

Report to the Council 18 November 2015

Committee: Audit, Scrutiny and Transformation

Chair: Councillor John Kerlake

Statement of Accounts 2014/2015

Following an unqualified audit opinion the Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 was approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

External Audit Results Report 2014/15

The external auditors reported their findings on the Statement of Accounts for 2014/15. An unqualified audit opinion was given with no material misstatements identified during the audit process.

Internal Audit Progress Report

An update on the progress against the 2015/16 internal audit plan that was agreed with in the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 was given.

The report also included an update on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations raised in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Strategic Risk Review

The Insurance & Risk Management Strategy had been reviewed and was submitted to the Committee for approval.

The report updated members of the Audit, Scrutiny and Transformation Committee on new, closed or changes to strategic risks. Dates for Members and Officers training on risk management were also provided.

One risk had increased from the previous quarter relating to Finance Pressures. This was due to the current funding and economic pressures facing the Council.

Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/16

The Committee's revised work programme for 2015/16 was agreed. In addition the Member/Officer Communications / Members Casework Task and Finish Group would report back to the Committee in December with an update on its capacity to complete its objectives.

Transformation and New Ways of Working

The Council has to transform the way that it conducts its business. Advances in technology, changes in legislation and financial and other pressures, requires an

organisation that is flexible; one which meets the needs of its customers but also provides employees of the Council with the tools to perform.

Key to any transformation is ensuring that the Council can continued to make the changes needed on an on-going basis. This implied an ability to adapt and be innovative. The reduction in full time equivalent staffing levels will be one measurement of the success of the initiatives.

Phase 1 of the Transformation agenda will focus on the delivery of the Customer Access Strategy and New Ways of Working. This is a vital piece of work and will support and make evident the change that is happening within the Council. This phase focuses on:

- The progress and implementation of the New Ways of Working programme, highlighting major milestones achieved and to follow;
- Implementation of the Customer Access Strategy and current progress;
- A review of the work programme that supports both of the above.

IT Transformation and Data Security

The work programme to support IT Transformation and IT security fell into two themes: “Building a solid foundation” and “My Desktop Anywhere”.

The Council has a duty to protect its data. Further, we must do so in order to continue to provide a high level of service to customers. To allow this to happen, we needed to ensure the availability of ICT systems and access to data in a secure and reliable manner. Continuity planning is a key part of the project to avoid loss of data and ensure quick restoration of services in the event of disruption. This is provided by the IT infrastructure and can be thought of as the foundation to build upon.

In addition, the Council faces challenges including a continued increase in the amount of data being processed and stored, service provision to customers outside normal operating times through online services, and increasing costs and reduced resources.

New Ways of Working (NWoW) initiative outlined the need for officers to access information in a variety of ways and time periods to support changing customer requirements and working patterns. Using technology to provide “My Desktop Anywhere” supports NWoW putting the power into the department to design and provide their service.

To support this transformation IT needed to further transform. The approach of “high availability by design” should be implemented. The aim of high availability was to maximize access to systems and data for officers and customers. IT Transformation is delivered through the Modern Work Programme. Phase 1 improves current storage and links this with Microsoft Azure cloud services to enable the Council to take full advantage of the “cloud”.

An information workshop to inform Members of the work in more detail will also be scheduled.

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Committee: Community and Health

Chair: Councillor Will Russell

Lighting Up Brentwood

This year's Lighting Up Brentwood will take place on Saturday 28 November from 12 noon until 6pm. The Road will be closed from 8am until 8pm.

This is an extremely popular event and last year attracted approximately 15,000 people. This year's event will be hosted by Phoenix FM from the main stage near Wilson's Corner, but there are additional stages outside Santander in Crown Street providing live music throughout the event.

There will be plenty of other activities on offer such as 60 stalls providing food, drink arts and crafts in the High Street and Crown Street. As in previous years there will be a variety of walkabout acts, fairground rides and a snow globe at the Baytree Centre.

The culmination of the event will be the switch on of the Christmas lights at 5pm by the Mayor of Brentwood, Cllr Mark Reed ably assisted by a well known children's character and the Christmas Card winner.

Shenfield Christmas Fayre

Shenfield Christmas Fayre will be on Sunday 29 November from 1pm until 6pm. Hutton Road will be closed from 10am until 8pm.

There will be plenty of activities including an ice rink, Santas Grotto, small petting area, face painting and involvement from the two local business clusters.

The event will be hosted by Phoenix FM with a stage featuring performances from local school choirs. In addition there will live music on the West side of Shenfield.

Hutton Community Centre

The Council has started the process to handover Hutton Community Centre to a community organisation. The deadline for Expressions of Interest is 2 November and a report will be coming to the December Policy, Finance and Resources Committee for Members to agree the organisation which will take over the management of the Centre.

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. Final submission date is Monday 29 February 2016.

Community Safety update

Competency

- Daniel Cannon successfully achieved his BTEC Level 3 Advanced Award for Community Safety Practitioners. This was a great achievement and he continues to develop in his role.
- The Council obtained an Interim Injunction against a tenant of a Council owned dwelling for causing alarm, harassment and distress to other residents. This is the first time the new Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014 has been used.

Projects Update

- **Prison Me No Way** – Another popular Crime & Safety Awareness event is planned in October for 400+ at Anglo European School.
- **Firebreak** – 10 students successfully completed Firebreak in September in front of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Cllr Cloke and family and friends.
- **Senior Safety Roadshow** – The roadshow continues to grow from strength to strength and the team is booked up to Christmas. It's a real partnership project involving Essex Police, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, NHW, Home Instead and Age UK.
- **Senior Safety Day** – Our first Senior Safety Day is planned for 29th October at Doddinghurst Road Church.
- Engagement/promotional events – The team continue to engage with local residents and promote the work of the Community Safety Partnership and Council. Last event was in partnership with Essex Police and NHW in the High Street. More are planned

Planned Activity

- **Night of Action** – Following a meeting of the Local Action Group a partnership Night of Action is planned for Railway Square in October following complaints of ASB from local residents.

Health

Health and Safety Prosecution

A health and safety prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work Act has been successfully brought by Brentwood Borough Council against Parkway Fitness Limited resulting in a levy of £14372 in fines and costs. The case heard in Basildon Magistrates

Court on 7th October 2015 concerned an Ercolina Rehab gym machine located at Virgin Active, Little Warley which was being used by a member of the public. Due to failure of the floor fixings the machine fell over on to the user who sustained heavy bruising as a result. The machine had been relocated by the contractor - Parkway Fitness only weeks before. The reasons for the fine were; failure to carry out a proper assessment of the floor; failure to take in to account how the machine was fixed previously, and failure to conduct a proper risk assessment. As a consequence of this accident all machines of this type have been refixed using a more secure method and the result of this prosecution is currently being reported to all major gym companies so that they are aware of the duties of their contractor's when undertaking such work nationally.

Health and Wellbeing funding

As a consequence of newly available funding from Essex County Council both Basildon and Brentwood Borough Councils are now to benefit from a shared Public Health Specialist post. This Specialist will undertake health and wellbeing work on behalf of both authorities, being guided by the work plans produced by each respective Health and Wellbeing Board. In addition, each Authority is to receive a grant of £26,500 per annum to spend on health related areas requiring improvement such as combating current levels of obesity, physical inactivity, poor eating standards and enabling the elderly towards sustained independent living.

Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 18 November 2015

Committee: Economic Development

Chair: Councillor Keith Parker

The second Economic Development Committee was held on the 2 September 2015 during which it was agreed:

- To implement the 2015/6 Brentwood Borough Council Apprenticeship Programme to support the skills and employability agenda, Corporate Plan and ED Strategy priorities of the Council. The programme would include 3 parts: a) an in-house local authority apprentice in the Council, b) support for Brentwood Community Print to recruit two apprentices with mental health issues, c) £10,000 towards a wage subsidy scheme to encourage 10 Brentwood employers/businesses to recruit 10 apprentices, working in partnership with Essex County Council's apprenticeship team.
- To commission and develop a Brentwood Visitor and Location Website utilizing the Visit Essex Partner Scheme (option 2b) and to implement this under the delegated authority of the Head of Service for Planning and Development utilizing £10,000 of the 2015/16 Economic Development Budget. This project is currently at contractual stage.

A Visitor and Location Website will provide the most effective vehicle to market the whole Borough including its attractions, eateries, commercial and retail offer, enterprise projects, living and work space, talented workforce and excellent transport links. The site will cater for their different audiences and offer personal contact information for business enquiries. The Website development and promotion supports the visitor economy, business support and investment objectives of the Economic Development Strategy. The NVG options use economies of scale to build, host, monitor, provide support and maintenance for partner sites and so offer the most cost effective option. This has been tried and tested having successfully designed the re-launched Visit Essex.

- To implement the first ever 2015/16 Brentwood Business Showcase Event to support the Business Support and development priority of the ED Strategy and Council Corporate Plan. Initially it was agreed that this would be delivered in March 2016. However following an initial tendering exercise in October 2015, the preferred supplier has now informed us that they are unable to undertake the work for us due to their own internal resourcing issues over the next 6 months. The project is being re-tendered to secure external support to help deliver this event, which we are now scheduling for October 2016 rather than March 2016 given timescales now faced.
- That the Economic Development Team hold further discussions with the Borough's secondary schools in the Autumn 2015 to assess their desire to take

part in 'Opportunity Brentwood' in 2016/17, and if this is positive then this event be facilitated working in partnership with our large employers and Thurrock Council/" Opportunity Thurrock". As a result of meeting with the Head Teachers, Beckett Keys and the Endeavour School have both expressed a desire to attend the 2016 event supported by Brentwood BC (£500 per school). At the last minute, Beckett Keys also expressed a desire to attend the 2015 event. Brentwood BC supported this (£500) from this year's ED budget, benefiting the 300 school children who attended and received excellent feedback from the school on the value of the event.

Work continues to progress well with the Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group to support a variety of activities and projects to promote the town centre and support its traders including, Crown Street Tea Party, Shenfield Jazz Event, the new Crown Street Arts and Crafts Market, Shenfield Lighting Up event, Pastors Street Bus and Halloween Pumpkin Trail.

Work is on-going with partners to produce a new Prospectus for the Heart of Essex, the sub-regional partnership Brentwood is a member of. This will include a list of key shared priorities for the sub-region that can be used to influence future public and private investors.

Another successful free business workshop was held in partnership with Pro-actions Ltd during September to support businesses with marketing and social media. Another is planned on the subject of Leadership for 17 November 2015. These events are always well attended with positive feedback.

We have now completed the Brentwood Business Directory phase 2 data update and now have just over 5,000 businesses on the directory, 1850 with email addresses, which is a key tool when engaging with businesses and communicating any events or support available to them.

The Essex Rivers LEADER Grant Programme was formally launched in October 2015. Grant support is available for businesses in the eligible rural parts of the Borough to encourage business development, diversification and support job creation and rural services. Parish Councils are also eligible to apply. A total of £1.8m is available until 2020 across the Essex Rivers area (including Maldon, Chelmsford, Brentwood) with minimum grant awards being £10,000 and maximum of £100,000.

Report to the Council 18 November 2015

Committee: Environment & Housing Management Committee

Chair: Councillor Hossack

Council Garage development sites

A planning pre-application meeting was held on the 19th October 2015, for both Fawters Close and Magdalen Gardens. The planning applications for both schemes will be submitted to the Planning and Licensing Committee on 1st December 2015. The Resident consultation events were held on the 12th and 13th September; both events were well attended by residents. The overall response received was positive, in that residents understood the need for affordable housing in Brentwood, although concerns were raised with parking, the boundary fence and removal of asbestos roofing at Fawters Close.

An update report will be submitted to Housing and Environment Committee on the 9 December 2015.

Performance

Overall performance continues to improve with good performance being achieved at the end of Quarter 2. The only exception is the numbers of households in temporary accommodation which continues to increase; and is reflective of the national trend.

Rent collection KPI's have 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; this has been hi-lighted on the Council's strategic risk register.

The Gas servicing KPI has achieved 100% which is top quartile performance.

The void turnaround KPI (the number of days it takes us to let a property) has for the first time achieved top quartile performance for Quarter 2.

A detailed performance report will be submitted to Housing and Environment Committee on the 9 December 2015.

Report to the Council – 18 November 2015

Committee: Planning and Licensing

Chairperson: Councillor Roger McCheyne

Planning

Modern Planning Service Update

Now that the Modern Planning Service has been operating for just over 6 months, it is prudent to review the processes and procedures to make sure that they are helping deliver the service that the Council wants. At the 2 November 2015 Policy, Finance and Resources Committee, it was agreed to set up a cross party member working group to identify any changes or improvements that are needed to the service.

Over the coming weeks, users of the service, including members, officers and Parish Councils will be invited to give their views on the Modern Planning Service. This will include asking if there are any recommended improvements to the processes and procedures currently operating.

Once the review has been completed, a report from the Head of Planning and Development will be brought to the Policy, Finance and Resources Committee in December 2015 outlining the review findings and any recommended changes to the planning service's procedures. Members and any other planning service users are encouraged to make suggestions to make our service more effective and efficient for all our customers.

Planning Application Decisions

Since September 2015, the Planning and Licensing Committee has met twice and determined 7 planning applications – approving 5 and refusing 2.

The application to convert The Bull public house in Blackmore seems to have generated the greatest amount of interest from local people. At the 3rd November Committee, members decided to refuse to grant planning permission to change the pub into housing. Other recent Committee decisions include the granting of planning permission for the William Hunter Way Car Wash to reopen with a much improved facility for Brentwood Town Centre.

Local Plan

As members are aware, the Local Plan is one of the most important strategies that this Council will prepare. It will set out the development policies and sites that will shape how we plan for Brentwood over the next 15 years. Officers are presenting an update on where we are with the Local Plan at this evening's Ordinary Council meeting, highlighting the principle issues raised so far by local people and key stakeholders.

The Local Plan Members Working Group has met several times now to feed into the final Local Plan that will be presented to members in January. As well as considering the most appropriate sites to identify for future development in the Borough, the Working Group has also been considering and shaping key policy areas such as affordable housing, green belt, town centres and planning contributions through Section 106 Agreements.

In addition to these issues, the priorities highlighted in the recently adopted corporate plan "Vision for Brentwood 2016 – 19" also need to be reflected in the new Local Plan. Once approved by members, the new draft Local Plan will be subject to public consultation as part of the statutory planning process.

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 still out to consultation. This will continue until 27 November 2015 and is available on the Council website. Members may comment on the document should they wish to do so, in writing prior to the closing date.

The Gambling policy has also undergone a consultation, which closed on 31 October 2015; however, this was an interim consultation to ensure that the policy remained valid pending publication of significant revised guidance from the Gambling Commission. The guidance has now been published and whilst the Gambling policy will be considered by this Council for adoption in January 2016, it is anticipated that a fully revised policy will be ready for consultation and adoption by July 2016.

I am pleased to report that streamlining within the licensing team and efficiency measures have brought about a situation where fees for drivers of a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle have been significantly reduced. Members will be aware that licence fees are set purely on a cost recovery basis and this is good news for the trade as a reduction of £115 for a three year licence has come at a time when a change in the law through the Deregulation Act 2015 has required the Council to discontinue 1 and 2 year licences in favour of a three year licence. The impact of this additional cost is therefore significantly reduced.

Vehicle licence fees have also been frozen for 2016/17, which represents three years without an increase. However, a deficit in the Operator account has meant an increase of around 5%.

Report to the Council 18 November 2015

Committee: Policy, Finance and Resources

Chair: Councillor Louise McKinlay

Draft Vision for Brentwood and Outcome of Consultation

The draft Vision for Brentwood (2016-2019) consultation is now complete and the draft 'Vision for Brentwood' had been developed. The draft would cover a three year period, 2016 to 2019 and would refresh the previous corporate plan, setting out clear strategic direction.

It was agreed that the 'Vision for Brentwood' 2016-2019 be placed on deposit for public comment until the end of September 2015 and that the development of work programmes to deliver the 'Vision for Brentwood' 2016-2019 be agreed with details coming back to a future committee for decision.

On the 2nd November the committee received the final version and this was approved. It will now be taken to Full Council for adoption.

Income Generation

The committee set out the current activities which were being undertaken by the Council in relation to this, summarised as follows:

- Ensuring the best use is being made of the Council's existing property;
- Updating the Council's asset register to identify potential revenue streams;
- Maximising returns from property assets through reviewing existing leases, triggering rent review clauses or negotiating new agreements. A central list of leased properties and rent review dates is being compiled;
- The identification and sale of redundant property assets;
- Acquisition of income generating property assets;
- Establishing a Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) to enable the Council to undertake commercial activity where appropriate;
- Minimising borrowing costs;
- Procurement challenge through the East of England Local Government Association;
- Reduction in the cost of provision of homelessness accommodation, possibly providing accommodation directly by the Council;
- Investigating the possibility of reclaiming VAT through engagement of specialist VAT consultants;
- Exploring opportunities for the Council to maintain its own trees and possibly generate an income through other tree-works.

A report is due back to the December meeting of the committee.

Corporate Asset Management Plan Update - Asset Challenge

The Asset Management Strategy 2014/15 was approved by the Asset & Enterprise Committee on 15 July 2014 and an update on progress was noted by the Asset & Enterprise Committee on 27 March 2015.

The Strategy highlighted the entrepreneurial approach to the Council's management of its assets and the March Committee report provided an update on progress. Since March the Council's Strategic Asset Manager had moved on and a temporary resource had been brought in for a short time to work with the asset management team to provide support and mentoring to the team as they continued to deliver the Asset Management Strategy.

An updated Asset Management Action Plan was provided for Members' consideration and a full discussion took place regarding the contents of the Plan.

Licensing the Town hall for Rooms for Weddings, Civil and Celebratory Services

The Council will apply for a licence to hold ceremonies in the committee suite area including Committee Rooms 1,2,3 , Meeting Room 1, the Mayors Parlour and the Council Chamber. The services will commence from early 2016, on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Group rooms will be freed up for booking meetings by officers during normal office hours

Financial Update

The committee received the latest financial position of the Council. Good progress has been made on savings targets, with £570k forecast against a total of £650k. External pressures mean that close attention is paid to expenditure at all levels. Detailed examination of budgets is being held on a regular basis with relevant Heads of Service.

Key Corporate Projects

An update was received on the Key Corporate projects of the Council. These are currently defined as:

- a) The Town Hall & Service Delivery Hub
- b) The Local Development Plan (LDP)
- c) The Town Centre (incorporating William Hunter Way)
- d) The Transformation Agenda of the Council

The above is not an inclusive list and other projects will be incorporated as determined by the committee. However such projects are defined as being integral to the delivery of the revised Corporate Plan 2016-2019

Organisational Review Update

The restructure of CLB is now nearing the end of the consultation phase. To date there are no major differences from the agreed business case and we are on target to realise the £205,000 savings in 2015/2016