

# Minutes

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee 13th July 2016



### Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
C Bailey	Yes	G Maclure	Yes
Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	Yes	F Ricci	Apologies
P Horner	Yes	Miss V Santomauro	No
D Hufton-Rees	No	P Schwier	Yes
D Mann (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	C Siddall (Chairman)	Yes

### 9 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Task and Finish Review into Apprenticeships in the Braintree District’ as John Milbank of Milbank Concrete was known to him.

Councillor G Maclure declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6 – ‘Overview and Scrutiny Review of Broadband Provision – First Evidence Gathering Session’ as John Milbank of Milbank Concrete was known to him.

Councillor C Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Task and Finish Review into Apprenticeships in the Braintree District’ as John Milbank of Milbank Concrete was known to him.

Councillor C Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest also in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Task and Finish Review into Apprenticeships in the Braintree District’ as a non-paid Director of Ignite Business Enterprise.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision when the Item was considered.

### 10 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were no questions asked or statements made.

12 **TASK AND FINISH REVIEW INTO APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

**INFORMATION:** Members were asked to consider the report of the Task and Finish Groups' scrutiny review report into Apprenticeships.

A Task and Finish Group of Braintree District Councillors was formed to explore the current state of apprenticeships in the District and make recommendations to the Council going forward. The Task and Finish Group had met with apprentices from the Council, from outside organisations and gathered evidence of companies and partners across the District.

As part of the review members looked at the take up of apprenticeships in the District relative to County and national levels, the barriers faced by companies and individuals taking up apprenticeships and what role the District Council had, if any, to play in the future of apprenticeships.

Members identified the barriers between schools and apprenticeships and felt that this should be reflected in the recommendations. It was therefore agreed by Members that recommendation 1 should be amended to read;

***“Businesses, and schools, need help to understand and navigate the apprenticeship process.***

*The process for hiring an apprentice can be complex, confusing and time consuming. Even large businesses can struggle with the complexity involved in identifying the correct programme for an apprentice, fulfilling the requirements of the provider and understanding the correct procedures for monitoring an apprentice's progress.*

*As the district is largely made up of small businesses, this becomes an even larger barrier and hindrance – making it a real issue specifically for Braintree. Our Task and Finish Group recommends that a checklist is pulled together, drawing on the experience of those who are further along the apprentice journey, which businesses in the district can refer to when deciding to recruit an apprentice. The Task and Finish Group also recommends that the Council looks to work closer with schools to ensure they also understand the journey and opportunities of apprenticeships”*

**DECISION:** To consider and refer the Task and Finish Groups' scrutiny review report into Apprenticeships to Full Council on 5th September 2016 and to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

As a result of the Task and Finish Group's review into Apprenticeships the following recommendations are made:

1. **Businesses need help to understand and navigate the apprenticeship process.**  
Work with the Essex Skills Board and Training providers to produce a simple checklist or process chart for businesses.
2. **Businesses need to understand the business case for taking on an apprentice.**  
Use positive case studies from companies in the local area to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to other businesses and encourage them to “Grow Your Own Talent”.
3. **Transport can be a major barrier for young people accessing apprenticeships.** Explore options including, Community Transport, which could be used to help address this situation.
4. **Agencies need to work together to address issues affecting apprenticeships.**  
The Essex Skills Board needs to take a lead in pulling together agencies across the district to promote apprenticeships.
5. **The Council should investigate establishing an apprenticeship agency.**  
The Council should look into establishing an apprenticeships agency, which would act a central pool of apprentices recruited and hired by the Council to then be “hired out” to businesses.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the committees’ report to be referred to Council and Cabinet in accordance with the procedure rules for scrutiny.

## 13 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW OF BROADBAND PROVISION – FIRST EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION**

**INFORMATION:** As part of this year’s Scrutiny Review in to broadband provision Members were asked to note the current position of broadband coverage in the Braintree District and agree a list of outside speakers to be invited to attend future meetings of the Committee.

Members received an update on the current Broadband Delivery UK scheme (BDUK). As part of the update Members were advised that there was currently concern with the level of coverage in the Braintree District which was considerably lower than the Essex target and was currently at 73% coverage.

The majority of the Superfast Essex programme was being delivered through fibre to the cabinet technology, which provided fibre-optic cabling from an exchange to a street cabinet and then copper cabling from the street cabinet to houses. There was also an element of fibre to the premises provision being rolled out as part of a rural pilot which involved fibre-optic cabling from an exchange to a fibre aggregation node then channelling further fibre-optic cabling directly to a connection point outside of the premises. There were limitations to the technologies that were being used in the Superfast Essex programme in that if a property was over half a mile away from the street cabinet the signal would degrade to the point that superfast speeds would no longer be available.

Braintree District Councils involvement in the Superfast Essex programme has to date involved commitment to contribute £250,000 in to the next phase which would be launched this summer which would enable around 2000 properties to access broadband directly and around 10% of properties in the district which would be upgraded under the Superfast Essex programme overall. The Council had been working closely with Superfast Essex in respect of economic development, to engage with businesses as there would be a great economic benefit to businesses from accessing superfast broadband. The Council along with Superfast Essex had jointly produced a guide to superfast broadband for business to help them gain a better understanding of the different technologies available. The Council had also assisted in organising meeting specifically for businesses around superfast broadband and launch events were held last year as well as taking part in various mapping activities to help identify business parks in the District where there were a higher concentration of businesses located.

Superfast Essex had provided vital comments with regard to the Local Plan to ensure a robust policy was in place for future homes to automatically be able to access superfast broadband. BT had made a commitment that any development over 100 homes would receive fibre to the premises free of charge.

It was agreed by Members to add to the list of invitees an independent consultant to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members agreed also to add an additional two meetings to the Overview and Scrutiny timetable to enable for further evidence gathering sessions to take place. These were scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 subject to Members availability.

**DECISION:** That it was agreed:

1. For Members to note the current position of broadband coverage in the Braintree District, and
2. Agree the list of outside speakers to be invited to attend future meetings, with the addition of an independent consultant.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

1. To ensure the delivery of the Committee's work programme.
2. To decide on the schedule of outside speakers for future meetings.

## 14 **UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that the Task and Finish Group Review of Buses and Community Transport report had now been finalised and would be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016.

With regard to the current Task and Finish Group for this Civic year, Review in to Obesity, expressions of interests had been received from Members wishing to take part in the review. The membership was being considered by the Scrutiny Steering Board and once confirmed would inform the lead officer who would then commence the review in to obesity. A progress report would be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update Members on the development of the review.

**DECISION:** To note the progress of the Task and Finish Groups.

15 **DECISION PLANNER**

**DECISION:** That the Decision Planner for the period 1st August 2016 to 30th November 2016 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.47pm.

Councillor C Siddall  
(Chairman)