

2 December 2015

Economic Development Committee

**Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group 2015/16
Workplan**

Report of: Gordon Glenday, Head of Planning and Development

Wards Affected: All

This report is: Public document

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group 2015/16 Workplan Budget and progress on projects and initiatives. On the 4th March 2015 Council approved the budget for 2015/16.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Note the updated Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group 2015/16 Workplan Budget (Appendix 1) and progress made on projects and initiatives.**

3. Introduction and Background

This report provides an update on Brentwood Borough Renaissance Group (BB Renaissance Group) projects and budget for 2015/16.

3.1 Local Trade Clusters

Work has continued to complete the set up of local business trade clusters in Brentwood Town Centre to provide greater representation and access to bid funding for traders in all retail sectors of the Borough.

The following Cluster Groups are formed or in the process of being formed:-

- i. Crown Street/Roper's Yard (formed)
- ii. Brentwood Town Centre East End (formed)
- iii. Brentwood Town Centre West End (under formation)
- iv. Kings Road (under formation)
- v. Warley Hill (under formation)
- vi. Upper Shenfield (formed)

- vii. Central Shenfield (formed)
- viii. Ingatestone (formed)

The Ongar Road Cluster has been renamed Brentwood Town Centre East End following the inclusion of businesses at Wilson's Corner and the East End of the High Street.

Kings Road, Brentwood is being formed under the leadership of Verde Vintage Boutique and their courtyard cluster of specialist independent shops.

BB Renaissance Group management are also in discussions to establish a Brentwood Town Centre West End cluster through Mannings Tea Rooms on the High Street. Also a Warley Hill cluster through the new manager of the Four Vintners.

The Crown Street Cluster Lead has changed following the decision of Lin Heath at French Quarter to step down after many years of hard work and dedication in support of Crown Street Cluster, the BB Renaissance Group and Town Centre, for which grateful thanks were expressed by the group. The new leader appointment was awarded to Sue Page of Crown Street Cafe by majority vote.

3.2 Environmental Audit

Gerry Bender and Michael Hardy continue to monitor and report on Town Centre issues which are published on the BB Renaissance Group website www.brentwoodrenaissance.co.uk Following road repairs to the High Street there remain issues with the pavement surface, blocked drains, damaged railings, street furniture and cleaning, which are to be taken up through our County Councillors, or Head of Street Scene and Environment, as appropriate.

3.3 Crown Street Market

A trial Crown Street Arts and Crafts Market was held on Saturday 24 October with live music from the D'Ukes arranged by Brentwood Theatre. Mike Allen of Essex Farmers Markets is managing the market, along with the High Street, and hopes to also trial a vintage and antiques market which may be better received. Feedback was of poor trading for the stall holders, despite pre-publicity, and not helped by bad weather and Joey Essex visiting his shop which resulted in crowds of young people visiting Fusey.

Visiting TOWIE shop owners is an ongoing problem, particularly in Crown Street, due to the large numbers of visiting fans who prevent easy access to other shops in the vicinity and damage trade from regular shoppers, some of whom are ceasing to shop in Brentwood at weekends. Health and safety concerns associated with the large numbers of fans blocking the street are to be taken up with the Head of Service for Health, Safety and Localism.

3.4 Teenage Market

Mike Allen of Essex Farmers Markets has been unable to access meetings with secondary schools to discuss the concept, other than a more positive contact with Ursuline Convent High School who are keen to support the project with a view to launching in February 2016. The school are hoping to contact their peers at other schools in the Borough for more support.

3.5 Crown Street Arch

Construction drawings and costings for an arch at the junction with Hart Street have been received from the developers who are willing to fund the construction and installation costs. A meeting is being arranged for officers with Essex Highways to discuss their design approval and licensing costs.

3.6 Economic Development Business Support

3.6.1 Brentwood Incubation Enterprise Hub Feasibility Study

BB Renaissance Group has provided half the costs of the feasibility study for the viability of a Brentwood Business Enterprise Centre. This helps to fulfil some of the group's main aims to help grow the local economy, provide business support and training in the Town Centres. Creative Space Management were appointed to supply the study and their final report presented to the steering group and Councillors was well received.

3.6.2 BEST Growth Hub

Following the establishment of the new BEST (Best of Essex, Southend and Thurrock) Growth Hub to support and advise businesses, BEST and their Brentwood Area Business Navigator have presented their services to the BB Renaissance Group. It was agreed that the Growth Hub would offer the services of their Business Navigator to give free diagnostic help and workshops for our businesses in the new year.

3.7 Project Planning

Officers and BB Renaissance Group Management continue to work closely with cluster businesses to support and facilitate cost effective campaigns, events and promotions across all retail areas of the Borough, given the increasing challenges facing retail on the High Streets.

Shenfield traders have reported better trading from July following a difficult first six months of 2015. Brentwood businesses report continuing difficulties with footfall, including the TOWIE shops and many express that more local regular customers and families have been put off shopping in the Town Centre due to the young TOWIE tours visitor market and what they consider to be crowding or ASB. This is particularly evident for shops lower down Brentwood High Street and in Crown Street.

BB Renaissance Group is supporting Christmas events across the Borough through cluster activities and bid funding. This includes Brentwood Lighting

Up, Shenfield Christmas Fayre and Ingatestone Victorian Evening. Crown Street have also secured private sponsorship for a Selfie Booth, social media kiosk.

The Brentwood Gazette had offered BB Renaissance Group editorial coverage of independent shops as a 'Love Your Local Shops at Christmas' campaign in the Lighting Up Supplement. Shops are also booking paid for coupon advertisements similar to the Independents Day campaign in July. The campaign will replace a Small Business Saturday Event on 5th December. Last year's activities and entertainments did not attract visitors to a very quiet Town Centre the weekend after Lighting Up and following the Black Friday promotion.

Allocated project funds are stated in the Workplan Budget Appendix 1.

3.8 Bid Funding Applications

3.8.1 Shenfield Christmas Fayre

A joint bid totalling £3,000, representing £1,500 for Shenfield Upper and Central Trade Clusters was given approval. Shenfield traders were match funding 33% of the costs. The Upper Shenfield Cluster had also secured £3,000 private local sponsorship of the event for an ice rink on the road next to Shenfield Green following agreement of the road closure.

3.8.2 Ingatestone Victorian Evening

A revised bid for £1,000 has been approved following a request for full supporting financial information. This is to cover a funding shortfall as Ingatestone Parish Council voted against any financial support for the event, stating that they no longer had sufficient funds to support the Victorian Evening. Businesses and residents, however, wished it to continue as Ingatestone's main annual community event. Local businesses and event sponsors are therefore contributing the majority of the costs and a grant was received from the BBC Community Fund.

3.8.3 Street Pastors Minibus Project

Funding of £1,000 was approved as a quarter share of funding for the first year's lease of a minibus. The remaining share was made up of contributions from the Community Safety Partnership, Ardleigh Green School in Hornchurch and local churches. Ardleigh Green School would be garaging the bus and have usage other than Friday nights and monthly Saturday nights when the bus would be in use by the Street Pastors. A lease arrangement for a five year contract was planned rather than the previous proposal of purchasing a second hand bus and sponsorship from the night time economy businesses was to be initiated.

3.8.4 Brentwood Children's Literary Festival

Funding of £1,000 was approved towards the launch of an annual Brentwood Children's Literary Festival in summer 2016. This is to be managed by the Chicken and Frog independent children's bookshop under charitable status and will comprise a range of author events in shops, libraries, Brentwood Theatre and local schools. Events will include writing and illustration workshops, performance poetry, talks, book signings and author master classes. The library will host a free character based event to tie in with their summer reading challenge. 18 authors are booked for the event to date and the Brentwood Gazette are media partners. Local business sponsorship has been secured plus a grant of over £3000 from author James Patterson.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 In addition to the budget for 2015/16 of £20,000, the Council resources the delivery and support for this plan. Various options will be considered when scoping and developing the projects to ensure best outcomes and value for money.

4.2 Current Budgetary Position

Committed and projected spend to the value of £33,019 revenue and £21,985 capital have been allocated to date for 2015/16. Allocation of the remaining £23,733 revenue and £25,737 capital balance will continue throughout the financial year as bids are submitted and evaluated for agreement.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

For the Committee to agree the 2015/6 BB Renaissance Group Workplan Budget.

6. Consultation

6.1 All bids are subject to appropriate scrutiny and accountability and require approval by a majority share of the BB Renaissance Group members and by authorised signatories, i.e. the Chair and Head of Service. For high profile projects, agreement is also obtained from Brentwood Borough Council Members.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 The BB Renaissance Group Workplan supports the council's Corporate Priorities for:

A Prosperous Borough – Promoting a mixed economic base across the Borough, maximising opportunities in the Town Centres for retail.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Chris Leslie, Finance Director

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- 8.1 Brentwood Borough Council has provided funding of £20,000 during 2015/16 to the BB Renaissance Group (revenue) agreed as part of the budget setting process on 4th March 2015. Future funding will be subject to the budget setting process which will be concluded in March 2016.
- 8.2 The Town Centre Development Coordinator is the lead officer who manages and coordinates the BB Renaissance group.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Chris Potter, Monitoring Officer

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- 8.3 None

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 8.4 None

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

- 9.1 None

10. Appendices to this report

- Appendix 1 Budget Workplan 2015/16

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