

Mobile issues continue to affect connectivity in south Brentwood

Many of you will be aware of the problem of poor or non-existent mobile phone signals in the vicinity of Brentwood Station and beyond. This was caused by the removal of the mast from Ewing House in Kings Road in June this year, when planned redevelopment of the building commenced.

That mast served all four major networks, and so far a replacement site has not been found which meets Brentwood Council's approval.

Phil Drane, Director of Planning & Economy at the Council, said recently that he understood the process would take "months rather than days".

In 2019, Vodafone and O2 applied for permission to erect masts in Pastoral Way and at the corner of Crown Street and Coptfold Road. Earlier this year, 3 Mobile and EE applied for a mast on top of Masefield Court near Brentwood station. All of these planning applications were refused by Brentwood Borough Council. The Chamber is talking to the Council and the phone operators in a bid to get the situation resolved as quickly as possible.

Changes on Chamber committee

An executive committee meeting was held recently to discuss the leadership and future direction of the Chamber.

Following a decisive vote of support for the current chairman, Colin Barber, committee members Sheila Murphy, Neil Hornsby and Sally Sykes felt that the time had come to step down from the committee.

Speaking afterwards, Colin Barber said: "We really appreciate everything that Sheila, Neil and Sally have done for the Chamber of Commerce, and I and the other members of the committee would like to acknowledge this.

"As we continue with our plans for the future, I am confident that the Chamber will continue to play a significant role in supporting business in Brentwood."



Chamber remembers John Kerslake

Many of you will have heard that Brentwood Councillor and Chamber executive committee member, John Kerslake, sadly passed away in October following a diagnosis of advanced cancer.

Until recently John was deputy leader of Brentwood Borough Council and always showed a commitment to the people of Brentwood. As a Chamber committee member he acted as a liaison between the Chamber members and the council.

"John was very shrewd and insightful, and whenever he intervened in a discussion we always knew that his words would be incisive and relevant," said Chamber chairman, Colin Barber. "He combined that with a great sense of humour, which helped us all ensure that we did not take things too seriously.

"Only a few weeks ago John spoke to me about taking on a new role as the External Liaison Officer for the Chamber, with responsibility for providing a link with various other organisations in and around Brentwood - a role for which he was ideally suited.

"John will be greatly missed, and on behalf of all the Chamber members I would like to pass on our condolences to John's family and friends."



▮ WeBuildEssex were main contractors and project managers on this famous Soho building

From Soft Cell to Soho Chic in London project

Chamber member WeBuildEssex (webuildessex.co.uk) has recently completed a full and completely bespoke design and build project in central London. What was once a former home to Marc Almond is now a completely modernised and refurbished live/work space in the heart of London's Soho.

Situated just off Wardour St, 1A Flaxman Court has been many things over the years. A quirky Georgian mews property, tucked behind The Ship Pub and opposite the five-star Soho Hotel. It's at the centre of practically everything.

Famed as being 'Tainted Love' singer Marc Almond's 1980s residence, this piece of real estate shares its postcode with other famous London landmarks including Trident Studios.

"The tired interior and exterior have been given a complete facelift," explained WeBuildEssex's Andy Rogers. "We worked closely with the landlords and incoming tenant to create a multi-functional space."

MilocoBuilds were brought in to design the audio post studios. These needed to be completely sound proof, a challenge given where the building is. "We acted as main contractor and project managers and it was one of our most challenging projects to date," added Andy. "This was mainly down to the awkward location of the site.

"That was from a sympathetic strip out to future-proofing the ageing building with new walls and ceilings, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom plus full fibre networks, CCTV, fire and burglar alarms, door entry and of course the usual new mechanical and electrical installs.

"There was a lot of time spent crafting bespoke joinery and furniture to maximise the space that spreads over three floors. The end result was more successful than we could have imagined and we have saved a slightly crumbling piece of listed architecture for another 50 years or more."

Four new members

We had a quartet of new members approved at the October executive committee meeting - and are pleased to see applications still coming in during the current situation.

Among those joining were **Hosted by Design** (hostedbydesign.co.uk), who provide web hosting, domain management and WordPress maintenance services.

Also signing up was **Victoria Howell Health & Wellbeing** (victoriahowellhealthandwellbeing.co.uk). Victoria provides women's health advice and support to individuals and businesses and specialises in menopause services. Our other new members, who feature elsewhere in this edition, were **flexy** (flexyapp.uk) and Adrian Williams of **CSE** (csegrowth.co.uk).

Virtual sponsorships

Despite being unable to run in-person events at present, such as our Business Breakfasts and Meet The Members, we're still keen to offer members the chance to sponsor gatherings, and raise their profile.

Going into lockdown we had a full slate of Business Breakfast sponsors, and almost a complete set of Meet The Members hosts through to the end of the year - plus plenty of takers for sponsoring the new Meet & Eat lunchtime events that had just started up.

We're back up and running with regular online events again, and as we look set to continue in that vein through the winter the events team at Chamber is putting together a plan on potential charges and benefits for sponsoring the Virtual Breakfasts, Virtual Lunches, and maybe also the Virtual Christmas Lunch.

Meetings at year end

Our final chamber executive committee meeting of the year will take place on Thursday December 10, with plenty on the agenda looking forward to hopefully better times in 2021. So if you have any issues you'd like to raise, do drop us a line.

We'll be working on potential events dates too looking in to the start of 2021 and will be updating you in the final newsletter of the year, and adding everything confirmed to the website at brentwoodchamber.co.uk/future-events-calendar.

It's a tough job being a small business owner

Chamber member Adrian Williams (csegrowth.co.uk) recognises the challenges faced by a lot of small businesses: "They are often spending countless hours trying to generate the revenues to meet this month's bills, while at the same time wondering where next month's business is coming from.

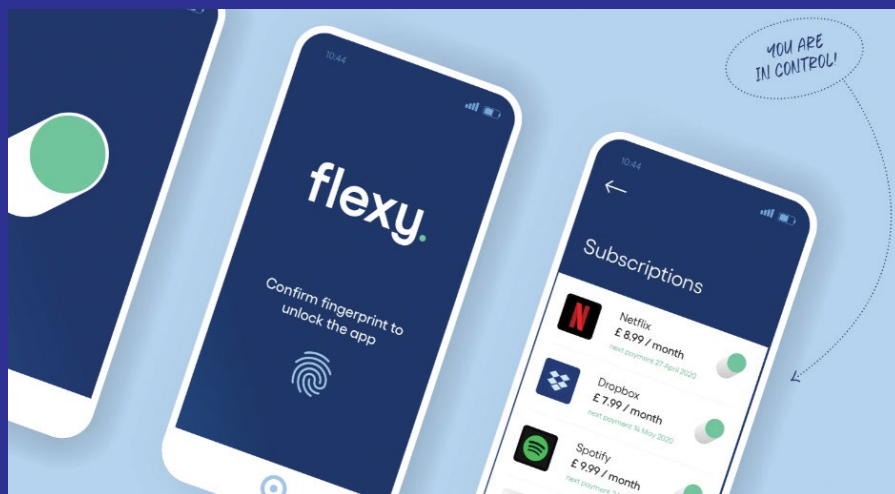
"And then, of course, there is that bothersome law of supply and demand to cope with. If there is healthy demand for what you do then you can be certain that there will be lots of competition for your products or services.

"If you find yourself as the only supplier of a product or service then you are probably already an incredible success, or perhaps you might sadly have to re-think your business completely! In a competitive marketplace the winners are nearly always those owners that take some time out from being 'in' their businesses to make more time to be 'on' their businesses. This offers the opportunity for the owners to create a competitive edge, to build brand recognition, and to thrive and grow.

"Correctly focussed networking and social media are two 'on' the business activities that can really contribute to making a difference. The search for readily affordable, pragmatic, and easily actionable external advice is a critical stepping stone for a small business.

"And of course there is all that red tape. Is your small business at risk of punishment for not having the necessary tick in the box for health and safety, employment and payroll law, workplace pensions, liability insurance?

"If this has resonated in any way to you and your business, then get #fresheyes to improve your business."



Change how you manage your subscriptions

flexy's intuitive app is for consumers to manage, discover and purchase on-demand products. The new Chamber member (flexyapp.uk) provides a consumer with visibility of their subscriptions in one place - and all subscriptions purchased via flexy's shopfront can be paused, resumed or cancelled at any time.

Says co-founder Joanna Mansbridge: "Our vision for flexy is to become a household name changing the way subscriptions are managed and consumed in a fully flexible and transparent manner."

flexy's pilot programme is in Essex and Sussex, with plans to roll out across the UK. Adds Joanna: "We have partnered with a number of flagship businesses in Essex, whose products and services are now available via subscription from the flexy app. Customers can now subscribe to regular deliveries of local wines from our award-winning vineyard, craft beer from local breweries, food boxes, flowers and beauty products.

"Our 'digital high streets' bridge the technology gap, helping local businesses compete with the likes of Amazon and big supermarkets at a fraction of the cost.

"flexy connects local and independent businesses with their local communities in a convenient way, making it easier to buy local. We would love to hear from relevant businesses interested in promoting their products via flexy's shopfront."

Brexit workshops – is your business ready?

Local businesses have been invited to attend one of a series of free workshops to help them to get prepared as the UK withdraws from the European Union.

The sessions are fully funded by Back to Business Essex and Essex County Council, and will be delivered by Mike Russell of MKR Solutions.

They will be in four parts:

- Impact on Export
- Impact on Import
- Trade Agreements
- Disruptive Strategy

With the end of the Brexit transition period rapidly approaching on December 31 businesses should already be well advanced with their plans and procedures if they will be doing business with European countries from January 1 2021.

This Brexit workshop - running on November 17 and December 9 - has been produced to incorporate the latest position and information available, enabling Essex SMEs to understand and adopt any changes required to trade with the EU. Register at eventbrite.co.uk/e/brexit-is-your-business-oven-ready-tickets-122375260699.

Keep being data aware

Hopefully members will have seen our communication last month after an email went out purporting to be from a Trade Show Specialist at Chamber - which was definitely not authorised by us!

As you will be aware, members' details are available on the Chamber website, and it appears that member information had been taken from there.

Having member contact information at brentwoodchamber.co.uk/members helps boost search engine visibility for those listed, and allows members and the public to find trusted suppliers across the various sector categories.

Members generally only list information that is also appearing on their individual websites, such as contact info and social links. There is also the option to set information to 'private' so it does not display.

If you have any queries, please do drop the Chamber office a line at chamber.office@brentwoodchamber.co.uk.

Chamber Events Calendar 2020

November

Tuesday 3 - Wellbeing Evening, with Victoria Howell
Wednesday 11 – Build Your Business workshop: Using Facebook to Get More Business
Thursday 12 – Member Spotlight: Robin Bailey, Capricorn Media
Friday 13 - Virtual Business Breakfast
Sunday 15 – Winter Netwalking
Tuesday 24 - Virtual Business Lunch

December

Tuesday 1 - Wellbeing Evening
Guest presenter Leanne Perilly, make up artist – Getting Glam for Christmas
Friday 11 - Virtual Business Breakfast
Sponsored by Kinetic Podiatry Clinic
Tuesday 22 - Virtual Xmas Lunch
TBC - Build Your Business workshops
TBC - Chamber AGM

Events can be booked in advance at [brentwoodchamber.co.uk/events](https://www.brentwoodchamber.co.uk/events).

Chamber roles open for you to fill

Chamber executive committee member and current newsletter editor, Julian Goode, will not be seeking re-election at this year's AGM.

Chamber Chairman, Colin Barber, commenting on the news said: "We really appreciate all that Julian has done for the Chamber since joining the committee three and a half years ago. In addition to serving on the executive committee, Julian has been newsletter editor for the past two years, overseeing a significant increase in the quantity and quality of the editorial content.

"Julian has also managed all of the Chamber's social media content, and has been responsible for compiling and despatching all the Chamber emails. Clearly Julian's departure will leave a big gap to fill, but we are hoping that other members will step forward to fill these vital roles.

"In the meantime we wish Julian all the best, and would like to thank him on behalf of all the members of the Chamber."

Julian's departure essentially leaves three roles to be filled: newsletter editor; social media and website content manager; member communications manager.

Added Colin: "While Julian filled all three roles, we realise that this represents a lot of work, so we are therefore considering the possibility of dividing the responsibilities among three people.

"If you think you have the necessary experience and time to fill any of these three vital roles, or would like to find out more about what is involved, then please contact me at Colin.Barber@BrentwoodChamber.co.uk."



Members of the Fisher Jones Greenwood team celebrate their achievements

Outstanding Legal 500 results for FJG

Chamber member Fisher Jones Greenwood Solicitors (FJG) is recognised as being committed to providing expert legal advice and exceptional client service across a range of legal matters, being particularly known in the Essex area for their expertise in Family Law.

In the 2021 edition of the Legal 500, this is celebrated with the well-established Family Law team having acquired a decade's worth of Top Tier rankings. As well as this, the 2021 edition sees FJG boast eight practice areas rankings altogether, in addition to two 'Leading Individuals', six 'Next Generation Partners', three 'Rising Stars' and 17 'Recommended Lawyers'.

Most notable in the rankings for FJG in 2021 is the continued Tier 1 success of the FJG Family Law team in securing a landmark ten-year top-level ranking. Over the years the Legal 500 editions have described the team as 'exceptional', 'modern and refreshing', 'compassionate and cost-efficient', 'open and up-front' offering a 'high-level service' and providing 'excellent service across the spectrum'.

AGM on hold for the time being

Our AGM was originally scheduled to take place in May, and we postponed it hoping that we would be able to hold the event live later in the year. Unfortunately that has not been the case, and we do not envisage being able to hold it live in the foreseeable future.

Three of the purposes of the AGM are to approve the annual accounts, set subscription rates for the following year and to elect new committee members. The executive committee are now looking at ways of dealing with these matters in the event we are unable to hold a full AGM.

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