



Brentwood Chamber of Commerce Newsletter

September 2009

www.brentwoodchambers.co.uk

Dear Member

We have all been watching the transformation of Brentwood High Street with interest and there will be many who think, as I do, that the end result looks likely to give Brentwood a welcome facelift.

However, whilst we all accept that the process was always going to be difficult and that 'there is no gain



without pain', the degree of pain and disruption to trade is proving badly damaging to some shops down at the western

end of the high street. An example is the old-established menswear shop, Mr Savile, which has reported a catastrophic drop in trade, just at a time when they would expect brisk business (they also specialise in hiring out wedding outfits).

They believe, in common with many of us, that the eventual outcome will be an attractive high street which will hopefully encourage more visitors to come and shop in our town. Their problem is one we have been pointing out to Council leaders for some time – how do they survive until then?

The idea of a late night shopping evening on Thursdays was taken up by Mr Savile but they had **NO** visitors on the first Thursday. Maybe it will improve, but they feel that more radical help is needed.

They think, as do many of our members, that the Council should 'think out of the box' in looking to help the town survive the disruption. **The fact is that people are deliberately avoiding coming into Brentwood to shop or do business.**

Who wants to brave the noise, the dirt and the

parking difficulties when they can more easily go elsewhere – to a more comfortable, user-friendly shopping centre which welcomes them with open arms?

Radical thinking needs to take place. The Council have come back to us with a partial response, including the perhaps not unreasonable point that late night Thursdays need to be given a chance. It has also been pointed out that the County Council has powers to consider business rate rebates in certain circumstances. Perhaps this is one of them?

The *Weekly News* reported that some high street shops had benefitted from the late night opening and the entertainment which was laid on – but that did not include the western end of the high street. Also, Thursday nights are all very well, but what about the rest of the week?

One of the reasons that visitors are keeping away is the negative media coverage. We all need to do something to let local papers and County radio stations know that Brentwood is open for business as usual. But it is also clear that the authorities need to come up with something striking and brave. They worry about the loss of revenue which, for example, introducing an hour's free parking (and giving that widescale publicity) would cost. However, the price of that surely pales into insignificance against the loss of rates revenues and damage to the town which could result from shops needlessly going out of business.

The economic crisis is bad enough to overcome. But a killer blow could be dealt to our town's businesses unless the authorities come up with some creative initiatives to attract people into the town during the transformation works; and unless we all do our bit to support local trade as well as encourage the media to project a more positive image of the town during this transition. The Council needs to lead the way but we must all act now, to protect our town

Mike Hawkins
Executive Secretary

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This is a popular facility and we do have takers for a number of months ahead. So please hurry to take advantage of this offer and contact us to put your name down to sponsor a future Newsletter.

COMPANY PROFILE

Have you sent us your company profile to add to your entry on Chamber's website? If not, please consider sending us details of the services your company offer. This is yet another opportunity to promote your business. There is no additional fee, just send us about 200 – 250 words, preferably in a word document to info@brentwoodchambers.co.uk



MESSAGE FROM CHAMBER MEMBER SADS CHARITY (Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndrome)

The cardiac charity SADS UK is holding a Grand Charity Ball on the 26th September at the Stockbrook Manor, Billericay. Proceeds raised from the evening are to help BHF Heart Nurses at the new Essex Cardiothoracic Centre in Basildon, who support heart patients in Essex. Tickets are available at £58 and this includes a welcome drink of bucks fizz and half a bottle of wine with your meal. The meal is followed by a short auction, fabulous raffle and dancing to the live band 'The Shoes'. If you would like further details please contact Anne Jolly, SADS UK, Tel: 01277 811215. or email at sadsoffice@btconnect.com

Also, book now for the SADS UK Surviving Cardiac Arrest Conference, Royal College of Physicians, October 24th 2009

Charity No. 1113681 Suite 6, Churchill House, Station Rd,
West Horndon, Essex, CM13 3XD.

The following companies have joined us recently and we welcome them to membership of Chamber:

Impact IT Support Ltd, Brook Lodge, Riseway, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8BG
Fox Cottage Ltd, Fox Cottage, Kennel Lane, Billericay, Essex CM12 9RR
CO2 Creative Limited, 1 Saxon House, Upminster Trading Park, Warley Street, Upminster, Essex RM14 3PJ
Red Frog G.S.F Ltd, 108 High Street, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4AP

!! USE THE CHAMBER WEBSITE TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS !!

We hope you agree that the Chamber website has improved since its re-launch earlier this year. We are introducing another new feature because we are keen that it should become a really useful marketing tool for all our members.



Of course you can already add your company profile to your existing entry on our website as well as a direct link to your own website.

We are now adding a rolling banner to the homepage which will feature topical issues and events; but this feature could be used also to promote a special event for you such as business anniversary, a key milestone etc. Also each of our website pages contain a sponsorship area to the right hand side which you can use to advertise your business at the modest fee of £50 per annum. Please take advantage of this by contacting us either via the website or direct at info@brentwoodchambers.co.uk or phone 01277 214814.

It is good to report that two new members operating business in the leisure sector have joined Chamber recently

The first is **Red Frog Restaurant**, at the western end of Brentwood High Street. You may well have seen them mentioned as a venue for *Drinks of France* wine tastings.



Red Frog combines offering high class French and international cuisine with a delicatessen service. Why not give it a go? Call them at 01277 233981 or email redfrog.gsf@gmail.com



The other is the new **Premier Inn** opening soon in Kings Road, Brentwood (the former Amstrad building which featured in Alan Sugar's *Apprentice* programme). In fact there is a grand official opening for Brentwood's **Premier Inn** on 15th October. Make a note of it in your diaries - I know they would appreciate the support of Chamber members. More information on this next month.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Executive Committee Meeting Dates for 2009 are:

17th September ~ Joint with Council, 15th October and 19th November

If you have any issues you want to be raised at an Executive Committee meeting, please contact the Chamber office a week or so before the relevant meeting and we will put it on the agenda

Email: info@brentwoodchambers.co.uk

NETWORKING EVENTS

The next **Breakfast Club** is **Wednesday 16th September**, 7.30 to 8.45am

Future planned dates: 21st October, 18th November & 16th December

The **Christmas Lunch** is 10th December, 12 noon to 2.00pm

(although we are looking into possibly making this an evening event instead, would that appeal to you? – please let us know)

Venue: The Headley, The Common, Great Warley, Brentwood, CM13 3HS

To book your place and pay online:

<http://www.brantdesignstudio.co.uk/brentwoodchamber.html> or telephone Elaine Othen 01376 564955

Open Evening

*Thursday 5th November, 6.00pm – 8.30pm
at the Marygreen Manor Hotel, London Road*

To book, visit www.brentwoodchambers.co.uk EVENTS

Sign Off

Summer has now passed us by, though, by and large, we had it quite good in our part of the country compared with most. Now the autumn, with its challenges, lies before us.

Amongst the challenges is how to survive not just the recession but also the town's major refurbishment programme. Welcome though it is and award-winning though it will undoubtedly be when finished, the road works do seem to have kept people out of Brentwood and our businesses are suffering, in consequence. We all need to play our part, but particularly the authorities, to try and make sure that we come out of it not only with a smart new high street but with all our current businesses still intact.

Mike Hawkins

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