

Overview and Scrutiny Committee AGENDA



THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND THIS MEETING

Please note this meeting will be audio recorded.

Date: Wednesday, 29 January 2014

Time: 19:15

**Venue: Council Chamber, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree,
Essex, CM7 9HB**

Membership:

Councillor P R Barlow
Councillor C A Cadman
Councillor Dr R L Evans (Chairman)
Councillor P Horner
Councillor S A Howell
Councillor R P Ramage

Councillor F Ricci
Councillor W J Rose
Councillor A F Shelton
Councillor J S Sutton
Councillor J R Swift

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

PUBLIC SESSION

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Members Declarations

1. 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.
2. 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 Public Question Time**
(See paragraph below).
- 4 Minutes of Last Meeting**
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Commttee held on 4th December 2013 (copy previously circulated).
- 5 Scrutiny of Council Budget and Council Tax 2014-15 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-15 to 2017-18**
Report to follow.
- 6 Task and Finish Group - Provision of Public Services in Rural Areas** 5 - 6
- 7 Task and Finish Group - Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme** 7 - 8
- 8 Decision Planner**
To consider the Decision Planner for the period 1st February 2014 to 31st May 2014 (previously circulated).
- 9 Urgent Business - Public Session**
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 Exclusion of the Public and Press**
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.

PRIVATE SESSION

11 Urgent Business - Private Session

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

Contact Details

If you require any further information please contact Alastair Peace on 01376 552525 extension 2602 or e-mail alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

Public 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 Section on 01376 552525 or email chloe.glock@braintree.gov.uk at least 2 working days 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.....
Comment.....

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Contact Details:

Progress Report from Rural Services Task and Finish Group		Agenda No: 6
Corporate Priority: Delivering excellent customer service Report presented by: Councillor Flint, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group Report prepared by: Chris Fleetham, Corporate Director		
Background Papers: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings 29 th May and 11 th July 2013		Public Report
Options: N/A		Key Decision: No
<p>At its meeting on 29th May 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be established to scrutinise the provision of public services in rural areas. The composition of the Group was approved by the Committee on 11th July 2013.</p> <p>The initial meeting of the Group took place on 12th September 2013, when the Terms of Reference, Scope of the Review, and a background to the work of the former Rural Isolation Task and Finish Group was presented by its Chairman, Councillor Gabrielle Spray.</p> <p>At their second meeting on 21st October 2013, the Group received presentations from three invitees, who discussed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy Wright (Corporate Director and Member of the Braintree District Health and Wellbeing Panel, BDHWP) – Roles and responsibilities of organisations involved in the provision of health and wellbeing in Essex; BDHWP's health priorities; and the perceived lack of communication between health authorities across rural borders. • Jan Cole (Rural Community Council of Essex - RCCE) – Background to Rural Services Survey 2011 followed by an opportunity for Members to suggest services to be audited in the upcoming 2014 Survey. • Tania Roberge (Marketing & Communications Manager) – An overview of the Council's channels of communications, specifically the targeting of parishes and rural areas in corporate communication efforts. <p>This was concluded with a discussion regarding Members' preferred outcomes for the Task & Finish Group, which at this meeting was agreed to be too fragmented to determine specific outcomes. To help narrow the scope, Members requested a list of rural services to be provided by Service Unit Managers and presented at its following meeting.</p>		

The list was presented by Chris Fleetham (Corporate Director) at the Group's third meeting on 2nd December 2013, which Peter Smith (Head of Economic Development) also attended to provide Members with an update on the progress of rural broadband. The Group also re-requested Service Unit Managers to be contacted again and asked how their services can be better provided or adapted to rural areas with current resources. The Group then referred back to its set of Members' preferred outcomes and grouped these into 4 key areas for further investigation: Communication, Access to Services, Rural Facilities and Rural Health. It was agreed that the Chairman would allocate 3 Members to focus on each area in more detail.

The initial findings from the 4 working groups will take place on 27th January at the Task Group's fourth meeting, where Paul Partridge (Head of Operations) will also be in attendance to discuss the feasibility of waste services directly providing clear sacks to residents.

Two future meetings are scheduled to take place on 24th February and 24th March 2014 where the Group will work towards drafting its final recommendations.

Decision: The Committee is asked to note the progress of the Group.

Purpose of Decision: To inform the Committee of progress with the review of the provision of public services in rural areas.

Corporate implications

Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	None
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None
Risks:	Not applicable

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee
29th January 2014



Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme Task and Finish Group – Progress Report		Agenda No: 7
Corporate Priority: Supporting vulnerable people in our community Report presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group Report prepared by: Trevor Wilson		
Background Papers: Overview and Scrutiny Meetings 29 th May, 11 th July and 25 th September 2013		Public Report
Options: N/A		Key Decision: No
<p>At its meeting on 29th May 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task & Finish Group be established to scrutinise the Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme. The composition of the Group was approved by the Committee on 11th July 2013.</p> <p>The Group held its first meeting on 26th November 2013 and received a presentation giving an overview of the Local Council Tax Support scheme and details of the first six months of operation.</p> <p>This included details of the value of awards made, number of working age claimants receiving support, operation of the Exceptional Hardship Fund, impact on the council tax collection rate and the three appeals made to the Valuation Tribunal regarding the scheme.</p> <p>Members of the group raised questions on a number of areas including non-dependant deductions, discretionary housing payments and methods of obtaining feedback on the operation of the scheme.</p> <p>The second meeting will have taken place on 28th January 2014. The group will have received a presentation from the Braintree Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau, detail on the discretionary housing payment scheme (awards to-date and number of claimants assisted), detail on the residency criteria adopted by Tendring District Council in its scheme, and information on the costs of the scheme.</p> <p>The group is planning to conclude its work and produce a report of its findings by 31st March 2014.</p>		

Decision: That the progress report of the Task and Finish Group scrutinising the Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme be noted.	
Purpose of Decision: To inform the Committee of progress with the review of the Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme be noted.	
Corporate implications	
Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	None
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None
Risks:	Not applicable
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