

# Minutes

## Partnership Development Group

20<sup>th</sup> November 2019



### Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Baugh	Yes	I Pritchard	Yes
G Courtauld	Yes	R Ramage (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Mrs M Cunningham (Chairman)	Yes	Mrs J Sandum	Yes
T McArdle	Yes	P Thorogood	Apologies
Mrs J Pell	Yes		

### 10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** There was one interest declared:-

Councillor Mrs J Pell declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6, "Scrutiny Review into Leisure Provision across the Braintree District – Access to Sport – Second Evidence Gathering Session," as she was a trustee of the Halstead Day Centre.

### 11 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

### 12 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Development Group held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 13 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO LEISURE PROVISION ACROSS THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT – ACCESS TO SPORT – SECOND EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that due to the presence of a number of guest speakers at the meeting, the Chairman had agreed to reorder the Agenda in order to allow Item 6, "Scrutiny Review into Leisure Provision Across the Braintree District – Access to Sport – Second Evidence Gathering Session," to be taken first. The Chairman then welcomed the guest speakers to the meeting and introduced them to the remaining Members of the Committee. The speakers included John Wood, Chair of the Active Braintree Foundation (ABF), and Braintree District Council (BDC) officers Julie O'Hara, Senior Planning Policy Officer and Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer. Mr. Wood was invited to deliver his presentation to Members first. The presentation provided Members with an overview of the ABF and its role within the District, its achievements, strengths and weaknesses, future planned work and a list of the strategic partnerships it had liaison with.

The full presentation slides can be viewed at:

[https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS\\_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/21/Default.aspx](https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/21/Default.aspx)

Further to the presentation, the following information was provided in response to questions raised by Members:

- Members were advised that the ABF would offer support to different organisations that sought to work with them where this was possible, such as through the provision of funding or expertise needed to help implement new projects and activities. The Sports for Confidence project at Witham Leisure Centre was mentioned as an example of this, the organisation of which had helped to promote access to sport and other leisure facilities for groups of people who faced barriers to participation, such as those with learning disabilities.
- Members were informed that the Council's Health and Wellbeing Board received a 'health profile' of the District on an annual basis, of which identified the primary issues across the District regarding access to leisure and sports provision. In respect of the current year, the key issues identified were inactivity, obesity, frailty and mental health. Different approaches towards improving access to sport in respect of diverse groups was often required and with the influx of new data each year, the Council was then able to direct its focus and resources towards rectifying the latest issues highlighted, whilst giving adequate consideration towards how to encourage the wider District to be active as well.
- On the subject of community assets such as sports, leisure and healthcare facilities, it was stressed that consideration should be given as to how these assets could be incorporated within new communities during the design stage, and how these facilities would interlink as effectively as possible. An example of such a community already in place was the Abbey Croft Leisure site in Mildenhall, Suffolk, which included a GP Practice, library, sports facilities and social services within a single area that also had strong links with the local school. By having a variety of health, leisure and social provision in one place, local residents were able to be referred to the services most appropriate for their needs with greater efficiency.
- Members were informed of the activity finder that was available for all residents to utilise on the Active Essex website, of which both BDC and ABF had subscribed to. The activity finder encompassed the entire County and enabled its users to identify the activities, groups and sports facilities that were most accessible to them via a post code search. However, despite regular promotion of the facility by ECC, many residents across the District were not aware that the activity finder was available to them. Mention was also made of the funding allocated to Community 360 by the ABF for them to undertake a six-month research project that would identify all of the walking groups that existed throughout the District for future publication on their website.
- Improvements to the promotion of valuable community assets, such as through the activity finder on the Active Essex website, was essential if access to sports activity was to increase; for example, Parish Councils could include a link to the activity finder on their respective websites to help enable local residents to seek leisure provision in their own areas, as well as report any changes to the sports activities and facilities for

both local residents and the wider area (e.g. such as changes to the management of clubs, cancelled sessions, etc.).

- In response to a query raised regarding walking groups available in the District, and whether BDC could help to promote those groups more effectively, Members were advised that work was already underway within the Community Services Team at BDC to help with the promotion of such groups and clubs. The initiative had stemmed from the need to reduce rates of social isolation and loneliness across the District as opposed to purely improvements in the uptake of physical activity.
- Reference was made to the £30k of funding available to the ABF; Members were informed that the majority of this funding had been received from Active Essex and Public Health. Smaller grants were received from charities, such as those associated with the Courtauld Family.
- The lack of engagement with the ABF by some organisations and businesses throughout the District was attributed to factors such as time constraints and a focus by individual groups on their own specific activities and initiatives, rather than the wider District picture of sports accessibility. Whilst engagement with the ABF could not be imposed on other organisations, it was nonetheless important that the key aims of the ABF of widening access to sport, increasing participation in sports and improving the health and wellbeing of the public be communicated in a more effective manner. The success of the 'Spot It Stop It' campaign launched by the Community Safety Partnership was mentioned as a key example where local businesses and other organisations alike had engaged in partnership work with one another in order to increase awareness of the scheme, of which sought to combat cases of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Members were informed that local clubs did not necessarily have to register their presence with an official local body or organisation such as the Local Authority, although it was stressed that this depended on the nature of the activities that the club wished to undertake (i.e. if licensable activities, such as the sale of alcohol, were involved). BDC advertised the presence of the ABF and Active Braintree Network (ABN) and the opportunities they presented as much as possible to any new clubs or groups it was aware of. It was added that all clubs, regardless of whether they were registered with the Local Authority or not, were still required to register with a national government body.
- The ABF did not have direct links with community mental health teams, but it was relayed that Sports for Confidence representatives were known to work directly with such teams. The contact details for mental health teams in the District could be obtained from Sports for Confidence and representatives on the Health and Wellbeing Panel. Mental health representatives were also known to sit on the Health and Wellbeing Panel.
- It was agreed that residents were more likely to undertake sports activities within their own residential areas, rather than travel longer distances to attend clubs or group sessions. However, in smaller communities like those of villages, there was not always enough interest or active participation from local residents to keep such facilities, which included grass pitches, functioning.
- Members were informed that sports development in the Braintree District was a priority consideration of BDC; officers such as Joby Humm, Leisure and Contracts Manager at

BDC had vast knowledge of the subject but were restricted as to the amount of time they could invest in the subject, often due to other work commitments. As such, a potential recommendation as part of the Scrutiny Review was to support officers by identifying the sports facilities that were available across the District overall and to look at how those facilities could be utilised as efficiently as possible. BDC could then work with the ABF to help implement this.

- Rates of obesity across schools within the Braintree District was a serious issue that concerned pre-schools, primary and secondary schools. Schools such as Beckers Green Primary School in Braintree were known to offer after-school clubs and activities every day of the school week, whereas other schools were known to offer very little in terms of sports activities and clubs.
- The 'Daily Mile' scheme was not a compulsory requirement of schools, although a number of primary schools that were registered with Active Essex were known to undertake the activity. Not all schools were registered with Active Essex and, as such, their exact activities were not recorded. The demands of the curriculum within secondary schools and a general lack of motivation to participate in sports activities by older groups children was also attributed to the lack of engagement in sports and leisure activities. Contact with schools (such as through school governors or the Schools Sports Partnership) was considered vital in helping to encourage an increase in the level of sports activities undertaken, as well as registration with Active Essex and regular reviews of the effectiveness of the current sports provision being implemented.
- It was reported that the 'Livewell Child' initiative had been implemented across 10 schools within the Braintree District as part of a three year pilot. The 'Daily Mile' was a core aspect of this programme, although schools were encouraged to develop their own sports activity schedules according to what was most appropriate for them. Following the end of the pilot period, it was intended that the Livewell Child programme would be rolled out more widely to a range of schools within the District. Officers within the Health and Wellbeing Team, such as Greg Tye, would work closely with local schools and the Schools Partnership to encourage involvement in the 'Daily Mile' programme. It was advised that Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, would report back to Members at upcoming meetings of the Council in respect of the latest progress concerning the Livewell Child initiative.
- Members agreed that it was important to encourage the use of recreational activities in public open spaces, such as outdoor football pitches
- The ABF's involvement with football clubs across the District was primarily through Community Iron; its Head of Operations, Mark Samson, was a member of the ABF Board.
- With regard to workshops organised by the ABF, Members were advised that the ABF often liaised with its partner organisations in order to determine what topics they would like to attend a workshop on (e.g. funding, working with social media, safeguarding, Section 106 developments and how those were accessed, etc). Funding for the different clubs and organisations who were in partnership with the ABF was allocated by means of grant sums of up to £1,000 for the promotion of sports activities. Applications for funding were considered on an individual basis in order to ensure that funding criteria was met and that the request was justifiable. Despite the funding opportunities available through the ABF, the majority of the workshops that they

provided on the subject of funding were often in relation to the opportunities offered by other organisations (e.g. from Sports England, other local pots of money, etc). It was emphasised to Members that there was a much wider availability of funding for the purposes of sports provision than people were largely aware of. The ABF worked to signpost organisations to the most appropriate funding streams.

- In regard to the expertise needed on the sports activities available across the District, the ABF possessed resources in the form of a number of organisations who could provide the required information, such as Active Essex.

The Chairman thanked John Wood for his presentation and the responses provided to questions raised by Members, of which were very insightful. Mr Wood elected to stay for the remainder of the meeting. The Chairman then invited BDC officers Julie O'Hara, Senior Planning Policy Officer and Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer to deliver their joint presentation on the role of Planning in conjunction with leisure provision across the District. During the presentation, reference was made to the Local Plan and the 'leisure' policies that were to be incorporated within its composition, evidence base documents (e.g. Braintree Open Space, Sports and Recreational Facilities Study 2016-2033), infrastructure delivery plan, planning obligations and recent examples of Section 106 usage.

The full presentation slides can be viewed at:

[https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS\\_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/21/Default.aspx](https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/21/Default.aspx)

In response to questions raised by Members, the following information was provided:

- In response to an issue raised by John Wood during his presentation, Neil Jones explained that Planning officers were required to determine planning applications in accordance with the Council's adopted planning policies. As part of the Local Plan, designated Employment Policy Areas, such as industrial estates, remain protected for industrial and commercial usage in order to ensure that there was a sufficient supply of employment land and facilities that businesses could expand to. This was of particular importance in light of the influx of housing growth in recent years and the need to ensure that businesses were able to flourish within the District, rather than resort to seeking opportunities elsewhere. As part of the new Local Plan, Planning officers had been required to examine the existing and future supply of employment land and how this would be met (e.g. Horizon 120), as well as the protection of existing employment land. Planning applications received by BDC sometimes conflicted with this employment policy and as such, could not always be granted. Applicants were always encouraged to appeal in such instances where they did not agree with the Council's decision on their planning application.
- In reference to the Local Plan, Members were informed that Planning officers followed a standards based approach when calculating what provision of open space was required for new developments. The size of a development allowed Planning officers to specify the scale of the open space that would be required.
- Members were advised that Open Space can be provided through Section 106 agreements, by either the developer making provision on the site, or by making a financial contribution which the Council can use to improve existing facilities, or provide new Open Space and leisure facilities. It was explained that it is not possible

to request that a developer included more space at a site in order to address a previous issue that had perhaps arisen as a result of historic planning policy.

- In instances where unallocated sites under the Local Plan experienced significant opposition from the public, developers were sometimes known to offer over and above what they would normally provide in respect of a development's scope; however, in such instances, developers could be viewed as buying the permission. It was stressed that there was always a negotiation process between BDC and a developer, the end results of which would need to be reasonable and proportionate and in line with BDC's standards regarding open spaces and leisure provision.
- Although it was originally envisaged that a changing facility at the Hatfield Road Football Pitch would be provided next to the site, BDC officers were concerned that this would create a liability with regard to the site's ongoing maintenance. It was also unlikely that the changing facilities would be utilised more than once or twice a week due to the infrequency of the Pitch's use for formal activities. It was therefore intended that the changing facilities would instead be included within a new community building that would be located alongside Maltings Lane in order to provide a more sustainable solution. A steering group had been established consisting of BDC Officers, Members of the Public and interested parties to consider the best option to approach the implementation process with local residents, as well as how the facility might look. It was added that Section 106 funds were available for potential future usage in this area.
- Further to the hearing with the Planning Inspector in January 2020, Members were informed that Part 1 of the Local Plan could still be subject to amendments. The duration of the hearing was unable to be confirmed, but it was advised that were any changes proposed to the Plan in light of the Inspector's examination, a public consultation would need to be held and comments received back from this taken into consideration as well.
- Signposting the availability of Section 106 money was largely sporadic. A template had recently been developed by the Council's S106 Officer and Planning officers for use in conjunction with the Communications Team at BDC when new developments were being delivered to help highlight the new or improved facilities that are provided as a result of new developments through Section 106 obligations. It was hoped that a process would be implemented soon to help move this initiative forward with developers.

Further to the presentation, John Wood expressed a concern that he had about the restrictive nature of the Sports England Facilities Planning Model, upon which the Open Spaces Recreational Facilities Study that was designed by BDC, in addition to a number of similar plans developed by Local Authorities across the UK, was based. Although the Sports England Model identified examples of sports facilities like those of sports halls and swimming pools, the model failed to encapsulate specialist sports facilities, such as venues for gymnastics and dance. It was noted that those who sought to implement specialist sports activities often encountered more difficulty with this due to a lack of suitable facilities available for the specific use that was required.

On behalf of Members, the Chairman again expressed her thanks to John Wood, Julie O'Hara and Neil Jones for their presentations and contribution towards the Group's evidence gathering.

**INFORMATION:** Members considered a report which provided an update on the Group's progress in respect of the Scrutiny Review and presented them with the opportunity to highlight any other avenues for exploration as part of the Review.

Following a discussion by Members, the following areas for future exploration were identified:

- The Chairman expressed interest in inviting a representative from Rayne Parish Council and perhaps others to speak with the Group on the topic of leisure provision within their own remits (e.g. on the topic of outdoor gym facilities). Officers subsequently agreed to send an invitation to the Parish Clerk at Rayne Parish Council and to conduct research into other types of leisure and sports facilities that were provided by other Parish Councils within the District.
- Members were advised that it was a valid recommendation as part of the Scrutiny Review for the Group to declare that it had no further recommendations to make, especially if Members felt satisfied that adequate sports and leisure provision was being successfully delivered throughout the District. A further recommendation by Members could be to suggest that BDC gave consideration to how leisure and sports facilities across the District could be made better use of. Members were again reminded that any recommendations made would need to be evidence based.
- Another potential recommendation was to examine informal sports provision within the District.
- A further potential recommendation was to encourage all Ward Members to engage more with Town and Parish Councils in order to provide more informed responses during public consultation periods with the Council (i.e. open spaces action plan consultation). Those Members who were in non-Parish areas were advised to contact officers within BDC's Economic Development Team, such as Nicola Murphy, about how they might engage more successfully with the Council during public consultations. Joby Humm was also a useful contact in this subject area.

Further to the discussion, the Chairman reminded Members of the upcoming meeting of the Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2019, at which Fusion Lifestyle were due to attend to provide their annual report. All Members of the Partnership Development Group were encouraged to attend the meeting or, if they were unable to do so, to watch the subsequent webcast.

**DECISION:** Members noted the report and provided any additional feedback in respect of the future Work Programmed.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure Members are aware of the future Work Programme.

The meeting commenced at 7.19pm and closed at 9.45pm.

Councillor Mrs M Cunningham

(Chairman)