 January 2015 which will be implemented from April 2015. This provides governance and guidance on the additional support that is offered to the voluntary and community sector organisations such as parking permits and printing. Where this could impact on the voluntary sector implementation has been delayed until April 2016..

Commissioning Prospectus

The Commissioning Prospectus has also been launched on the delta e-sourcing website for invitations to tender for the following services:

- The provision of a free, confidential, debt management, housing needs and welfare benefits advice service for Brentwood Borough residents
- The coordination of a Community transport provision for Brentwood Borough
- The provision of a coordinated framework which will support Brentwood's voluntary and community sector organisations

Closing dates for the tenders is 22nd February and notifications of winning tender will be made by 27 February 2015.

Brentwood Community Fund update

The Fitness in Mind project that the Community Fund supported has been awarded and Active Essex physical activity project of the year.

Events programme for 2015

The Community services team are currently scouting locations for the Family Fun Days and getting the on line application forms ready to go live for end of February.

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Committee: Environment

Chair: Councillor William Lloyd

Cemetery Regulations

For the first time in 20 years the cemetery regulations were updated.

The new regulations are intended to set out what is and isn't considered acceptable behaviour in the cemeteries, and what rights the Exclusive Right of Burial Holder (ERB) has in relation to their burial plot.

Areas of notable information within the regulations include:

- General behaviour within the cemeteries
- What is an ERB and what does it allow a holder to do.
- The funeral process and what is involved.
- The Council's commitments when undertaking a burial.
- Memorials and ornaments.
- Common Graves.
- Fees and Charges.

The regulations have been designed so that they not only give the ERB holder peace of mind with regard to the Council's commitment of standards, but also as a tool to be used by Officers to sensitively challenge unacceptable behaviour by individuals.

Education Programme

Dawn Taylor provided an update on the education programme, and the recognition the Council achieved at National awards presentation by the Institute of Waste Management.

Waste Strategy

It has been agreed to establish a cross-party working group to develop a Waste Strategy for the Borough. The Strategy will look at the future of Waste across Essex, and will align to work being done through the Essex Waste Partnership.

Free Food Waste Bags

It has been agreed to extend the number of outlets providing free food waste bags. Local traders have been contacted and a number have agreed to participate in distributing the bags, after their current stock has been sold.

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Committee: Finance and Resources

Chair: Councillor Barry Aspinell

Further to the Committee's meeting on 14 January 2015 the following items were debated and their decisions noted below;

In Kind Policy

Members were presented with the Council's 'In Kind Policy', which related to printing and parking arrangements which are currently provided by the Council, to certain organisations. The Policy was requested following a meeting of the Strategy and Policy Board in November 2013. It was agreed that Officers would produce a guidance document to ensure consistency of approach and that support is targeted to those who need it most.

Members agreed the following;

- The In Kind Policy (available to view in full on www.brentwood.gov.uk);
- The revised parking permits (one per person for Members, employees and Voluntary Sector organisations) will commence from April 2015;
- Free parking permits will cease to be issued for Brentwood Library from April 2016 (to allow time for Essex County Council to adjust their budgets accordingly);
- The community rates for printing to be implemented in April 2016 to allow organisations to allocate within their budgets;
- Commercial printing rates to be implemented in April 2015
- Printing support for the Brentwood Half Marathon would be supported for one more year, due to the event being held in March 2015.

Customer Services Transformation – Customer Access Strategy

Members were advised that at the Strategy and Policy Board in November 2013, a business case was agreed which outlined ways in which the Council could move away from a traditional reception/telephone service, in favour of a new model which offers modern and efficient channels of access for customers. In order to move this forward, Members were provided with details of the Customer Service Access Strategy. This proposed the overarching framework the Council will adopt to interact with customers to ensure successful service delivery.

Members were also informed of the High Level Implementation plan, which set out key areas and actions which the Council will meet the demands of its customers.

Members agreed the Customer Access Strategy and High Level Implementation Plan.

Medium Term Financial Plan Update

Members were presented with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plans (MTFP) following announcements from Central Government in relation to Local Government funding for 2015/16. The key message was that there were no additional funding reductions placed for 2015/16 other than those already indicated within settlement figures. Note should be made Government aim to find an additional £10bn of additional efficiency savings by 2017/18. Due to the General Election Members were advised that no guarantee on future funding could be determined.

Members noted that the current MTFP had been modeled with a 2% reduction in Council Tax; then a freeze year on year. Members noted that this was not a confirmed decision, and that full options (+2% to -2%) will be presented to the January meeting of Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that a borrowing requirement would be triggered and a capital programme was included for information.

Hopefield Animal Sanctuary and Tesco were mentioned with the possibility of discussing the future of the animal sanctuary and securing rental or similar moving forward.

Members subsequently noted the contents of the MTFP and will receive a further update at the Committee meeting on 11 February.

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Committee: Housing and Health

Chair: Councillor Ross Carter

Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme (ELAS)

The ELAS scheme is being setup to promote and encourage landlords of privately rented homes to manage their properties to a high standard. The Vice Chair, Cllr Hirst and Acting Head of Housing attended the ELAS launch event on the 25th September 2014 at Kelvedon Park, Essex. The event demonstrated the benefits of an integrated county-wide approach to engagement between Local Authorities and the private rented sector.

The Chief Fire Officers Association ('CFOA') 'Bluewatch', as the provider of the service to ELAS, has now setup the portal website for landlords to join the scheme. Currently the active consortium includes: Chelmsford, Colchester, Uttlesford, Tendring, Braintree, Epping Forest and Maldon. Private landlords are now able to register, at a fee of £95.00 per annum.

Membership of ELAS will enable Brentwood to increase its range of strategic options in relation to housing provision within the Borough and provide opportunities to work with Landlords to supply advice on property standards/condition of private sector housing. Through improved relationships with local landlords Brentwood will be able to further engage in alternate prevention areas, such as the current provision of the Rent Deposit Scheme and potential future leasehold arrangements. Such arrangements allow for increased revenue and to create direct placements to solve homelessness and to reduce reliance on emergency bed & breakfast accommodation.

On the 5th November 2014 the Housing & Health Committee approved and confirmed that Brentwood Council would join the ELAS scheme. We are currently awaiting the final contract to be drawn up by Bluewatch for signature, before proceeding with operational implementation.

Affordable Housing Strategy

An Affordable Housing Strategy workshop was held on Monday 6th October 2014 with Housing & Health Committee Members and Officers, as reported at Committee on the 5th November 2014. The Affordable Housing Strategy will build on the current Housing Strategy, approved by members in November 2013, by setting out the

detailed plans for developing Affordable Housing. It will set out the provision of new homes within an agreed framework for assessing the demand and securing homes to meet the need and demand. Following on from this a representative cross-section of members of the Committee will be invited to attend a further Housing Strategy workshop to be held in 21 January 2015.

As part of the Affordable Housing Strategy and following the recommendation of Committee on the 5th November 2014 an initiative to identify the potential redevelopment of sites that provide opportunities for new Affordable Housing is being implemented. One such opportunity identified is in relation to the development of garage sites across the Borough which are underused and hard to let. Three sites have been identified, that subject to surveys of utilities, provide opportunities for redevelopment. These sites will potentially provide twelve new homes at a cost of £1.64m.

These sites are being reviewed for development potential by Housing Services, Planning Services and Asset Management with an appropriate development vehicle and funding model in the process of being formulated. Ward members have been consulted as part of this process to allow for an outline planning application to be drafted for submission to Planning Services in February/March 2015. Any garage tenants who will be affected by this scheme be consulted accordingly.

Armed Forces Charter

As a result of the problems armed forces service leavers have encountered when leaving active service the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued guidance to Local Authorities in June 2012. In February 2014, Lord Ashcroft published the 'Veterans Transition Review' which examined the transition of armed forces personnel from their military careers to civilian life at the end of their service. Local Authorities and armed forces personnel are now being encouraged to work together to establish a community covenant. One aspect of this process is in reviewing and extending current services, including housing.

Two Housing Officers have been tasked to lead the above initiative and to provide a specialist point of contact for Armed Forces housing advice applicants. A key component of this initiative is to provide time-critical advice and support, maintaining a core service commitment of a personal advice session being offered within seven days of first contact, either at the Town Hall or via a home visit as may be required.

To further develop the armed forces provision a bespoke Armed Forces housing advice handbook is being drafted, to provide relevant applicants with a single information gateway through which they can effectively access Council services. This will be made available in both paper and e-formats. It will also provide a focused signposting pathway to allow more effective access to partner agency services.

Approval was granted to develop the Armed Forces Charter at Housing & Health Committee on the 7 January 2015.

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Committee: Licensing

Chair: Councillor Gareth Barrett

Parish Councils were approached at the planning policy Strategic Growth Options Consultation briefing on Monday 19 January to see if they are interested in holding markets in their Parish. Letters have also been sent out to them and to ward Members offering this opportunity. Licensing controls would be implemented to enable the markets to be properly controlled, although responsibility for running the market within a Council set framework would sit with each individual parish council – giving them the opportunity to create business and income opportunities if it fits the needs of their residents.

A cross party task and finish group to consider the future structure and process relating to the setting of taxi fares and the terms of reference of the Taxi Trade Consultative Group (TTCG) will, at the time of writing, be considered by Audit & Scrutiny on 27th January. It is intended that this group will commence its work within the next few weeks with a report back to Licensing Committee within six months (allowing for the election period) to ensure that a clear structure for future tariff setting is agreed, with confidence in the process secured for members, residents and the trade alike - then in place as soon as possible.

The Public Fundraising Regulatory Association (PFRA) and other relevant bodies have been approached in order to commence work to review the agreement for Direct Debit charity collections within the borough. Whilst not regulated by legislation as such, this body works with charities and the various councils to promote best practice amongst collectors. By updating this agreement we can ensure that the welfare of Brentwood's visitors and residents is protected as far as possible. An amended draft document will be presented to Licensing Committee in June this year.

In September 2013, Members of the Licensing Committee received a report on controls that are available to alleviate any pressure on the night time economy. In the face of decreasing crime figures and few complaints it was determined at that time that no such controls were required. Clearly this is a position that can change and should therefore be kept under review. This combined with a recent increase in the numbers of applications for alcohol licences in and around Brentwood High Street would lead me to conclude that this position should be reviewed in the near future. Members of the licensing team are collating statistics from a number of sources including, Police data, Health statistics and in house complaints so that a report may be produced for reconsideration of such measures. Particular emphasis is to be given to the Cumulative Impact of these licensed premises.

We are coming up to a good time for review of a Cumulative Impact policy as the Council must, every five years, review its wider statement of Licensing Policy as required under the Licensing Act 2003. The next review is due to be confirmed in January 2016 and therefore work has already commenced to identify items for inclusion in the revised policy. I am pleased to say that the licensing team is ahead of the game on this review and pre-publication scrutiny should be possible allowing real member engagement with this policy.

Throughout Essex there is a wealth of knowledge amongst the various authorities and to this end our licensing team will be joining an Essex working party to identify general changes to the policy. Notwithstanding this, specific inclusions that affect Brentwood and its residents such as cumulative impact policies may still be considered over and above any general recommendations.

Alongside considering potential licensing measures positive late-night economy schemes remain under consideration, such as Best Bar None and Purple Flag. That said, given the financial and staff requirements for such schemes any decision must be made in a wider budgetary context, alongside consultation with BNAG and BASLE, so there are no imminent plans to bring forward these options to the next Licensing Committee.

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Committee: Planning and Development Control

Chair: Councillor Phil Baker

Local Development Plan (LDP)

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is one of the most important strategic projects that Brentwood Council is currently undertaking. It sets out the Council's strategy for growth over the next 15 years and so is key to shaping the future of the Borough for our residents and businesses. I am very pleased to say that we are now out to formal public consultation on 2 important LDP documents.

Firstly, we are consulting on the LDP "Strategic Growth Options" for the whole of the Borough. This document sets out the sites that have previously been suggested as possible sites for development. It is important to clarify however, that no decisions have been made on the future of any of these sites – they are flagged up as options to see what local people think. People can suggest additional sites too if they feel additional options should be considered. This consultation ends on 17th February. I am planning to hold a working group in March to go through some of the key early messages raised during the consultation so that people have an early indication as to how things might be moving forward with the plan.

The second document is the "Dunton Garden Suburb Consultation". This is a joint consultation with Basildon Borough Council and relates specifically to the area in the south of the Borough east of West Horndon and over into Laindon. This area specific option looks at the possibility of creating a new, sustainable garden suburb, with around 4000 – 6000 new homes, new job and training opportunities, enhanced parks and open spaces and new infrastructure such as roads, health facilities and schools. Again, no decisions have been made with any of this so it is important that local people have their say before we can move forward with any plans. The consultation on this particular document was also due to end on 17th February but at the request of Basildon Council, it has been agreed to extend this until 17th March.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of getting local people and businesses to send us all their ideas on how we should be managing the essential growth that Brentwood needs to plan for over the next 15 years or so. Several consultation events have already been held and more are planned. It is already clear that local people are very interested in shaping the future of their Borough which is great – hopefully that interest will be reflected in the number and the quality of the responses we receive by the end of both consultations.

Crossrail

Members will recall that at the Planning Committee in December, Crossrail's application was deferred due to a lack of information on elements of the proposed works. I specifically request that Council officers and Crossrail representatives

undertake further consultation on the plans so that the Committee could have more of the information I felt it needed to determine the application in the best interests of local people.

Since that decision was made in December, I am pleased to say that Council officers and Crossrail representatives have been working very closely with each other to bring forward the information we required to determine the application. I have to stress however, that as part of the Crossrail Act 2008, the Council's influence over many of the proposals is limited as parliament has already given Crossrail the powers it needs to build the railway and the ancillary works needed to deliver the new services. Despite this, I am convinced that by requiring Crossrail to work more closely with our officers on their plans, we are now getting a better outcome from the proposed works for our local residents and businesses than would otherwise have been the case.

Consequently, at the January Planning Committee, Crossrail presented its updated plans in more detail, allowing members to understand better what was actually being proposed. As a result of this closer working relationship, the Planning Committee approved Crossrail's plans so that the essential works could go ahead.

This has meant that preparatory works finally started this weekend with the specific works relating to the de-vegetation of the area around Friars Avenue Car Park scheduled to begin on site this weekend.

Council officers will continue to work closely with Crossrail throughout the development phase up to 2018 to ensure that all future proposals affecting the Brentwood and Shenfield stations are undertaken in a way that minimises disruption to local people and is communicated to everyone affected in a timely way.

Future Work

Given the Council's pressing need to reduce costs and generate income wherever possible, the Head of Planning and Development is reviewing our planning services fees and charges. At present, potential developers can meet with a range of planning and other council officers to discuss their proposals before they come to Planning Committee. Indicative research on this suggests that Brentwood's fees are a lot less than many other comparable boroughs and so there appears to be scope to increase these rates to more accurately reflect the costs of facilitating pre-planning application meetings. As we all know, the level of interest from the development industry in Brentwood will be high over the coming years and so it is important for us to make sure that the Council is able to generate a fairer income from this development interest.