

## **Report to the Council 29 June 2016**

### **Committee: Audit and Scrutiny**

**Chair: Councillor Jan Pound**

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#### **Statement of Accounts**

The Committee was presented with a copy of the accounts signed by the S151 Officer and Annual Governance Statement for their review in advance of being asked to formally approve them following the external audit.

This was the earliest the annual accounts had been prepared and nearly a month before the statutory deadline. This was still achieved despite a reduction in the budget for Financial Services.

External audit of the accounts began in early June with the aspiration the accounts would be signed off by the auditors in time for the next Committee meeting on 27 July 2016. If this was achieved the accounts would be approved over two months earlier than the statutory deadline.

#### **Internal Audit Annual Report and Progress Report**

Internal audit provided a summary of the work performed for the 2015/16 Annual Audit Plan. Overall the Council had achieved the majority of ratings at moderate or limited, which was an average rating in terms of the auditor's scoring system.

The audits completed since the last Committee were Human Resources, Risk Management, Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity, Payroll, Housing Systems, Revenues & Benefits and a summary of the findings were also included in the report.

#### **Strategic & Operational Risk Review**

This report updated members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on new, closed or changes to risks.

Two strategic risks had been reduced:

1. Roll out of universal credit – reduced following control measures put in place.
2. Information Management and Security – Training and further support from Thurrock arranged.

## **Corporate Complaints Monitoring and Freedom of Information Requests**

Detail of the complaints received through the Council's formal complaints process were provided and also information regarding the number of Freedom of Information requests received during 2015/16.

There had been an increase in the number of complaints compared to previous years, in part due to the improvement in the complaints monitoring process. Of the complaints that were upheld there was no particular trends or themes to the complaints that would result in concerns about a process or service delivery failure.

In 2015/16 the Council received 574 Freedom of Information requests compared to 622 the previous year.

## **Work Programme 2016/17**

The Committee considered its work programme for the coming year and following discussions a revised programme was agreed.

## **Report to the Council 29 June 2016**

**Committee: Community, Health and Leisure Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Parker**

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### **Assets of Community Value**

Blackmore Bull Community Group has indicated that they wish to submit a community bid for the asset which is currently listed as an Asset of Community Value. This has triggered a 6 month moratorium period on the disposal of the Asset.

### **Leisure Strategy**

Members agreed at the 6 June Community, Health and Leisure Committee to the appointment of consultants to undertake the next phase of the Leisure Strategy development work.

### **Dog Microchipping**

The Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations 2015 came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The Regulations require a keeper of a dog which is older than 8 weeks to ensure that it is microchipped by a vet or suitably trained person. It was agreed by Members that delegated powers be given to the Chief Executive and the Environmental Health Manager and officers nominated by them to take appropriate action if dogs are found not to have been microchipped.

### **Parish Council Liaison Meeting**

An update was presented to the Parish Council's on the Local Development Plan, the Town Centre Action Plan and the Lower Thames Crossing at the Parish Council Liaison Meeting on 14 June 2016. There was also a presentation on the work and achievements of the Community Safety Partnership.

An update was provided on the current work to dovetail the local list into the emerging Local Plan and Parish Council's were requested to input into the Local Heritage Listing Project. This list is kept 'live' at all times enabling buildings to be added and removed as appropriate. It was emphasised that local listing is a tool to give recognition to Heritage which is significant at a local level – it does not apply to buildings which have statutory protection. Parish Councils were encouraged to review the Heritage Environment Record to glean a greater understanding of the significance of the Historic Environment in their areas - this is publically available information coordinated by Historic England, IHBC (Institute of Historic Buildings and Conservation) and Conservation Professionals.

The website link is <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/>

## **Health and Wellbeing**

A Public Health Improvement Practitioner is now employed jointly between Brentwood and Basildon Borough Councils, and each authority has now received £26,500 ring-fenced grant to spend specifically on health and wellbeing projects as devised by their respective health and wellbeing boards. In addition, Brentwood Council now has a Cycling Furtherance Group which under the board has tasked itself with establishing a vast cycling network throughout the Borough. This work which is unique within Essex is being conducted along with assistance from Planning Services and Essex County Council. The Borough is also contemplating becoming part of 'Dementia Action Alliance' jointly with Basildon Borough Council. It is also looking at the possibilities of enhancing activities within care homes to promote health and wellbeing across all ages.

## **Report to the Council – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

**Committee: Environment and Housing Management**

**Chair: Councillor Hossack**

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### **ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Waste Strategy Group**

Members agreed that the Waste Strategy group set up in January 2015 continues to meet and develop the Waste Strategy for the Council in line with the work being undertaken through the Essex Waste Management Partnership. The group will report back to Environmental and Housing Management Committees and will meet 4 times a year.

The members of the group will be – Cllr Hossack (Chair) Cllr Poppy (Vice Chair), Cllr Squirrell, Cllr Barrett, Cllr Cloke and Officers from Street Scene Department.

#### **West Horndon Pilot Scheme**

The Environment and Housing Management Committee agreed in December 2015 to the introduction of a Waste and recycling collection trial in West Horndon – which included householders being given two wheeled bins (just over 600 households) one for dry recyclables and the other bin for general waste.

The bins were delivered in March 2016 and the scheme started 1 April 2016.

Information on the weight of general waste and recycling were recorded for a one month period prior to the scheme starting, and for one month after the start date. This shows that there has been an overall increase in waste and recycling of 13%, with an increase in general waste of 8% and 26% for dry recycling. The recycling rate has increased by over 3% to 30.9%.

The exercise of recording the weights will be repeated, in order to verify the initial findings.

The impact on collection times has also been recorded: the rounds are taking longer, up to 53% (this equates to almost an additional hour per round).

The following are just a few common comments or observations:

Residents:

Bins are too large; nowhere to keep them; spilt waste from some of the tipping operations; like the scheme as able to put the waste out the night before.

Operations:

Much slower; harder work than handling sacks; contamination issues at the bring site. A detailed report will follow after six months.

### **Textile Collection Scheme**

The textile collection service operated by Essex Textiles has collected 46.480 tonnes for 2015/16. The overall tonnage for 2015/16 was 91.175 tonnes. The tonnage reported for 2014/15 was 60.610 tonnes.

The collection service has effectively diverted an additional 50%; however compositional analysis indicates that c. 6% of the general stream is comprised of textiles so there is still potential to divert greater tonnage.

The Council receive a financial return from Essex Textiles and Essex County Council , which would equate to c. £7.5k for 2015/16.

Feedback from the public is limited and there have not been any negative comments from the charity sector.

The collection service enhances the recycling services currently offered, helps to divert a valuable resource from the MBT plant.

### **Love Essex litter campaign**

Essex local authorities and fast food businesses will continue the battle against litter and will be working together for the third year with a new look campaign with the same objective; to combat litter and put pressure on offenders to change their anti-social behaviour.

With local authority budgets depleting every year, the demand and pressure on services such as street cleaning rises. The ultimate victory would be to eradicate the littering bad habit, however as the trend in 'eating-on-the-go' continues to grow, so does the battle against litter. Local authority partnership the Cleaner Essex Group is determined to tackle the problem and knows that the joined-up approach has been tried, tested, and most crucially has brought results.

This year's campaign will commence on 15 August for 6 weeks. Locally, Depot staff will be arranging a series of events locally and encouraging local community groups and Parish Councils to also undertake their own Community events with the support of the Council providing sacks, litter pickers and collecting rubbish collected.

Litter Awareness Road Shows and Community Litter picks are being arranged by the Depot and Dawn Taylor will be updating all Members and Parish Clerks on details of these and of how to get involved for example by running local community litter picks during the six weeks of the campaign, whereby Council will support by supplying sacks, litter picks, collecting rubbish etc.

During the campaign Environmental Health will also be holding stop and search exercises with the Police.

## **HOUSING MANAGEMENT**

### **Development of Council Garage Sites**

The Committee will be aware of the Council's aspirations to build affordable homes on under used Council garage sites. Planning permission was obtained on the 1 December 2015 to build:

- 4 x 1 bedroom single storey units for older persons at Fawters Close, Brentwood
- 3 x 3 bedroom Houses for families at Magdalen Gardens, Brentwood

Design drawings and specification are being produced by architects in preparation to start the procurement of a building contractor to construct the properties on behalf of the Council. We aim to start building works on site mid September 2016.

Consultation meetings have taken place with the residents at Fawters Close and Cedar Road in relation to asbestos roofing removal from garages, dismantling of garages and new boundary wall.

### **Stock Condition Survey**

The Council has awarded a contract to Pennington's surveyors to complete a stock condition survey on all its housing stock. The survey of 2,479 properties and communal areas will commence on 27 June 2016 and will last approximately 6 months. All tenants will be written too in advance to arrange access to their homes. The results of the survey will inform the Council HRA business plan over the next 10, 15 & 20 years. Robust data management is critical for effective decision-making on assets; feedback from the surveys will entered into a new Keystone asset management database used to plan our future investments decisions on Council housing stock.

### **Parking at Gibraltar House, Mayflower House & The Keys**

Members and residents raised concerns over the lack of parking at the above schemes end of 2015 caused by parking spaces being used by workers of local businesses during the day.

Officers are preparing a new resident permit scheme. A public meeting is being held on 5 July 2016 at the Town Hall to consult residents and Members on options.

Environment and Housing Committee granted delegated authority on the 15 June 2016 for the Head of Housing and Chair of Housing Cllr Hossack, following resident consultation to approve resident parking options and charges.





## **Report to the Council 29 June 2016**

**Committee: Planning and Licensing Committee**

**Chair: Councillor Roger McCheyne**

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### **PLANNING**

Since implementing the Modern Planning Agenda in April of last year I am pleased to report that the planning team have identified further potential streamlining of processes and efficiency savings which will bring about enhanced service delivery.

Separately, Members will also be aware that officers have been positively engaging with the team from Thurrock to identify additional service improvements. Few of the suggestions in the report are entirely new; they include some things that have been done here before and others which some officers have experienced elsewhere. The improvements would affect the whole development management process from initial pre-application discussions through the application stage and on to implementation on the ground, including compliance with conditions and S106 agreements. The team is enthusiastic and will take ownership of all these ideas now and as it moves pro-actively into the implementation phase. The changes are quite wide ranging and include modifying ways of managing work streams, using technology better and improved working with members and agents. Members will be encouraged to become involved in these changes where appropriate and the team will report back on the progress of implementation as we move forward. To be successful and move the service on, officers and Members will need to demonstrate commitment to these service improvements.

Both the number of applications submitted and the number of pre-application requests have increased year on year and the pre-application service continues to be extremely popular particularly with developers wishing to submit applications for larger housing schemes. Both application and pre-application fee income is ahead of year end forecast. The publication of the draft local development plan has ignited developer interest in some of the larger sites identified within the borough and officers are collaborating with those parties to identify deliverable sites which will support the work of the policy team when the plan comes to examination. We expect that as we move through the local plan inquiry to adoption that developer contact will increase markedly and we have ideas about how to best meet this challenge with regard to workload and quality of development. For this reason we need to implement move swiftly through the implementation of these improvements to put us in the best position to meet these future challenges.

## LICENSING

The Council now has a new supplier for vehicle plates and door signs in respect of both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles. Whilst the costs are primarily the same, the quality is of a higher standard and this should improve durability.

The licensing team negotiated with the new supplier and consulted fully with the trade prior to agreeing on the final product.

Traditionally Hackney Carriages are defined by white rear plate and white door sign and private hire vehicles by a blue rear plate only. These are being gradually phased out following introduction of the new style of plates in April this year. However, it will take until April 2017 to fully replace all plates and door signs as replacement is taking place as and when the vehicles are due for licence renewal.

New Hackney Carriage plates and door signs are now purple in colour. The door sign also carries the words 'this vehicle may be hailed' which clearly defines it as a Hackney Carriage (Taxi).

New private hire plates are yellow, with the addition for the first time of a door sign (also in yellow). The door signs on private hire vehicles carry the words 'this vehicle must be pre-booked', which assists in more clearly defining the vehicle and its purpose.

With concerns over safeguarding following Rotherham, Oxford and others, particularly with regard to children's welfare, it is hoped that the new colour and addition of door signs will assist in identifying the vehicles more clearly and thus providing peace of mind to the public that the vehicle and driver are vetted and safe.

Following on with the safeguarding theme, the licensing team are in the early planning stages, working with community safety and key partners, to introduce safeguarding training for drivers of licensed vehicles as well as for members of the alcohol licensing trade. This forms part of the Council's duty to assist and promote safeguarding as far as it can in order to avoid the tragic consequences of a failure to act or to support vulnerable adults and children as experienced elsewhere.

## **Report to the Council 29 June 2016**

**Committee: Policy, Finance and Resources**

**Chair: Councillor Louise McKinlay**

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### **Provisional Outturn and Annual Treasury Management Report 2015/16**

The report covered the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital 2015/16 outturns, which are still subject to external audit. The outturn position reflected the fact that the Council continues to be under increasing financial pressure from funding cuts, and economic factors.

The treasury management indicators showed that the Council continued to reduce its capital financing requirement in 2015/16.

### **Business Income Generation Update**

Six income generating areas currently being developed were presented to the Committee:

1. Increasing demand for the trade waste service
2. Increasing demand for the brown garden bins
3. Pet memorial service
4. Increasing demand for weddings at the Town Hall
5. Providing services to private landlords
6. Providing additional tree management services

A Business Development post has recently been created to focus on this and continue to investigate new initiatives.

### **MIND Relocation to the Town Hall**

A lease was agreed by the Committee which allows MIND to relocate from its existing premises and come into the Town Hall to form part of the Town Hall Hub.

### **Car Parking Review**

Parking is an important issue for the Borough therefore it is essential that sufficient information is available on which future decisions can be based. The framework for the parking review was set out over three stages:

#### **Stage 1**

- Inception
- Preliminary Engagement

- Reviews
- Parking Audit
- Demand & Revenue
- Capacity Utilisation
- Stage 1 Report

### **Stage 2**

- Workshops
- Option Development

### **Stage 3**

- Strategy & Action Plan

A consultation will form part of the review involving relevant external parties.

### **Warley Pavilion Lease**

A lease to Mavericks RFC was approved for the Warley Pavilion and nearby toilet block, in the North Eastern corner of Warley Playing Fields, with a view to the property becoming Mavericks' clubhouse and headquarters.

The club would refurbish the currently disused buildings and it would provide additional sporting facilities in the Borough.

### **Woodland Management Plan**

In order to improve the management of the Borough's woodland areas it was agreed that the opportunity to secure grant funding from the Forestry Commission to develop a woodland management plan be pursued.

There is also the potential to generate income from both the harvest and improved use of Hartswood Tip, all of which will be subject to the development of a supporting business case.

### **Environmental Health Enforcement Policy**

The Council is required to have an environmental health enforcement policy that is in-line with current guidance and legislation. It covers the delivery of enforcement and makes reference to the Better Regulation Delivery Office – Regulators Code 2014. It sets out the principles applied to encourage smarter, risk-based enforcement.

## **Food Safety and Health & Safety Enforcement Services Plans 2016/17**

Brentwood Borough Council must provide Service Plans for approval by Members with respect to its statutory obligations to enforce all relevant provisions of food safety and health and safety legislation within its area.

These Service Plans identify how the service intends carrying out the proactive and reactive elements of inspections and investigations to ensure the continuing safety of both business employees and the public. It also includes measures taken to aid businesses in compliance such as the provision of training and the food hygiene rating scheme.

### **Food Safety Enforcement**

The Food Safety Service Plan for 2016/17 has been approved by PF&R Committee. The document explains what was achieved within the previous financial year. The Service maintained a 'broad compliance' figure of over 97% (the set target), and ensured that all food premises due an inspection received one and on time. For the second year running Brentwood Borough Council food premises standards rate second highest on compliance within the UK and highest in Essex according to the 'Which' magazine. The authority also took more food samples for bacteriological testing in proportion to the number of food premises than any other authority in Essex. Targets will remain the same for 2016/17. In addition, Brentwood is now part of the Tuck In project being run by the Essex authorities which has to date seen a total of 14 premises now serving more healthier food than before within the Borough. Work will progress to sign up further premises in 2016/17. This work dovetails with that being undertaken to improve health and wellbeing. Lastly, the Service now offers the Allergen Awareness Course to all food businesses and their employees.

### **Health and Safety Enforcement**

The Health and Safety Service Plan for 2016/17 has been approved by PF&R Committee. As reported, both the Government and HSE continue to set the local authority agenda as to what interventions may take place within this authority and all others within the UK. As a consequence, the output of inspections nationally has reduced by 95% and the same is true for Brentwood. Last year the Authority undertook a range of projects to reduce risk within permitted areas. This included work around gym equipment safety, exposure to asbestos and carbon monoxide generated from solid fuel tandoori ovens. This work will continue in 2016/17. Much of the output of the health and safety enforcement service at Brentwood has however been reactive to accidents and there are currently three significant investigations taking place regarding a fall from height, injury from fireworks and a gym machine which became detached from its floor fixings.

## **Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report 2015/16**

The report detailed the current systems the Council has in place to promote Health and Safety and comply with its legal obligations.

During 2015/16 there were 38 incidents reported with the majority of these occurring in Street Scene and Housing services. The highest type of injury was stress with 11 incidents and the most common cause was verbal abuse or threatening behavior towards staff.

### **Corporate Health and Safety**

The Corporate Health and Safety Service continues to report quarterly to members on accident/incident data and work in progress. The Health and Safety Committee also meets quarterly to discuss issues in depth and to formulate work needing to be done to improve safety within all significant areas. The Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report for 2015/16 has been approved by PF&R Committee. Improvements continue to show in a number of key areas including training of employees and induction. Services such as refuse collection, grounds maintenance, street scene, parks and open spaces and the depot workshop have seen improvements to their health and safety management systems. Additional work with other service areas such as Housing, Planning and Corporate Services has also taken place. This has involved reviews of existing health and safety systems such as lone working arrangements and risk assessments, the cautionary contacts register, fire procedures and First Aid arrangements together with support of the Town Hall remodeling proposals.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

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