

Report to the Council 16 September 2015

Committee: Audit, Scrutiny and Transformation

Chair: Councillor John Kerslake

At its first meeting the Committee received the Statement of Accounts 2014/15 for their review ahead of formal approval in September. The accounts showed that the General Fund balance at the end of the year remained unchanged at £4.5m.

Internal Audit presented their annual report to the Committee. The report gave a summary of the work performed in accordance with the 2014/15 Annual Audit Plan. In addition to the annual report it was also agreed that Member training in relation to IT transformation and data security would be revisited at the next Committee meeting.

Internal Audit also presented a report on their progress against the 2015/16 Annual Audit Plan and the implantation of recommendations raised in previous years.

The Strategic Risk Register and Operational Risk Registers were submitted to the Committee and approved. It was noted that Zurich would be able to provide risk training to Members again this year.

The Corporate Complaints Monitoring and Freedom of Information Requests report presented to the Committee showed:

- 23 Stage one formal complaints were received in 2014/15;
- 6 of those complaints progressed to Stage Two;
- 3 complaints had progressed to the Local Government Ombudsman;
- 622 Freedom of Information Requests were received in 2014/15.

Details of the work undertaken by the Fraud Investigation Team were reported to the Committee. There were 174 referrals of potential fraud between January and May 2015 mainly relating to Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support. Sanctions were applied to 25 cases during this time. As the team is transferring to the DWP any future reporting will need to be provided by the DWP.

External audit fees for 2015/16 of £68,006 for audit work and £18,070 for certification work were approved by the Committee. This is a reduction in fees compared to previous years.

The Committee also agreed its work programme to guide its work for 2015/16 and the Committee's annual report to be presented to Council.

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Committee: Community and Health Committee

Chair: Councillor Will Russell

Mental Health Challenge

The Borough Council has been working hard to meet the local authority Mental Health Challenge. 25 staff and Councillors Sanders and Hubbard attended an informative half day LITE training session on Mental Health First Aid which was funded through EU Skills. This provided basic awareness of mental health illnesses and how to support someone suffering from mental distress.

The Council has been continuing to support local organisations providing mental health services, such as working with the Fitness in Mind project to deliver a new walking programme to improve the health and mental wellbeing of local residents. The walks take place from the Brentwood Centre and is led by volunteers.

The Council also supported the Open Arts group by exhibiting work by artists with mental health illnesses as part of the Brentwood Art and Heritage Trail, and has started to explore how we can support people with mental health illnesses to begin or get back to work through apprenticeship opportunities. Internally, officers are reviewing the Council's HR Policies and considering ways in which we can increase support for staff's mental health.

Brentwood Art and Heritage Trail

As part of the Essex Summer of Art, which sees 20 art trails and 15 studio events across the county, this year's Brentwood Art Trail from 29 June to 12 July, was a resounding success, with an estimated 1000 visitors enjoying the artwork on display across 40 venues. Participating businesses included independent shops, national retailers, galleries, Brentwood Theatre, Thorndon Countryside Visitors' Centre, Ingatestone Hall, Marillac Care Home, Barnard's Farm and of course the Town Hall. A large number of artists exhibited, including 29 individuals, a group exhibition by 12 artists at Brentwood Theatre, existing exhibitors at the local galleries and 50 pupils from Brentwood County High, Hollytrees and Shenfield St Mary's schools. Visitors were able to enjoy 6 fantastic events as part of the trail, including meeting the sculptor of the popular local Gruffalo trail and discussing the Banksy effect and viewing some never-seen-before Banksy work with John Brandler. Our very own mayor, Cllr Mark Reed, led a fascinating Heritage tour of Brentwood High St and local historian, John Fryer gave a very interesting talk on the history of Brentwood Station as it celebrated its 175th anniversary. Historical photographs were displayed on the walls in the waiting rooms on Platforms 3 and 4.

In 8 short weeks the Trail had over 3000 website hits and an amazing 93,900 tweet impressions. The Trail had some fantastic comments from visitors and participating businesses, with people being introduced to shops, galleries and cafes that they did not

know existed and some shops seeing an increase in footfall by 10% over the course of the trail and a 5% increase in sales.

William Diamond Junior Fife and Drum Corps

As part of the Brentwood Heritage and Cultural Festival an American fife and drum corps band delivered a performance for Brentwood shoppers on 15 August .

The Corps was formed in 2002 in Lexington, Massachusetts, with the aim of promoting the study of traditional fife and drum music, fellowship and history to young Americans aged 8 to 18. The six holed wooden fife and a rope tension drum is the signature sound of colonial New England and the young musicians wear traditional clothing worn by people with yeoman status living in Lexington in 1775.

The William Diamond Juniors met members of the Brentwood Imperial Youth Band, visited the Essex Regimental Chapel, and played at the Tower of London at the National Sea Cadet Band Competition finals as part of their visit to the UK.

Brentwood Community Fund

Members agreed to allocate funding to a number of organisations from the £40,300 Brentwood Community Fund. Applicants could apply for up to £3,500 for projects that benefit Brentwood communities and supports the Council's priorities.

Brentwood Ward budgets

Members will be aware that the ward budget allocation is now available for Members to submit their proposals through the on line application form. A number of Councillors recently supported the Brentwood Tattoo with their ward budgets. Over 1,000 people attended the event at Brentwood County High School in July.

Strawberry Fair

This year's Strawberry Fair took place on Shenfield Common on 13 June with more than 2,000 people coming along to enjoy the live music, classic cars and family fun activities. The weather did not dampen the spirits as local performers, dance groups and bands from the Hermit performed in the Big Top hosted by Phoenix FM. There was also entertainment from Rocky's Fun House and Punch and Judy shows throughout the day, together with plenty of strawberries and cream, Pimms and local beer. Community Safety also provided information and advice during the event.

Family Fun Days

The Community Services Team have successfully delivered 7 family Fun Days throughout the Borough including Hutton, Mountnessing and Pilgrims Hatch together with those held at King George's Playing Fields. The days are attracting increased number of residents and supports families with free activities throughout the school holidays. The team estimated that the events attract approximately 10,000 people throughout the holidays. The Family Fun Days also support the utilization and promotion of the Borough's green open spaces around the Borough. The first Family Fun Day for the Summer holidays had to be moved at the last minute due to poor weather conditions from King George's Playing Field's to Hutton Community Centre which proved to be a

good alternative venue where some inside space is required. The Community Safety team also provided information and advice during the event.

Health and Wellbeing Board

A new Essex wide campaign has been launched called 'Tuck In' which aims to encourage local independent takeaway food outlets to make pledges to reduce the amount of salt, sugar, calories and use less saturated fats in their food. The BLT Café at Brentwood Leisure Centre was the first business in Brentwood to make the pledges. Food businesses that make the pledges will be given a toolkit specific to their type of food, free advisory visits and free nutrition training. They will also be featured on our webpage www.brentwood.gov.uk/healthierbrentwood

The launch of the campaign featured in local press and radio. We are also sending out tweets using #TuckIN to link in with the other Councils in Essex.

Lighting Up Brentwood & Shenfield Christmas Fayre

This year's Lighting Up Brentwood will take place on Saturday 28 November and the Shenfield Christmas Fayre on Sunday 29 November, the initial working group meeting took place on 2nd September.

Hutton Community Centre

Hutton Community Centre has increased their regular bookings with 40 organizations regularly using the centre, offering a wide range of activities for all ages. Regular weekly bingo sessions are running with good engagement from the local community.

Council for Voluntary Services networking event

Brentwood CVS held their annual networking event with presentations from SNAP and Tom Abell from the Brentwood and Basildon Clinical Group about Fit for the Future.

Officers are continuing to work with Brentwood CVS to establish a volunteer centre for Brentwood

New apprentice

A new apprentice has started in Community Services which has been funded via Active Essex which will support the Community events, Active Brentwood and help deliver some of the priorities of the Brentwood Health and Wellbeing Board.

Town Hall Defibrillator

A defibrillator has been installed at for the Town Hall, to aid staff and members of the public should an emergency such as a heart attack occur. First Aiders at the Town Hall have received training in how to use this device and, it is located in the Reception area of the Town Hall. This is being publicised in the Members Newsletter, The Town Hall Tabloid and in the local press.

Community Safety update

Carers Event – Attended a dedicated event to promote the work of the team and provide information and advice on safety issues for the most vulnerable.

Prison Me No Way – delivered another popular Crime & Safety Awareness event at Shenfield High School to over 400 students.

Keep Safe Shenfield & Brentwood – Launched Keep Safe in Shenfield with 9 retailers agreeing to take part in the scheme and celebrated almost a year running the Keep Safe in Brentwood High Street.

Speedwatch – Held a training event for all new speed watch volunteers.

Presentation to American Law Students – Gave a presentation to a group of law students from Chicago on Community Safety and our partnership work.

Loan Shark Charter – The Mayor joined other partners in signing the Loan Shark Charter during Loan Shark Awareness Week. Training was also provided on raising awareness of loan sharks and the team were also in the High Street and local primary schools promoting loan shark awareness and safety.

Safety Visits – Visits are now undertaken with the Essex Police Crime Prevention & Tactical Adviser to all high risk victims of domestic abuse and burglary.

Safety Advisory Group –New terms of reference and pro forma for future events has been created to stream line the process and assist in ensuring that public events throughout the Borough are controlled safely.

CCTV Update - All CCTV operational staff have now been trained to achieve BTEC Level 2 Awards for CCTV Operations (Public Space Surveillance). We are replacing one of the cameras in Shenfield to provide a high definition surveillance camera for this area. Work is also progressing to ensure that our CCTV system operates under a Code of Practice that meets the operational guidelines published by the Surveillance Camera Commissioner and the Information Commissioner's Office; the revised Brentwood Code of Practice is being consulted on prior to determination at Committee.

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Committee: Economic Development

Chair: Councillor Keith Parker

The first Economic Development Committee was held on the 1st July 2015 during which it was agreed that:

- The proposed Economic Development projects and Initiatives for 2015/16 are undertaken and implemented within the delegated authority of the Head of Planning and Development after liaising with the Chair of the Committee to utilise the 2015/16 Economic Development budget.
- The Economic Development Manager investigates the appetite of the Borough's secondary schools and large employers to take part in "Opportunity Brentwood" on 7 October 2015/16 and should such sufficient appetite exists then the Head of Planning and Development be granted delegated authority to facilitate this event working in partnership with Thurrock Council and "Opportunity Brentwood". This action has been undertaken and demand from schools to take part in this initiative for 2015 has proved limited, however we will now look to liaise with schools again in the new academic year to develop this project for October 2016.
- Work begins on the "Brentwood Apprenticeship Scheme 2015/16" to include both opportunities within the Council, partnership working with the private sector and discussions with Brentwood Community Print and other mental health groups within the Borough to identify joint working and opportunities under the apprenticeship scheme. A detailed project proposal was submitted to the 2 September Economic Development Committee for approval.
- The Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group 2015/16 Work Plan was agreed.
- The Head of Paid Service be granted delegated authority to negotiate and enter into an agreement with Essex Fire and Rescue Authority to use the land at the former headquarters, Rayleigh Road, Brentwood to provide temporary additional off-street parking facilities which would address the displacement of permit holders by Crossrail.
- The Head of Paid Service be granted delegated authority to undertake all statutory steps to amend the Off-street Parking Order by including such reasonable provisions as he sees fit, in consultation with the Chair of the Economic Development Committee, including a provision for setting the operating time from 7am-7pm Monday to Friday.

Proposals have also been submitted to hold a Business Showcase Event in March 2016 and to develop and market a Brentwood Visitor and Location Website and were *considered/approved* at the 2 September 2015 ED Committee.

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Committee: Environment & Housing Committee

Chair: Councillor Chris Hossack

Street Inspector

At the June Committee Members approved the establishment of the role of Street Inspector for the Borough. The post was advertised as part of the Street Scene management restructure, and Anthony Willson was appointed to the post, which will commence from 1st September 2015.

The Street Inspector will work with Members, and have a clear remit to use the resources of the Neighbourhood Action Team, and when appropriate the Highway rangers. This will provide the resources to identify issues and ensure that they are addressed.

The Inspector will play a community engagement role for the Council, and work with residents and businesses to identify ways of improving the public realm. This will mean liaising with key partners, and working with them to identify ways of enhancing the environment.

Garage development sites

The plans for the Fawtens Close and Magdalen Gardens site have been revised to meet the Council's Planning Policy. A consultation event is due to be held on the 12th and 13th September for residents to view the plans and to provide local residents with the opportunity to discuss the development with Officers. Invitation letters for this event are due to be issued to local residents.

Property Acquisitions

The property purchases are progressing well with a completion date before the 15th September to ensure we spend the capital receipts before the deadline. These properties will meet a housing need on the transfer register which will be let at affordable rents.

Performance

Overall performance is good with the exception of numbers in temporary accommodation which we have very limited control over which is reflected by the national trend.

Rent collection KPI has maintained top quartile performance. Performance in this area will become more difficult with the onset of universal credit when tenants will be paid housing benefit direct rather than to the landlord.

Numbers in temporary accommodation continue to increase and is a challenge to reduce with the numbers of people becoming homeless increasing. This is reflective of the national trend. The two main causes of homelessness are due to rent arrears, primarily the high rents, the local housing allowance and housing benefit not being able to meet the shortfall of rent. The second highest cause of homelessness due to parental eviction. We are currently working with Basildon Woman's Aid to provide a family mediation service to assist in the prevention of parental evictions. We should be able to 'soft launch' this project in October 2015.

Gas servicing KPI we achieved 99.84% which is disappointing, the decrease in performance was due to being unable to access one property due to the tenant being in hospital.

Repairs performance - We are currently reviewing how we collect our customer satisfaction data. We are working with tenant talkback to introduce a new customer satisfaction survey and collection method. Officers have separately been conducting a telephone survey of customers who had repairs completed in May, June, July 2015. Q1 figures confirmed that both contractors achieved target of 99%. Appointments kept – Wates achieved 100% target, Oakray achieved 99% target.

'Getting your house in order' Modernisation programme

Progress continues in the 'Getting our House in order' modernization programme. KPI workshops are continuing which feeds into the programme. Housing Needs recently underwent the Diagnostic peer review with other Local Authorities and achieved a 66% score for the Housing Advice and Homeless Service currently provided. This score reflected well against our peers which included, Epping, Chelmsford, Harlow, and Uttlesford.

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Committee: Planning and Licensing

Chairperson: Councillor Roger McCheyne

Planning

Planning and Licensing Committees Merged

Following the May local elections, it was decided to change the Council's committee structures and so the former Planning and Development Committee and the Licensing Committee have now been merged. Since then, the Committee has met in June, July and September and has determined around 25 planning and licensing applications and reports.

Modern Planning

Our Modern Planning processes introduced earlier this year are beginning to take shape now. Our new fees and charges for building control and pre-planning application meetings are already starting to bring more income into the planning service. Having introduced the new rates from 1 June, we have already increased our fee income by around £10k for the first 3 months. This increased revenue will be used to help enhance the planning services we provide for our clients over the coming months and years.

We knew that there were always going to be "teething problems" when we introduced the new planning email alert system to inform members of planning applications and decisions. We are bottoming these out now and I am confident that we will continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our overall planning service. Hopefully all members will have been trained on how to use the electronic system now – if not, I strongly urge you to do so as you will see that it is an excellent way of keeping updated with the planning applications we are dealing with.

Local Plan

Our Local Plan continues to progress towards the next stage in the statutory process. We are finalising the new Draft Plan based on the comments we have had following the Strategic Growth Options consultation earlier this year. The new Plan, which will go to Planning and Licensing Committee and Full Council at the end of this year, will need to address a lot of challenging decisions for us. For example, how are we going to meet our overall housing need while at the same time protecting our precious green belt?

Once the new Plan is approved by members, there will be another public consultation to see what local people, the development industry and the statutory bodies think of the proposed policies and development sites. Following this, a public inquiry is likely to be held at the end of 2016 (see timetable below)

Local Plan Timetable	
Pre-production and Document Preparation Issues and Options <i>Completed</i>	Published November 2009
Preparation of Document <i>Completed</i>	April 2013
Preferred Options Consultation <i>Completed</i>	July – October 2013
Analysis of Representations and Review of Strategic Issues <i>Completed</i>	November 2013 – May 2014
Strategic Growth Options Consultation <i>Completed</i>	January – February 2015
Consider representations	February – August 2015
Draft Plan Consultation	Q4 2015
Consider Representations	Q1 – Q2 2016
Publication of Document	Q2 2016
Pre-submission Consultation	Q3 2016
Submission to Secretary of State	Q4 2016
Independent Examination	Q4 2016 – Q1 2017
Receive and publish Inspectors recommendations	Q2 2017
Adopt Plan	Q2 2017
Post Production	
Monitoring and Review mechanisms	Authorities Monitoring Report

Crossrail

Officers have been working closely with Crossrail's team to make sure that Brentwood's resident and businesses benefit as much as possible from the introduction of this major new rail service. Inevitably, however, there were always going to be some inconveniences for the Borough during the construction phase. One of the key issues for local residents was the number of lorry movements in and around both Brentwood and Shenfield stations during the construction phase. In order to minimise the impact of lorry movements over the next 2 years, Crossrail is planning to use the Officer's Meadow site in Shenfield to load and unload building material. This, it is argued, would avoid them having to drive large lorries in and out of Shenfield or Brentwood town centres. A planning application is required to undertake this work and so the Planning and Licensing Committee is likely to be considering this in November/December.

Licensing

The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003, which regulates the sale of alcohol, regulated entertainment and Late Night refreshments, is currently out to consultation. This will continue until 27 November 2015. All those having

an interest in licensable activities are encouraged to take part in this consultation which is accessible on the council's website.

The Policy illustrates how the Council in its role as the Licensing Authority will perform its functions and outlines what is expected from applicants and what applicants and members of the public may expect from us.

The consultation is deliberately wide to ensure that it not only conforms to the requirements of legislation, but that it is targeted to reach any person or business that may have an interest in the licensed trade or its effects.

There is also consultation in progress on the Statement of Gambling Policy, which serves a similar function to that of the Licensing Act 2003 Policy. The Council regulates Commercial Gambling Premises under the Gambling Act 2005 and this policy is in place to support that function. The Gambling policy consultation ends on 26 October 2015.

Members of the Council have all been consulted in respect of both policies and in that regard all comments are welcome and shall be considered prior to the policies being recommended to Ordinary Council for publication.

The licensing team have taken part in a number of recent high profile premises visits, some with the Police and other responsible authorities and some unilaterally. This is to ensure that licence holders continue to promote the licensing objectives and ensure that Brentwood remains a safe and secure borough for residents and visitors alike.

In one case an observation of unlawful trading has been observed and has resulted in action to secure the interests and safety of the public, which is ongoing and will be reported to Members at the appropriate time.

Members of the Licensing Committee that sat between April 2014 and April of this year will be aware of concerns raised over the complex nature of calculating fares in respect of the maximum tariff that may be charged by Taxi's. I can report that the first meeting of the cross party task and finish group requested by that Committee has taken place and that work is ongoing to look at methods and timescales for future setting of Taxi fares as well as the terms of reference and membership criteria of the Taxi Trade Consultative Group.

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Committee: Policy, Finance and Resources

Chair: Councillor Louise McKinlay

Old House Refurbishment

The Committee agreed that the Head of Paid Service be granted delegated authority to dispose of Old House at best value (on the basis that planning approval being obtained and listed building consent had been granted). The property will be marketed by Savills and offered at auction on 2nd November with the benefit of a planning brief, requirement that development is completed within a set time period and subject to a reserve price of £700,000.

Approval for Restructures in Three Service Areas

The areas that were under consideration for restructure were:

- Senior Management Team, also known as Corporate Leadership Board (CLB).
- Street Scene Management
- Car Parking

Committee agreed that the Head of Paid Service be granted Delegated Authority to undertake, manage and implement the restructures provided that consultation took place with the Leaders of all Political groups (or in their absence, their appointed deputies). Such consultation would include meetings with the Leaders and would include advice as to progress.

Annual Treasury Management 2014/15

Under the Local Government Act 2003 the Council is required to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2014/15. The report showed that borrow had reduced during 2014/15.

Provisional Outturn 2014/15

As part of the year end process, the Council must report the outturn position for 2014/15 and produce a Statement of Accounts.

The report dealt with the 2014/15 financial outturn for the following:

- General Fund – breakeven position for the year.
- Housing Revenue Account – under spent of £94k for the year.
- Capital Programme – under spend of £3.4m for the year.

Draft Corporate Plan

The purpose of the report was to commence the process of updating the Council's Corporate Plan for 2016-19 and for approval for a six week period of consultation. It is important for the Council to have in place a Corporate Plan so it is clear in the strategic direction and planned approach to deliver progress against its vision for the Council.

The aim of the consultation is to ensure resident target groups, statutory partners, voluntary partners and interested parties had an opportunity to put forward their priorities for the Council so as the revised Corporate Plan would reflect the needs of the Borough.

Warley Training Centre – Sale and Acquisition

Delegated authority was given to the Head of Paid Service to approve and enter into conditional contracts with the party that submitted the highest compliant bid for the sale of Warley Training Centre.

The requirement for the developer to provide a community facility was omitted and the Head of Paid Service was given delegated authority to negotiate and agree, after consultation with the Chair of the Committee, a capital sum in lieu. The sum is to be set aside for community facilities within the Borough, with preference to the Warley Ward.

The requirement that the Council entered into an option agreement to purchase up to 5 residential units was withdrawn.

[The Council and the purchaser intend to exchange contracts week commencing 24th August 2015]

Hutton Community Centre

An external valuation of Hutton Community Centre was agreed to be carried out to determine the current open market rental that could be expected.

The process for seeking bids for a lease of Hutton Community Centre will be carried out in accordance with the process set out in the report. The bids will be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

Counsel has been instructed to provide advice to the Council to ensure that a robust marketing process can be undertaken to secure a sustainable future for Hutton Community Centre.

Bell Mead, Ingatestone – Sale

Following the submission of the planning application and consultation the purchasers have been advised by Planning to reduce the massing of the rear block which previously was to be 4 town houses. The scheme now provides 16 units all of which are to be apartments, of which 5 are to be affordable plus 10 additional car parking spaces. All other terms to remain as previously agreed.

Hutton Football Club

The Committee agreed a payment from the club of £2,000 for back rent and an annual rental of £900 going forward. The remaining £13,000 of back rent was written off.

Kind George's Playing Fields Café – Lease Renewal

Delegated Authority was given to the Head of Paid Service to grant a new lease to Emine Mani t/a Mani Caterers incorporating the terms as set out in the report.

Performance Indicators Fourth Quarter and Year End 2014/15

The report detailed the Operational Performance indicators agreed for 2014/15 and gave performance detail for the fourth quarter and year end 2014/15.

Write Offs

All write offs over £5,000 must be approved by the Committee.

Revenues and Benefits Restructure

This was an exempt report and the recommendations contained in the report were agreed.