

Monthly Business Breakfast

The Chamber Business Breakfast continues to be a popular fixture in our networking programme, with a different sponsor each month.

February's sponsor was SNAP, who talked about the wonderful work that they do for local children. We also had an interesting discussion about the benefits to both businesses and charities of close collaboration between the two sectors.



SNAP February's Business Breakfast sponsor.

Jeremy Radley from SNAP said, "We found the event a great opportunity to engage and communicate with both existing and new supporters. Pam from our Family Support team provided recent examples of her interactions with families who called SNAP's helpline – it brought the whole reason that SNAP exists to life. We also spent some time discussing the different ways that businesses support the charity – this even resulted in a couple of generous donations of raffle prizes for an event that is being held in support of SNAP. An amazing result!"

Christine from [Perfect Layout](#) is a new Chamber member so this was her first Business Breakfast. She said, "I was impressed by the format of the Business Breakfast, hosted by the Chamber. It was a perfect blend of free flow networking, structured discussions, a formal presentation, and one-to-one conversations over breakfast. I look forward to attending future events."

Sarah from [Think Thinner Coaching](#) also attended for the first time and said, "I attended my first business breakfast earlier this month and found it a really relaxed and enjoyable experience. I was made very welcome by the other attendees, the breakfast was delicious, I listened to an informative presentation by the charity SNAP and made some useful connections with the other members of my table. There was no rush to leave and I was able to chat with a few more members before heading off. I will definitely be attending the next one as it was such a pleasurable way to network."

Consider joining our next Business Breakfast on Friday 8 March.

Sponsorship Opportunity

Sponsor one of our monthly Business Breakfasts. For £175 you'll secure a short introduction in the previous month's breakfast, 5 free places, a 10 minute presentation slot, opportunity to display publicity and exposure in the Chamber newsletter and website.

For more information or to reserve your month, contact the Chamber office – office@BrentwoodChamber.co.uk

New Chamber Members Welcome

If you are a local business and have not yet been to a Chamber of Commerce event, you are very welcome to come along to take advantage of the Chamber's programme. To find out more visit the website at brentwoodchamber.co.uk.

If you would like to join the Chamber, email us at: office@BrentwoodChamber.co.uk

The South Essex Business Expo

The South Essex Business Expo will be held on Thursday 14 March 2024 from 10am-3pm at the Brentwood Leisure Centre. This promises to be a great networking opportunity with nearly 200 stands and thousands of visitors are expected.

The Chamber will have a stand at this event and many of the Committee members will be there to continue supporting you in any way they can. Bring your business cards and we look forward to seeing you there.

BOOK FREE VISITOR TICKETS



Mike Hawkins, Executive Committee member.

Meet The Committee

We thought that you would like to find out a bit more about the members of the Chamber Executive Committee, so each month we will be interviewing a different person. This month, we have chosen to introduce you to Mike Hawkins who will sadly be retiring from the Executive Committee in May.

What is your role on the Chamber Committee?

I am now billed as a 'coopted' member of Exco. From 2004 until 2010 I was its Executive Secretary, becoming CEO from 2010 to 2017. I became Chairman of the Brentwood Business Partnership for 5 years until 2022 and represented them on Exco for that period. I was asked to stay on as a coopted member from 2022 until the present. I will be standing down at the May AGM after 20 years on Exco.

Tell us about your current job?

I am a retired Banker – a Divisional Director of NatWest (card Payments) and Chairman of MasterCard UK.

What do you like about Brentwood?

Brentwood is a great place to live in, raise a family and do business. It is attractive, surrounded by green fields and woodlands, excellent schooling, entrepreneurial businesspeople, easy commuting to the city of London and with a real community spirit which larger conurbations often lack.

What was your first job?

Management Trainee with British Oxygen Co.

What job did you think you would like to do when you were a child?

Journalist.

Who do you admire in the business world?

Richard Branson, plus some past CEOs of the major banks in UK.

Have you had any mentors and if so, what did you learn from them?

My father was an Engineer, an Operations Executive who spent most of his career in India and the far east, and gave me good advice about management styles – more about encouraging teamwork and adopting a collegiate approach rather than the 'tell' style so frequently seen with abrasive executives.

What advice would you give to someone just starting up in business?

Always be prepared to learn, work hard and don't be put off by set-backs – perseverance, especially in the face of difficult challenges, almost always pays off. But also be prepared to be flexible to achieve your goals. People skills are paramount even with a one-person business, so empathy is important.

How do you handle setbacks or frustrations?

In the words of the Dad's Army character 'don't panic'. Keep a cool head and maintain a rational approach. If your aims and objectives continue to stand up, don't forget them; but you may need to finesse your approach to achieve them in adverse circumstances.

What are your hobbies and interests outside of work?

A main hobby is music; eclectic tastes generally but I especially love classical music and sang in choirs for years. But also an avid reader and a golfer. Welsh rugby fan (some years are better than others!). Also, of course, my family, which includes 5 young grandchildren, also keep me happily occupied.

Who would you like to spend one day with and why?

If we can include those no longer with us, I am an admirer of Winston Churchill (often voted the most famous and admired Briton) and I would like to spend a day with him, especially in his pop in the war years.

Easter Egg Collection for SNAP

HS Estate Agents started collecting Easter Eggs for SNAP three years ago. They are now collecting eggs for Easter 2024 and received over 130 in the first week. HS kicked this off with 60 eggs and many local businesses and residents have donated generously since. Last year, Craig from Bennetts Funeral Directors came dressed as the Easter Bunny to drop off their eggs.

If you would like to donate eggs please drop them off at HS Estate Agents' office on Kings Road. They have asked if you could please buy smaller eggs as this makes it easier for SNAP to give out to the children and possibly some dairy/gluten free options.



Craig from Bennetts Funeral Directors dressed as the Easter Bunny.

Member's News



New City College Free Online Courses

New City College offers free online courses for people who want to build their confidence, change career direction, update their knowledge or improve their skills – without the need to attend regular classes on the College site.

Online courses provide an engaging, effective, accessible, and affordable way to undertake training, whilst benefiting from the same level of support and guidance from their outstanding tutors. You can gain a qualification accredited at Level 2 in the comfort of your own home or workplace, at times which suit you. These courses allow you to study at your own pace and fit around other commitments such as family or employment.

If you are an employer and would like to know more about setting up any of these courses for groups of employees, talk about upskilling or Apprenticeship opportunities, the team at New City College would be more than happy to meet to discuss. Please email paul.mason-hughes@ncclondon.ac.uk to arrange.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Welcome To Our New Members



My name is Ahtesham Shah. I live in Brentwood and have a Security Guard Company based in London. We cover London and its home counties and offer our services to corporate buildings, retail stores, shopping centres, construction sites, shows and events in the health care and education sectors but are not limited to these.

[CONTACT](#)



GILLIAN BROOKS
MARKET RESEARCH

Market Research - I help local organisations make informed data-lead business decisions by conducting Market Research. Knowing your market is a critical part of successful business. Get in touch if you are looking to build customer loyalty, get that competitive edge, wondering how best to approach new business prospects or simply have a question about your market that you'd like answered.

[CONTACT](#)



Ignite Insurance Brokers Ltd are a Brentwood based, award winning Insurance Brokers with a keen interest in working with local Business's and trying to help them not only save against the ever increasing insurance costs but making sure they are covered correctly and working with you for the long term. If you would like some help or advice, then please get in contact with us where we would be happy to assist.

[CONTACT](#)



We are award-winning brand-builders, helping businesses of all sizes launch, grow and build strong, and long-lasting relationships. Our strategic approach is key to developing brands that captivate customers, engage prospects and rally employees. We'd love to discuss your project and how we can help maximise engagement and achieve your goals.

[CONTACT](#)



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We make complex technology simple, helping businesses and other organisations with IT networks – internet, phones, IT security, mobiles and data cabling. We use plain English to explain how it works and provide one point of contact for all services.

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Perfect Layout
DIGITAL MARKETING

Perfect Layout Digital Marketing is here to help you build your business by improving your online visibility. Our aim is to ensure that our client's website and digital marketing efforts are driving leads to help expand their business and client base. You can find out whether there are gaps in your digital marketing by investing in a Website Health Check. We will provide you with a written report of our findings, that includes our recommendations and areas for improvement.

[CONTACT](#)

Brentwood Borough Council

Shop Improvement Grant Scheme

Grants of up to £2k are available for shop front and accessibility improvements. A total of £30k will be distributed to town centre businesses in Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone in 2024. This scheme is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The grant is available to anyone who owns or rents commercial premises in (including registered charities) Brentwood town centre, Shenfield high street and Ingatestone high street.

Brentwood Borough Council are asking businesses to complete a short Expression of Interest form to outline the improvements they would like to make to their business premise. They will check with their Planning Department to see if the improvements may require planning consent.

[EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM](#)

[FULL GUIDANCE](#)

SHOP IMPROVEMENT GRANT SCHEME

Funding of up to £2k available for Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone high street businesses

www.brentwood.gov.uk/funding



Funded by UK Government

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Upcoming Chamber Training

11 APR
Thursday

Customer Service Excellence

[BOOK HERE](#)

Upcoming Chamber Events

8 MAR
Friday

Business Breakfast at Marygreen Manor Hotel
Sponsored by 24 Fingers

[BOOK HERE](#)

12 APR
Friday

Business Breakfast at Marygreen Manor Hotel
Sponsorship available

[BOOK HERE](#)

9 MAY
Thursday

Meet the Chamber and AGM at Old Brentwood's Club

[BOOK HERE](#)

Upcoming Member Events

Pinney Talfourd - Spring Budget Event

MP, Julia Lopez, and the Conservative Party Chairman, Richard Holden, provide local businesses with the opportunity to discuss the Spring Budget's key announcements, ask questions and network.

7 March 2024
10:30 - 12:00

54 Station Road, Upminster RM14 2TU

[More information](#)

Brentwood Council - South Essex Business Expo

14 March 2024
10:00 - 15:00
The Brentwood Centre

[More information](#)

Let's Connect:

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14 March 2024
14:00 - 16:30