

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND THIS MEETING



Date: Wednesday 28th November 2012

Time: 7.15pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Causeway House, Braintree CM7 9HB

Membership:

Councillor P R Barlow	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor C A Cadman	Councillor W J Rose
Councillor Dr R L Evans (Chairman)	Councillor A F Shelton
Councillor P Horner	Councillor J S Sutton
Councillor S A Howell	Councillor J R Swift
Councillor R P Ramage	

Members are requested to attend this meeting, to transact the following business:-

1. Apologies for Absence.

2. Member Declarations.

- (i). To declare the existence and nature of any interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.
- (ii). To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.

3. Question Time. (See paragraph below).

- 4. Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26th September 2012 (copy previously circulated).

5. **Scrutiny of the Council's Priorities and Budget Position.** To receive a presentation from the Leader on the priorities for 2013-14 and the initial budget position (presentation slides to follow).
6. **Task and Finish Groups.**
 - a. **Council's General Property and Land Investment Policies.** To receive the Group's report (Page 4).
 - b. **Affordable Housing.** To receive a brief update. (Report attached, page 6).
 - c. **Citizen's Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency.** To receive a brief update report. (Report attached, page 8).
 - d. **Local Highway Liaison.** To receive Cabinet's response. (Report attached, page 10).
7. **Decision Planner.** To consider the Decision Planner for the period 1st December 2012 to 31st March 2013 (copy previously circulated).
8. **Chairman's Update.** To receive a verbal update from the Chairman on Overview and Scrutiny Committee issues.
9. **Urgent Business.** To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.
10. To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of any items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

At the time of compiling the agenda there were none.
11. **Urgent Business.** To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in private by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

A PEACE
Member Services Manager

The last page of this Agenda is numbered 16.

Contact Details

If you require any further information please contact Alastair Peace on 01376 551414 extension 2602 or e-mail alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

Question Time

Immediately after the Minutes of the previous meeting have been approved there will be a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak.

Members of the public wishing to speak should contact the Council's Member Services on (01376) 552525 or email alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk prior to the meeting.

Members of the public can remain to observe the whole of the public part of the meeting.

Health and Safety

Any persons attending meetings at Causeway House are requested to take a few moments to familiarise themselves with the nearest available fire exit, indicated by the fire evacuation signs. In the event of a continuous alarm sounding during the meeting, you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by a Council officer who will identify him/herself should the alarm sound. You will be assisted to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that your mobile phone is either switched to silent or switched off during the meeting.

Comments

Braintree District Council welcomes comments from members of the public in order to make its services as efficient and effective as possible. We would appreciate any suggestions regarding the usefulness of the paperwork for this meeting, or the conduct of the meeting you have attended.

Please let us have your comments setting out the following information

Meeting Attended Date of Meeting.....

Comments.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Contact Details:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
28th November 2012



Task and Finish Group - Scrutiny of the Council's Land and Property Investment Policies		Agenda No: 6a
Corporate Priority: Prosperity and Planning Portfolio Area: Planning and Property Report presented by: Cllr P Tattersley, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group Report prepared by: Andrew Epsom, Head of Asset Management		
Background Papers: Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings 13 th July 2011, 22 nd March 2012 and 11 th July 2012.		Public Report
Options: To refer the report to Council and Cabinet. To refer the report back to the group for further consideration.		Key Decision: No.
Executive Summary: At its meeting on the 13 th July 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be established to scrutinise the Council's general property and land investment policies. The composition of the Group was formally approved by Committee on the 12 th October 2011 and the Group subsequently conducted a number of meetings to examine this matter. A progress report from the Task and Finish Group went to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 22 nd March 2012. A report on the Task and Finish Group findings was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11 th July 2012. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee raised a number of queries that have now been addressed within the Group's revised report (enclosed separately).		

Decision:	
That the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group, the conclusions and recommendations reached in the report be noted and that the report be referred to Council and Cabinet.	
Purpose of Decision:	
To consider the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny of the Council's Land and Property Investment Policies	

Corporate implications	
Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	The Task and Finish Group exercise has enabled Members to be better informed by improving their knowledge and understanding of the work undertaken by the Asset Management Service. A number of lessons learnt from previous property transactions have been identified to enable a best practice approach to be applied to future property transactions.
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	N/a
Risks:	N/a
Officer Contact:	Andrew Epsom
Designation:	Head of Asset Management
Ext. No.	2921
E-mail:	andep@braintree.gov.uk

Task and Finish Group – Affordable Housing, Brief Update		Agenda No: 6b
<p>Corporate Priority: Prosperity: securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth</p> <p>Report presented by: Councillor P Barlow, Chairman of the Group</p> <p>Report prepared by: Affordable and Social Housing Task and Finish Group officer support</p>		
Background Papers: Affordable and Social Housing Task and Finish Group		Public Report
Options: For members to note progress of the Affordable and Social Housing Task and Finish Group.		Key Decision: No
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>The Group discussed and considered the Project Initiation Document and have agreed the project objectives, exclusions and scope.</p> <p>Project objectives are listed below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of existing resources to provide an indication as to the level of local housing need that could be met through forms of low cost home ownership. 2. Consult with stakeholders (housing associations, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the barriers to developing affordable housing. 3. Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what role BDC could take to mitigate barriers to new development. 4. Research and consider actions of other local authorities with regards to meeting local housing needs through low cost home ownership schemes. 5. Identify how we can best make use of the Capital Programme. 		

Following the first meeting, the Group intends to look further into local housing needs, Council assets, barriers to new development, best practice from other local authorities for enabling delivery of affordable homes and consult with key stakeholders on the next few meetings.

The next meeting is being arranged for Wednesday 12th December.

The work of this group supports the Corporate Priority to promote local prosperity through securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth.

Decision: Members are invited to note the progress of the Affordable and Social Housing Task and Finish Group.

Purpose of Decision: To monitor progress of the work being undertaken by the Affordable and Social Housing Task and Finish Group.

Corporate implications	
Financial:	None at this stage
Legal:	None at this stage
Equalities/Diversity	None at this stage
Customer Impact:	None at this stage
Environment and Climate Change:	None at this stage
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None at this stage
Risks:	None at this stage
Officer Contact:	Joanne Albini
Designation:	Head of Housing
Ext. No.	2118
E-mail:	joanne.albini@braintree.gov.uk

Task and Finish Group – Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau And Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency		Agenda No: 6c
Corporate Priority:	People- Supporting vulnerable people in our community; Encouraging flourishing communities	
Report presented by:	Cllr Tom Cunningham	
Report prepared by:	Angela Verghese	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options: To note the progress made by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency Task and Finish Group	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>This Report is to advise the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on how the Task & Finish Group have agreed to proceed:</p> <p>The brief received from Overview & Scrutiny Committee was as follows:</p> <p>“As regards the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency (BDVSA), the scrutiny review should understand the work, pressures, issues and benefits to the community of both organisations. The review should also identify what sort of information and how members would like to receive that information.”</p> <p>After some discussion the Task & Finish Group have set the following Terms of Reference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine the issues and relationship that BDVSA and the CAB face:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Through their work in the community;• Through their relationship with Braintree District Council.2. Determine the options arising from 1. above.3. Develop recommendations arising from the options in 2. above.		

The CAB and BDVSA will attend the next Task and Finish Group Meeting on 20th November 2012 to give a brief presentation on their work and to answer questions arising from their presentation.

Following the above presentations the Group expect to have two further meetings following which the final Report will be produced.

Decision:

To invite Members to note the progress made by the CAB and BDVSA Task and Finish Group

Purpose of Decision:

For members to note the progress made by the CAB and BDVSA Task and Finish Group

Corporate implications

Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None a
Customer Impact:	None
Environment and Climate Change:	n/a
Consultation/Community Engagement:	n/a
Risks:	none
Officer Contact:	Angela Verghese
Designation:	Community Wellbeing Manager
Ext. No.	2329
E-mail:	angelaverghese@braintree.gov.uk

Cabinet Response to the Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's Report on Local Highway Liaison		Agenda No: 6d
<p>Corporate Priority: Provide Value for money; Deliver excellent customer service</p> <p>Report presented by: Councillor Dr Evans, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Report prepared by: Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager</p>		
Background Papers:		Public Report
Options:		Key Decision: No
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>At its meeting on 24th September 2012, Cabinet responded to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task & Finish Group's Report on Local Highway Liaison.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee members are invited to note Cabinet's response.</p> <p><u>Minute Extract, Cabinet, 24th September 2012</u></p> <p>49. <u>CABINET RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP'S REPORT ON LOCAL HIGHWAY LIAISON</u></p> <p>DECISION: That response be agreed and the actions outlined in the report be delegated to the Corporate Director and/or Head of Operations to take forward.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISION: To consider and respond to the recommendations made by the Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Local Highway Liaison.</p>		
<p>Decision:</p> <p>Members are invited to note Cabinet's response.</p>		
<p>Purpose of Decision: To note Cabinet's response to the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Local Highway Liaison.</p>		

Corporate implications	
Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	The actions taken by key partners in response to the recommendations will improve the customer experience for those reporting highway issues.
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Key stakeholders have been consulted.
Risks:	Not applicable
Officer Contact:	Alastair Peace
Designation:	Member Services Manager
Ext. No.	2602
E-mail:	alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

CABINET
24th September 2012

Overview and Scrutiny Committee,
28th November 2012, Agenda Item 6d



Cabinet Response to the Recommendations from the Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group’s Report on Local Highway Liaison		Agenda No: 10a
Portfolio Area:	Place	
Corporate Priority:	Provide Value for money; Deliver excellent customer service	
Report presented by:	Cllr R Mitchell, Deputy Cabinet Member, Place	
Report prepared by:	Paul Partridge, Head of Operations	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Overview & Scrutiny Meetings 13 July & 12 October 2011 Cabinet 22 March 2012 & 16 July 2012 Full Council – 11 July 2012		
Options:	Key Decision: No	
To support or not support the proposed response.		
<p>Cabinet thanks the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for its comprehensive and timely report on Local Highway Liaison and notes the recommendations made.</p> <p>Most of the recommendations relate to the customer experience of those reporting issues to either Essex County Council Highways and the Highways Agency and the two agencies’ views have been sought and their comments reflected below.</p> <p>With particular reference to Essex County Council, they have recently entered into a new contract for highways maintenance and are enhancing their customer services procedures and systems. It should therefore be acknowledged that they are in a transitional period and it may take a little while before the full benefits of these improvements are fully realised.</p> <p>The new Local Highways Panel will ensure that there is a greater representation and influence at all tiers of local government, as well as providing a forum to prioritise highways issues raised at a local level. The Highways Panel is now the primary delivery mechanism for local schemes.</p>		

Response to specific recommendations

Recommendation 1

That ECC Highways makes the following improvements to its customer service system:-

- (a) Revises the reference number system to make it simpler and more intuitive;*
- (b) Implements, as soon as possible, its new highways interactive website to provide customers with an on-line tracking facility to monitor progress on maintenance issues (to be widely advertised when in place);*

Cabinet Response: Cabinet acknowledges that ECC has made a number of improvements to its website including an interactive page for reporting highway defects. Further enhancements to be introduced in October 2012 include a facility for customers to track progress with their reports. It is recognised that any new system will take a period of time to bed in and that the more customers use the system, the more obvious the benefits will become.

- (c) Writes to all Parish/Town Councils and District Members to explain how the new system works and what the key benefits and added value is to the customer;*

Cabinet Response: ECC has confirmed that a letter will be going out to all Parish/Town Councils shortly.

- (d) Publishes up to date service standards on its website and communicates these to BDC and Parish Councils.*

Cabinet Response: Cabinet supports the recommendation for ECC to publish their service standards in relation to the more common requests for service, which might avoid the need to make repeat calls. It also acknowledges that the new interactive website and the ability to track progress on-line will partially address this issue. However, it would be helpful for this information to be given to town and parish councils who could then cascade it to their parishioners.

Recommendation 2

That ECC:-

- (a) Develops a more flexible intervention criteria, especially in responding to issues reported by parish councils who have a useful role as the “eyes and ears” of their local communities; and*
- (b) Considers extending the principle of the existing Highway Ranger service to Parish Councils that are willing to carry out minor works at a local level; and*
- (c) Reviews and extends the role of the existing Highway Ranger service to cover as many of the locally reported issues as possible to ensure a speedy and quick completion of all minor works.*

Cabinet Response: Based on our own experience, the value of partnership working with Town and Parish Councils in carrying out basic tasks in their communities is widely acknowledged e.g. litter picking, strimming, grass cutting etc. Cabinet encourages ECC to explore opportunities to see if this approach can be trialled with a view to assessing the added value and benefits to be gained.

The value of the existing Highway Ranger service in delivering quick wins is widely recognised. The current cost of the service is considerably less than the budget allocated and ECC is encouraged to consider the possibility of providing a second team of Rangers or diverting some funding to fund a trial with parish councils whereby they carry out minor works on their behalf.

Recommendation 3

That ECC nominates a named officer (who could be based at Causeway House given the future joint use of the building) to work with District Members and Officers and Parish Councils on local highways issues, including attending site meetings.

Cabinet Response: Cabinet recognises that ECC has finite resources and must utilise these in the most efficient and effective way possible and it is simply not possible to devote a dedicated resource to individual authorities. However, under the new Local Highways Panel, they have nominated Rob McDonald as the main point of contact for all matters relating to the work of the Panel which includes new works and maintenance issues.

Recommendation 4

- (a) That the new Braintree Local Highways Panel includes an equal membership of 4 County, 4 District and 4 Town/Parish representatives;*
- (b) That all Panel meetings are held in public (unless there is a specific confidentiality issue) and that minutes and agendas are published on the BDC website as normal;*
- (c) That already identified and evidenced local improvement schemes, as agreed at the February 2012 Braintree Highways Panel meeting, are not delayed by a further re-appraisal;*
- (d) That a simple scoring matrix be developed that can be used to evaluate all future schemes to determine priorities locally as part of the decision making process; and*
- (e) That the Local Highways Panel (or a small Advisory Group comprising representatives of the Panel) review and comment locally on all new Traffic Regulation Order requests prior to their being determined by the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee.*

Cabinet Response: All of the above have been agreed and implemented.

Recommendation 5

- (a) *That BDC and ECC use existing officers attending the new Local Highways Panel to develop a more collaborative way of working together and with the HA on local issues; and*

Cabinet Response: This suggestion is welcomed and relevant officers have been asked to progress this.

- (b) *That the HA publishes schedules (agreed with BDC) for cyclical/routine maintenance on the A12 and A120, including litter clearance and sweeping and ensures that this is communicated to relevant Parish Councils and District Members.*

Cabinet Response: The Highways Agency has already provided their programme for 2012/13 and future work programmes will be distributed to Parish Councils and District Members.

Recommendation 6

That BDC, ECC and the HA ensure that clear and concise information is made available on their websites and in relevant publications, as to which organisation is responsible for the various elements of the highway service, with contact details to access the correct service provider.

Cabinet Response: Cabinets supports this recommendation and suggests that this information is made available on the respective agencies' websites and in their publications and regularly reviewed and updated as required.

Decision:

Cabinet approves this response and delegates the actions outlined to the Corporate Director and/or Head of Operations to take forward.

Purpose of Decision:

To consider and respond to the recommendations made by the Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group on Local Highway Liaison.

Corporate implications	
Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	The actions taken by key partners in response to the recommendations will improve the customer experience for those reporting highway issues.
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Key stakeholders have been consulted.
Risks:	Not applicable
Officer Contact:	Paul Partridge
Designation:	Head of Operations
Ext. No.	3331
E-mail:	paul.partridge@braintree.gov.uk