

Minutes

Council Meeting

16th February 2015



These Minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A webcast of the meeting is available for six months at www.braintree.gov.uk.

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor D Mann	Yes
Councillor J S Allen	Yes	Councillor J T McKee	Yes
Councillor M J Banthorpe	Yes	Councillor R G S Mitchell	Apologies
Councillor P R Barlow	Yes	Councillor J M Money	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Yes	Councillor Lady P Newton	Yes
Councillor J C Beavis	Yes	Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Apologies
Councillor D L Bebb	Yes	Councillor I C F Parker	Yes
Councillor E Bishop	Yes	Councillor J A Pell	Apologies
Councillor R J Bolton	No	Councillor R P Ramage	Yes
Councillor L B Bowers-Flint	Yes	Councillor D M Reid	No
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor C A Cadman	Apologies	Councillor D E A Rice	Yes (until 9.15 pm)
Councillor S Canning	Yes	Councillor W J Rose	Yes
Councillor T G Cunningham	Yes	Councillor V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor J G J Elliott	Yes	Councillor W D Scattergood	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes	Councillor W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor A V E Everard	Apologies	Councillor A F Shelton	Yes
Councillor J H G Finbow	Yes	Councillor L Shepherd	Yes
Councillor M J Fincken	Yes	Councillor C E Shute	Yes
Councillor T J W Foster	Yes	Councillor C Siddall	Yes
Councillor M E Galione	Yes	Councillor G A Spray	Yes
Councillor C Gibson	Apologies	Councillor J S Sutton	Yes
Councillor M Green	Yes (from 9.41pm)	Councillor J R Swift	Apologies
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor S A Howell	Apologies	Councillor C M Thompson	Apologies
Councillor H D Johnson	Yes	Councillor M Thorogood	Yes
Councillor S C Kirby	Yes	Councillor L S Walters (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Councillor M C M Lager	Yes	Councillor R G Walters	Yes
Councillor C Louis	Yes	Councillor S A Wilson (Chairman)	Yes
Councillor D J Louis	Yes	Councillor R Wright	Yes

71 **CHAIRMAN'S AND/OR LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman's announcements covered the following:

- New Year Honours – The Chairman reported that Derek Hopkins, Assistant Chief Officer, Special Constabulary, Essex Police had been appointed an MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours list for services to policing. Mr Hopkins from Silver End had dedicated 34 years to Essex Police.
- Commonwealth Day – The Chairman stated that on Monday 9th March 2015 at 10.00am she would raise the Commonwealth Flag at the Town Hall Centre, Braintree. In addition, the Chairman, along with every other Mayor and Chairman across the country, would conduct a brief ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of WW1. Family members of some local men who lost their lives during the conflict had been invited to attend.
- Keep Britain Tidy Awards – The Chairman congratulated Councillor Schmitt and Officers following their success at the National Keep Britain Tidy Awards. On 12th February 2015 at the Diamond Jubilee Awards Lunch, the Love Essex Campaign had been the winner of the Diamond Jubilee Partnership Award. This was a wonderful acknowledgement of an innovative, partnership approach to a County-wide campaign which had been led by Braintree District Council and it was the fifth Keep Britain Tidy Award won by the Council.
- Councillor Howell – The Chairman reported that Councillor Howell had had an accident in January 2015 and had broken her hip. Members of the Council joined the Chairman in sending Councillor Howell their best wishes for her recovery.

The Leader did not have any announcements to make.

72 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

Councillor P R Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6(1) – 'Recommendations from Cabinet held on 2nd February 2015 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19' as a Trustee of the Citizen's Advice Bureau Management Board.

Councillor J C Beavis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6(1) – 'Recommendations from Cabinet held on 2nd February 2015 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19' as a charity with which she was involved had submitted an application for a grant from the Mi Community fund.

Councillor G Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7a - Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members (Councillor G Butland – Leader of the Council) as a Member of Essex Fire Authority.

Councillor G A Spray declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6(1) – 'Recommendations from Cabinet held on 2nd February 2015 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19' as Chairman of the Mi Community Group.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members remained in the meeting for these items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

73 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

74 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15th December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

75 **COUNCIL BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2015/16 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2015/16 TO 2018/19**

INFORMATION: The Chairman informed Members that this item would be dealt with in two parts. The first matter to be considered would be the Council Budget and recommendations from Cabinet. The second matter was the Council Tax Resolution.

Members were reminded that it was a requirement that all votes on this item were recorded votes.

Several Members spoke on this item and the debate can be viewed on the Council's website at: <http://www.braintree.public-tv/core/>

(1) Recommendations from the Cabinet Meeting Held on 2nd February 2015 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19.

INFORMATION: Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, made his opening speech and introduced the report. Councillor Butland moved the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor Bebb.

The Chairman asked for any amendments to be proposed, seconded, debated and voted on in turn.

Councillor Barlow moved the first amendment which was seconded by Councillor Fincken:

“The raft of changes to the Planning system is likely to result in the delivery of fewer affordable housing units in the future. In addition, while the Council has delivered a modest number of affordable units through its own policies and resources, these have not been sufficient to reduce significantly the numbers on the active housing waiting list. The Labour Group therefore propose that the affordable housing budget of £750,000 funded by the New Homes Bonus [NHB] be increased to £1.5million by using part of the unallocated part of the £932,000 remaining within the NHB. This will enable the Council to invest in or underwrite further schemes that may come forward in the coming year.”

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Abbott, Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Rice, Shute, Thorogood, Wright (11)

Against the Motion

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters, Wilson (38)

Abstained

(0)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Swift, Thompson (11)

On being put to the vote, the proposed amendment was declared LOST.

Councillor Barlow moved a second amendment which was seconded by Councillor Fincken as follows:

“At the November budget scrutiny meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee [O&S] the Leader accepted the need to consider more creative ways of delivering more affordable housing units. Housing officers are aware of and are considering new and different funding mechanisms that may deliver these but there is no budget allocated for these potential schemes and the unallocated reserves are unlikely to provide a sufficient sum to enable these to be explored and delivered. The Labour Group therefore propose that the Council establish an investment appraisal process where affordable housing projects can be evaluated against a target rate of return that would enable the Council to borrow at Public Works Loan Board rates and still deliver both a financial return and more affordable housing properties.”

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Rice, Shute, Thorogood (9)

Against the Motion

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters, Wilson (38)

Abstained

Councillors: Abbott, Wright (2)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Swift, Thompson (11)

On being put to the vote, the proposed amendment was declared LOST.

Councillor Barlow then moved a third amendment which was seconded by Councillor Fincken as follows:

“The Council has sought to generate a variety of affordable housing units and a mixture of tenures from rent through to shared ownership and/or shared equity. Officers’ experience has been that take up of shared ownership/equity units has been less successful than expected as the mortgage qualifications have tended to be too onerous for people on low incomes as these properties do not appear to be covered by the various Government deposit support schemes or the Council’s own LAMS scheme. The Labour Group therefore propose that the Council research the causes and establish a mechanism that will enable these properties to be readily available to residents, including if necessary, undertaking to be a lender of last resort.”

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Rice, Shute, Thorogood (9)

Against the Motion

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters, Wilson (38)

Abstained

Councillors: Abbott, Wright (2)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O’Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Swift, Thompson (11)

On being put to the vote, the proposed amendment was declared LOST.

Councillor Fincken moved a fourth amendment which was seconded by Councillor Barlow as follows:

“The Council has supported the Citizens Advice Bureau [CAB] in helping to deliver a range of advice and support services to residents. The Service Level Agreement with the Council comes to an end in March of this year and the Council has budgeted to roll over the existing agreement and funding on a flat cash basis for 2015/6 while a new administration negotiates an updated agreement. This leaves the CAB at an inflation disadvantage for the coming year and this will inevitably impact adversely on the service that the Bureau can deliver with a resultant reduction in support for residents. The Labour Group therefore propose that the Budget for CAB support be increased by 2.3% [the prevailing RPI rate as of September 2014] from £171,830 to £175,782 with the additional costs drawn from reserves.”

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Abbott, Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Rice, Shute, Thorogood, Wright (11)

Against the Motion

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters (36)

Abstained

Councillors: Sutton, Wilson (2)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Swift, Thompson (11)

On being put to the vote, the proposed amendment was declared LOST.

The Chairman then moved to the general budget debate and once the debate was closed, a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 2nd February 2015 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2015/16 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 to 2018/19; the results were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters, Wilson (38)

Against the Motion

(0)

Abstained

Councillors: Abbott, Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Shute, Thorogood, Wright (10)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Rice, Swift, Thompson (12)

On being put to the vote, the original motion was declared CARRIED.

DECISION: That the following be approved:

1. The budget variations to the current base budget as detailed in Section 4 of the main report and Appendices B and C;
2. The savings as detailed in Appendix E;
3. The Priority Areas Investment bids, ongoing and for one-off expenditure, detailed in Appendix A;
4. That the New Burdens Grant of £27,317 to be received in 2015/16 be held in an earmarked reserve, to be utilised in respect of the Local Council Tax Support scheme and authorised by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Property;

5. That the Council Tax Freeze grant receivable from the Government in 2015/16 be accepted;
6. The Council's discretionary fees and charges for 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix D;
7. That the Council's housing rents and service charges are increased by 2.2% for 2015/16, as detailed in Appendix D;
8. That delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Member to agree variations to Trade Waste, Town Hall Centre, Building Control and Car Parking fees and charges for commercial purposes;
9. Discretionary Council Tax discounts and exemptions for 2015/16 are:
 - Discount applicable to empty dwellings undergoing major repairs is set at 0% for the twelve month period;
 - Discount applicable to vacant dwellings is set at 0% for the six month period;
 - Discount applicable to second homes is set at 0%;
 - Empty Homes Premium charged on dwellings vacant for over two years be set at 0%;
10. The Council's Pay Policy for 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix H;
11. An allocation of £894,484 from the General Fund unallocated balance in 2015/16;
12. Transfers between earmarked reserves and back to the Unallocated Balance in 2014/15 and estimated drawdown from earmarked reserves for 2015/16 as detailed in Appendix L;

Capital

13. The General Fund Capital bids for 2015/16 listed in Appendix M;

Treasury Management

14. The Prudential Indicators and limits set out in Appendix O;
15. The Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision as recommended in Appendix O;
16. The Treasury Management Strategy, including annual investment strategy, for 2015/16 (Appendix O);

Council Tax

17. The proposed estimates (producing a budget requirement for Council Tax purposes of £14,729,942) as detailed in Appendix I and the Council Tax for 2015/16 of £159.57 for a Band D property, having taking into consideration:
 - The consultation feedback received;
 - The assessment of risks in the budget assumptions;
 - The Equalities Impact Assessments and
 - The Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of balances (Appendix Q to the report).

REASON FOR DECISION: To determine the budget and Council Tax level proposals for 2015/16 in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution.

(2) Council Tax Resolution for 2015/16

INFORMATION: Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, introduced the report. Councillor Butland moved the recommendations in the report which were seconded by Councillor Bebb.

The results of the recorded vote on this matter were as follows:

For the Motion

Councillors: Abbott, Allen, Banthorpe, Baugh, Beavis, Bebb, Bowers-Flint, Butland, Canning, Cunningham, Elliott, Finbow, Foster, Galione, Horner, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, C Louis, D Louis, McKee, Money, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Ricci, Rose, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters, R Walters, Wilson, Wright (40)

Against the Motion

(0)

Abstained

Councillors: Barlow, Bishop, Dr Evans, Fincken, Green, Mann, Shute, Thorogood (8)

Absent

Councillors: Bolton, Cadman, Everard, Gibson, Howell, Mitchell, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Pell, Reid, Rice, Swift, Thompson (12)

On being put to the vote, the original motion was declared CARRIED.

DECISION: That the Council Tax Requirement and level of Council Tax for 2015/16 be approved in accordance with the following resolution:

Council Tax Base

Under delegated powers the Corporate Director has determined the amount of Council Tax Base for the whole Council area for 2015/16 as 49,742 Band D equivalents; and also that the amount set out in Column 2 of Schedule A should be the Council Tax Base for dwellings in those parts of the district listed in Column 1 of Schedule A to this resolution.

Calculation of the Council Tax Requirement

The following amounts are calculated by the Council for the year 2015/16, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended):-

- a) £91,940,933 being the expenditure the Council estimates it will incur in the year in performing its functions and which will be charged to its General Fund revenue account in accordance with proper practice. This amount includes allowances for contingencies, additions to earmarked financial reserves, and local precepts issued to the Council.

- b) £82,295,206 being the income estimated by the Council which will be credited to the General Fund revenue account in accordance with proper practice. This amount includes specific and general government grants, the estimated use of earmarked financial reserves and general balances, and the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund balance at 31 March 2015 in respect of council tax and business rates.
- c) £9,645,727, being the Council Tax Requirement for the year calculated as the difference between expenditure and income as set out at (a) and (b).

In making the above calculations the following amounts have been taken into account:

£2,556,001, being the amount of Revenue Support Grant receivable from central government for the year.

£4,064,310, being the estimated amount of the local share of business rates to be retained by the Council for the year after allowing for the following items: a tariff of £12,905,986 and estimated levy of £512,820 due to the Essex Business Rate Pool; £325,570 being the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund balance at 31 March 2015 in respect of business rates to be transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund revenue account in 2015/16; and a net amount of £918,290 of Local Government Act 2003 Section 31 grants estimated to be receivable from central government to fund the cap on the RPI increase in the business rate multiplier and the introduction and extension of various discretionary reliefs being funded by government.

£172,300, being the amount that has been calculated as the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund balance at 31 March 2015 in respect of council tax, which will be transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund revenue account in 2015/16.

£1,708,396, being the total of all local precepts received from town and parish councils and taken into account in making the calculation of the Council Tax Requirement at (c) above, and shown in Column 3 of Schedule A.

Calculation of the Basic Amount of Council Tax

The following amounts have been calculated:

- d) £193.92, being the basic amount of Council Tax for the year including local precepts, calculated by dividing (c) by the Council Tax Base for the whole district.
- e) £159.57, being the basic amount of Council Tax for dwellings in those parts of the District where there are no local precepts for town or parish councils. This represents the District Council's share of the total Council Tax rate and is charged across property bands as follows:

Property Band	Band as proportion of Band D	Council Tax Rate
A	6/9	£106.38
B	7/9	£124.11
C	8/9	£141.84
D	9/9	£159.57
E	11/9	£195.03
F	13/9	£230.49

G	15/9	£265.95
H	18/9	£319.14

The District Council's basic amount of Council Tax equates to a Council Tax Requirement for the Council's own purposes (excluding town and parish precepts) of £7,937,331.

Under the principles set by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for the 2015/16 financial year, the basic amount of Council Tax calculated by the Council is not deemed excessive and therefore does not require a referendum to be held.

- f) The amounts shown in Column 5 of Schedule A, calculated by adding to the basic amount of Council Tax at (e) above, the local precept amount relating to each parish or town council area, divided by the tax base for that area. This represents the basic amount of Council Tax for each parish or town council area. The charge for each property band is also shown in Schedule A.

Special Expenses

The Council resolves that any expenses incurred by it in performing, in part of its area, a function that is performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or town council, or a Chairman of a parish meeting, shall not be treated as Special Expenses for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Council Tax Setting

- g) The Council note that it has been advised of the following precepts:

- Essex County Council £54,057,119
- Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex £7,319,535
- Essex Fire Authority £3,303,864

Expressed as a Council Tax rate for dwellings in the following property bands:

Property Band	Essex County Council	Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex	Essex Fire Authority
A	£724.50	£98.10	£44.28
B	£845.25	£114.45	£51.66
C	£966.00	£130.80	£59.04
D	£1086.75	£147.15	£66.42
E	£1328.25	£179.85	£81.18
F	£1569.75	£212.55	£95.94
G	£1811.25	£245.25	£110.70
H	£2173.50	£294.30	£132.84

- h) The Council at having calculated the aggregate of the amounts stated under (f), and (g) above for each area within the District, the Council hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule B as the total amount of Council Tax for each of the property Bands.

REASON FOR DECISION: To formally set the Council Tax Requirement and Council Tax rates for 2015/16.

REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS AND ORAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS - PUBLIC SESSION

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to the reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members. The Chairman invited the Leader and the Cabinet Members to introduce their reports. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to ask questions. Questions were not limited to the content of the reports and could be about matters relating to a portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council, or to the District.

Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, in adding to his report stated that a Working Group of Essex Local Authority Leaders had been appointed to take forward a possible devolution proposal in Essex and the creation of a Combined Authority. Two Devolution Conventions would be held on 19th February 2015 and 5th March 2015 to which all Leaders of Local Authorities in Greater Essex would be invited. A report on devolution would be presented to Braintree District Council's Cabinet on 30th March 2015 and all Members would be kept informed of progress.

Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency, referred to a matter relating to Lloyds Bank/BACS in December 2014 which had led to the non-collection of some Council Tax and Business Rates direct debits. Councillor Bebb wished to record his thanks to all staff within the Finance Service who had worked valiantly to undertake quick, corrective action and to ensure that letters were sent to all affected customers. An official complaint had been lodged with Lloyds/BACS and a claim had been submitted for the full recovery of the Council's costs.

Councillor McKee, Deputy Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency, stated that, following a currency auction held on 10th February 2015 by the Central Bank of Iceland, the Council had received a further repayment which increased the amount recovered to £4,628,668 of its original £5m investment in Icelandic Banks. This equated to 92.5%. A balance held in Iceland, equivalent to £111,000 remained outstanding and it was expected that a further £33,000 would be recovered from Kaupthing, Singer and Friedlander Bank. It was anticipated that 95% of the total investment would be recovered. Councillor McKee reported also that at an Investment Workshop held on 6th February 2015, Members of the Cabinet had discussed how affordable housing might be provided by the leverage of private finance.

Councillor Lady Newton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Property, added to her report that on 9th February 2015 she had attended a meeting of the Haven Gateway Partnership which had also been attended by Patrick McLoughlin MP Secretary of State for Transport. Councillor Lady Newton had advised the Secretary of State that if growth was to be delivered in the Braintree District over the forthcoming 15 to 20 years a co-ordinated programme of investment in infrastructure, including improvements to the A120, would be required. The Secretary of State had been informed that Essex County Council had committed £5m towards the investigation of route alignment options and that Braintree District Council had allocated £2.5m from its New Homes Bonus fund to relieve congestion at Galleys Corner roundabout, Braintree. The Secretary of State had indicated that he would discuss this issue with the Highways Agency.

Councillor Lady Newton referred also to a serious fire which had occurred at Braintree Emergency Night Shelter (BENS), High Street, Braintree on 11th February 2015. All residents had escaped from the premises and no-one had been injured. However, six people including three residents of the shelter and three people from adjacent properties

had been made homeless. The Council was currently assisting four people with temporary accommodation.

Cllr Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Place, added to her report by referring to statistics issued recently by the Police regarding crime in the Braintree District during the period April to December 2014. These showed a reduction in incidents of anti-social behaviour, domestic burglary, vehicle crime and theft from vehicles, and an increase in the solve rate for robbery and serious violent crime.

Duration of Meeting

Councillor Butland moved that the meeting be extended beyond the 3 hour limit in accordance with Articles 1.10 and 1.11 of the Constitution. Members agreed unanimously in favour of continuing the meeting to deal with the remaining business set out in the agenda.

Members asked several questions arising from the reports. A webcast of the questions to and responses of Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website at: <http://www.braintree.public-i.tv/core/>

The main topics covered were as follows:

- Presentation given by Colchester Institute at the meeting of the Braintree District Business Leaders' Board held on 13th January 2015 setting out development plans for the College at Braintree. It was suggested that the Institute should be invited to give this presentation to Members of Braintree District Council.
- Essex Police and Crime Commissioner – Request for increase in precept
- Reduction in the Police budget and effect on the services provided.
- The work of Community Agents in Essex.
- Continued funding for the Rural Community Council of Essex.
- Withdrawal by First Buses of the service between Witham and Braintree Community Hospital.
- ICT/Customer Services – future IT and software options for the Council
- Fleurtations Florist, High Street, Braintree - Assistance available to the business following a fire at the neighbouring property.
- The timescale for the provision of a passing loop on the Braintree to Witham branch railway line at Cressing Station.
- Announcement by Councillor R Bass, Essex County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation regarding his preferred route for the dualling of the A120 between Marks Tey and Braintree.
- Silver End Conservation Area Appraisal – Timescale for publication.
- Cutting back of roadside trees and hedges by the Highways Agency – Debris.

- New strategy to support the needs of bees.
- Installation of additional solar panels on Braintree District Council owned buildings.
- Introduction of integrated commercial and domestic waste collections.
- Lockrams Lane car park, Witham – Resurfacing.
- Repair of highway verges in the District.
- Litter (from fast food outlets in particular) along highway verges in the District and the possible introduction of a levy to finance collection costs.

The following action was agreed in response to questions raised by Members:

- Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, agreed to invite Colchester Institute to give a presentation to Members of Braintree District Council about the College at Braintree.
- Councillor Lady Newton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Property, confirmed that she had referred to the importance of providing a passing loop on the Braintree to Witham branch railway line when responding to Network Rail's current consultation on the Anglia Route study and to circulate the response to all Councillors.
- Councillor Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Place, agreed to circulate to all Councillors any response received from the Highways Agency following the Council's representations about recent work to cut back trees and hedges along the edge of carriageways which had been severe and had left debris.
- Councillor Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Place, agreed to investigate whether Braintree District Council may be able to take over responsibility for the repair of highway verges in the District and to inform all Councillors of the outcome.

Councillor Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Place, agreed to investigate whether a levy could be imposed on fast food outlets to contribute towards the cost of collecting litter and to inform all Councillors of the outcome.

77 LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

INFORMATION: No matters were raised.

78 CHAIRMEN'S STATEMENTS – PUBLIC SESSION

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

79 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS - PUBLIC SESSION

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

80 BUSINESS OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

INFORMATION: There were no reports received from Council representatives on external organisations, or issues raised.

There were no matters raised in Private Session.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.10pm.

Councillor S A Wilson
(Chairman)