

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA



THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND THIS MEETING

Please note this meeting will be audio recorded.

Date: Wednesday, 25th September 2013

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:-

PUBLIC SESSION

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. **Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th July 2013 (copy previously circulated).

4. **Question Time.** (See paragraph below).
5. **Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Review of Moving Young People who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into Education, Employment or Training.** To consider the attached report (page 1) and continue the Committee’s review with the following invitees:

Liz Richardson	Support Worker, Leahurst Hostel, Braintree
Thomas Pitts	Support Worker, Leahurst Hostel, Braintree
Samantha Hampshire	Housing Support Worker Bramble Court, Witham
Melanie Nash	Housing Support Worker Bramble Court, Witham
Cathryn Henry	National Apprenticeship Service
Andy Wright	Corporate Director, Braintree District Council
Peter Smith	Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, Braintree District Council

A number of young people are also expected to attend.
It is also hoped that a member of staff from Braintree Foyer will attend.

6. **Task and Finish Groups – Affordable Housing.** To consider the attached report (page 4).
7. **Task and Finish Groups – Operation of the Council’s Council Tax Support Scheme.** To consider the attached report (page 33).
8. **Decision Planner.** To consider the Decision Planner for the period 1st September 2013 to 31st January 2014 (previously circulated).
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.

PRIVATE SESSION

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 35.

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

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.....

Comments.....

.....

Contact Details:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Review of Moving Young People who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into Education, Employment or Training		Agenda No: 5
Corporate Priorities:	Building a prosperous district Boost employment skills and support business People feel good Supporting vulnerable people in our community	
Report presented by:	Councillor Dr Evans, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options: To agree, or amend the proposed next steps of the scrutiny review.	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scrutinising moving young people in the Braintree District who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into Education, Employment or Training as its main scrutiny topic for 2013-14. The terms of reference for the review agreed by the Committee are set out in Annex A.</p> <p>As part of its review, the Committee is discussing NEET issues with a wide range of stakeholders with the aim of completing its scrutiny report early in 2014-15.</p>		
Progress - Work completed		
<p>To date, the following work items have been completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Terms of Reference for the review agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 29th May 2013;		

- Scrutiny review scoped by the Committee at its meeting on 10th July;
- NEET issues discussed with Essex County Council and Job Centre Plus at the Committee's meeting on 10th July;
- Facebook page and Twitter account established with the aim of engaging with stakeholders, in particular, young people.
- Posters and leaflets publishing the Committee's review including its Facebook page and Twitter account produced and distributed across the district (e.g. in Jobcentres, shops, libraries and hostels);
- Informal meetings held with Committee members and young people in hostels to discuss their experiences and difficulties in seeking education, employment or training;
- National Apprenticeship Service, young people and youth support workers invited to the Committee's meeting on 25th September.

Next Steps

Members are invited to agree the following next steps:

Future Invitees

- Invite employers, the College at Braintree and schools to an additional Committee meeting on Thursday 7th November;
- Hold informal meetings involving Committee members and groups supporting young people who are NEET (e.g. Parenting Platform);
- Invite all stakeholders to the Committee's meeting on 12th March 2013 to discuss an outline of the Committee's report (including its analysis, findings and recommendations).

Final Report

- Committee agrees its final report at its meeting around May 2014 (date to be determined).

Decision:
That progress in the Committee's scrutiny review of moving young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) into Education, Employment or Training be noted and the next steps in the review be agreed.
Purpose of Decision: To agree actions in support the Committee's scrutiny review.

Corporate Implications	
Financial:	None arising from this report.
Legal:	None arising from this report.
Equalities/Diversity	To be considered in the review.
Customer Impact:	To be considered in the review.
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising from this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Young people who are or have experienced being NEET and various stakeholder organisations supporting people who are NEET are being consulted.
Risks:	None arising from this report.
Officer Contact:	Alastair Peace
Designation:	Member Services Manager
Ext. No.	2602
E-mail:	alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
25th September 2013



Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group		Agenda No: 6
Corporate Priority:	Prosperity - Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth.	
Report presented by:	Cllr Barlow, Chairman Task and Finish Group	
Report prepared by:	Tim Lucas, Housing Research and Development Manager	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options:	Key Decision: NO	
Executive Summary:		
<p>Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish an Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group in autumn 2012 to explore how the Council might further support affordable and social housing in the district.</p> <p>The review was to include consideration for possible options in terms of shared ownership and shared equity.</p> <p>The members involved with the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group were Cllr Barlow as Chairman and Cllrs Banthorpe, Cadman, Gibson, Horner, Kirby, Mann, Rose, Shelton and Shepherd.</p> <p>The group held its first meeting in November 2012 where the following project objectives were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Use 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;➤ Consult with stakeholders (housing associations, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the barriers to developing affordable housing, specifically properties for low cost home ownership, in the district;➤ Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what role BDC could take to mitigate barriers to new development;		

- Research and consider actions of other local authorities with regards to meeting local housing needs through local cost home ownership schemes; and
- Provide a final report summarising the work undertaken by the group, findings and subsequent recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district.

The Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group Final Report details the work undertaken by the group and includes key messages arising from the study and subsequent recommendations. The background report attached provides a summary of this information.

Decision:

1. That the report, the work of the Task and Finish Group and the recommendations be noted
2. That the report be referred to Council and Cabinet.

Purpose of Decision: To consider the Task & Finish Group's Report and findings

Corporate implications

Financial:	None
Legal:	None
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	None
Environment and Climate Change:	n/a
Consultation/Community Engagement:	n/a
Officer Contact:	Tim Lucas
Designation:	Housing Research and Development
Ext. No.	2124
E-mail:	Tim.lucas@braintree.gov.uk

Background – Executive Summary from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group Final report

1.0 Executive Summary

With high property prices, affordability issues and an ageing population, housing is a significant issue for the district. The key considerations for meeting local housing needs include:

- The increased demand for a wider range of affordable housing options for those unable to afford to buy on the open market.
- The increased size of the private rented sector.
- The average age of new forming households increasing.
- Younger people migrating to areas where housing is more affordable.
- Increase in demand for a range of housing for older people across tenures, recognising the housing needs of older people vary extensively.
- Increase in the number of older person households under occupying.
- Increase need for housing related support services.

The Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group was set up in autumn 2012 to consider what direction the council could pursue in order to help meet existing and future housing needs locally. The following objectives were agreed by the group at the first meeting:

- **Use 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.
- **Consult with stakeholders** (housing associations, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the **barriers to developing affordable housing**, specifically properties for low cost home ownership, in the district.
- Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what **role BDC could take to mitigate barriers** to new development.
- Research and consider **actions of other local authorities** with regards to meeting local housing needs through local cost home ownership schemes.
- Provide a final report summarising the work undertaken by the group, findings and subsequent **recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district**.

Since the first meeting to agree the project plan in December 2013, the group held meetings with key stakeholders including the council's Finance Director, the Help to Buy Zone Agent for Essex and the Rural Community Council of Essex to consider opportunities for the council to further support the provision of affordable housing in the district.

Following meeting with various stakeholders, presentations and discussions, the key messages identified for consideration as part of formulating the final report include:

- The council has performed consistently well in enabling new affordable housing across the district
- The council already uses a range of methods to enable affordable housing and is forward thinking exploring new opportunities in this area.
- Demand for affordable housing in the district is high.
- The older person population in the district is expected to grow significantly over the next few years to 2021 therefore influencing the type of accommodation needed across the district.

Based on the research and study undertaken, the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group identifies the following recommendations to help the council to further support provision of affordable housing across the district.

	Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group Recommendations
1	Develop a new Housing Strategy for the district for the period 2014 to 2019 that includes findings from the new SHMA 2013 and data and analysis from the Housing StatNav.
2	Explore what type of intermediate housing is needed locally to meet needs most effectively.
3	Discuss with the CHIP Board the potential for using the CHIP fund to facilitate land banking locally.
4	Develop cost benefit analysis with regard to investing council money, for example, how many households will benefit from a given investment.

5	Agree how information on BDC capital and other resources can be made available to members.
6	Work with Essex County Council to establish a method for appraising the true value of land i.e. in terms of benefits to the local community and to specific customer groups as well as red book valuations.
7	Pilot an equity share scheme based on council owned land. E.g. council puts forward land for a housing association to build out a scheme. A proportion of the units are sold for 60% of market value with the council retaining the remaining equity of the property. When the owner moves on, the equity can be recycled into further affordable housing or property can stay as equity housing.
8	Council to adopt a flexible approach to delivery of affordable housing through Section 106 where we may expect private rented units, gifted units or wheelchair units instead of pro-rata mix.
9	Agree methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme.
10	Engage with housing associations and developers to gauge how effective our role in enabling affordable housing is and consider how we compare to our comparator local authorities and whether there is best practice elsewhere.
11	Publish the Help to Buy newsletters produced by zone agent, Moat on the council's website.

Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group

Final Report

Overview and Scrutiny 25th September 2013

Council 14th October 2013

Cabinet 9th December 2013

2.0 Executive Summary

With high property prices, affordability issues and an ageing population, housing is a significant issue for the district. The key considerations for meeting local housing needs include:

- The increased demand for a wider range of affordable housing options for those unable to afford to buy on the open market.
- The increased size of the private rented sector.
- The average age of new forming households increasing.
- Younger people migrating to areas where housing is more affordable.
- Increase in demand for a range of housing for older people across tenures, recognising the housing needs of older people vary extensively.
- Increase in the number of older person households under occupying.
- Increase need for housing related support services.

The Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group was set up in autumn 2012 to consider what direction the council could pursue in order to help meet existing and future housing needs locally. The following objectives were agreed by the group at the first meeting:

- **Use 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.
- **Consult with stakeholders** (housing associations, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the **barriers to developing affordable housing**, specifically properties for low cost home ownership, in the district.
- Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what **role BDC could take to mitigate barriers** to new development.
- Research and consider **actions of other local authorities** with regards to meeting local housing needs through local cost home ownership schemes.

- Provide a final report summarising the work undertaken by the group, findings and subsequent **recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district.**

Since the first meeting to agree the project plan in December 2013, the group held meetings with key stakeholders including the council's Finance Director, the Help to Buy Zone Agent for Essex and the Rural Community Council of Essex to consider opportunities for the council to further support the provision of affordable housing in the district.

Following meeting with various stakeholders, presentations and discussions, the key messages identified for consideration as part of formulating the final report include:

- The council has performed consistently well in enabling new affordable housing across the district
- The council already uses a range of methods to enable affordable housing and is forward thinking exploring new opportunities in this area.
- Demand for affordable housing in the district is high.
- The older person population in the district is expected to grow significantly over the next few years to 2021 therefore influencing the type of accommodation needed across the district.

Based on the research and study undertaken, the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group identifies the following recommendations to help the council to further support provision of affordable housing across the district.

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3	Discuss with the CHIP Board the potential for using the CHIP fund to facilitate land banking locally.
4	Develop cost benefit analysis with regard to investing council money, for example, how many households will benefit from a given investment.
5	Agree how information on BDC capital and other resources can be made available to members.
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11	Publish the Help to Buy newsletters produced by zone agent, Moat on the council's website.

HOUSING PRESS

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICES IN THE DISTRICT ALMOST 9 TIMES TYPICAL EARNINGS OF RESIDENTS.

Local people wanting to purchase a typical property within the Braintree District will need to have a household income of over £70,000

The average price of property in the district was reported as £213,000 in the Braintree SHMA Interim report March 2013, which represents almost 9 times typical earnings of existing residents.

The median earnings of residents in the Braintree District is estimated to be just over £24,000 according to the most recent Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

This poses a significant issue in terms of affordability not only to first time buyers, but also to existing households who need to move to bigger accommodation.

Average property prices in the district have remained relatively steady in recent years despite the recession.

In 2007, the average price of property in the district was approximately £223k. This dropped to the lowest recorded value of £196k in 2009 as the effect of the recession took hold.

However, by 2010 recovery was evident with average property prices in the district reaching £221K.

Since 2010 there have been marginal fluctuations in property prices locally but broadly speaking there has been little change.

Meanwhile wages have remained suppressed and household income has decreased for many, thus creating a greater gap between what typical residents in work can afford and the cost of the housing ladder.

90+ AGE GROUP SET TO INCREASE BY 44% IN 10 YEARS.

The largest expected growth in population across the district from 2011 to 2021 is in those aged 90+

Population projections indicate the number of residents in the Braintree District aged 90 and over will increase by over 1,000

Whilst the number of older people living in the district increases, it is expected there will be minimal increases in

there is likely to be more older people under-occupying properties, a greater demand for care and support services

<p>between 2011 and 2021. This represents an increase of almost 44%.</p> <p>Growth in the number of all residents over the age of 65 is expected to increase across the district during this time by 27%</p>	<p>young people living in the district.</p> <p>The number of residents aged between 0 to 19 and 20 to 29 is expected to decrease by 1.5% and 3.3% respectively.</p> <p>In terms of what these changes in local population means for housing,</p>	<p>and a greater need for more specialist housing such as extra care.</p> <p>Ensuring there are a range of different housing options to meet the needs of a diverse but ageing population is a key priority for the council.</p>
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2.0 Introduction

2.1 Local Housing Need

As the headline stories summarised previously demonstrate, housing is a key issue for the district. With affordability being a barrier to owner occupation for many working households and the significant changes expected in the district's population over the next ten years, the council will need to ensure appropriate strategies, plans and policies are in place to ensure local housing needs are met.

Key considerations for meeting future housing needs:

- The increased demand for a wider range of affordable housing options for those unable to afford to buy on the open market.
- The increased size of the private rented sector.
- Average age of new forming households increasing.
- Younger people migrating to areas where housing is more affordable.
- Increase in demand for a range of housing for older people across tenures, recognising the housing needs of older people vary extensively.
- Increase in the number of older person households under occupying.
- Increase need for housing related support services.

2.2 Braintree District Council recognises housing as a key priority in the Corporate Plan 2012 to 2016.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed a task and finish group to investigate how the Council could further support affordable housing and shared ownership provision across the district.

The box below summarises the overall aim of the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group and the members as appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group

A review of how the Council might further support affordable and social housing in the District.

Cllr Phil Barlow, Chairman

Group Members

Cllr Banthorpe

Cllr Kirby

Cllr Cadman

Cllr Rose

Cllr Gibson

Cllr Shelton

Cllr Horner

Cllr Shepherd

Cllr Mann

Officer Support

Jon Hayden, Corporate Director

Joanne Albin, Head of Housing

Tim Lucas, Housing Research and
Development Manager

Alison Weaver, Housing Policy and
Performance Officer

3.0 Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group – Project Plan

3.1 Project Initiation and objectives

A Projection Initiation Document (PID) detailing project objectives, stakeholder groups and methodology was prepared and considered by the group.

The five objectives of the group are provided in the table below.

Project objectives

- **Use 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.
- **Consult with stakeholders** (housing associations, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the **barriers to developing affordable housing**, specifically properties for low cost home ownership, in the district.

- Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what **role BDC could take to mitigate barriers** to new development.
- Research and consider **actions of other local authorities** with regards to meeting local housing needs through local cost home ownership schemes.
- Provide a final report summarising the work undertaken by the group, findings and subsequent **recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district.**

The following **stakeholder groups** were identified in the project plan:

- ✓ Housing associations
- ✓ Private developers
- ✓ BDC Members
- ✓ BDC staff

3.2 Methodology

The methodology agreed for achieving the objectives included:

- Discussing key areas/topics through use of presentations prepared by officers.
- Inviting guest speakers to provide insight into their areas of specialism.
- Undertaking research to establish examples of best practice.

Six meetings were held between November and July covering the following broad areas:

Meeting	What was covered
1	Discussion of the project initiation document and approach to undertaking the project.
2	Presentation of existing methods used by the Council to enable development of new affordable homes.
3	Moat, Help to Buy zone agents for Essex delivered a presentation on low cost home ownership products, local need for low cost home ownership and information about the local market.
4	Chris Fleetham attended to provide details about the Local Authority Mortgage scheme.
5	Jan Cole, a joint appointment with Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and BDC, delivered a presentation about the Localism Act highlighting the potential areas under the Act that could provide opportunity for supporting the development of new affordable homes.
6	Recap of the meetings held and discussions around recommendations for the final report.

Research was also carried out around the following:

- The approach taken by neighbouring local authorities on what mechanisms they use to enable affordable housing development.
- Examples of where the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme has already been provided.
- Local housing needs across the district for affordable housing and low cost home ownership options.

3.3 Other inputs:

The following recent projects have also provided input into the groups discussions, considerations and final recommendations.

	Additional information	Points for consideration for final recommendations
★	<p>The new Strategy Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) interim report</p> <p>The council, along with 4 other local authorities, commissioned consultant David Couttie Associates (DCA) in April 2013 to undertake a new SHMA for each respective local authority area.</p> <p>In June the interim report was received and key findings were presented to the group.</p> <p>The SHMA process includes a household survey which aims to gather details around household income, savings and equity and the housing aspirations of local people.</p>	<p>Local market indicators suggest house prices have remained relatively stable in the district since late 2009 following the market crash in 2007.</p> <p>We expect the final SHMA report will show affordability is a key issue for many households in the district through high property price to local income ratios and large mortgage deposit requirements.</p> <p>The final SHMA report will also provide the number of homes needed in the district each year across different tenures to address existing and projected local housing needs.</p> <p>This will include the number of units needed for shared ownership/shared equity.</p>
★	<p>Housing StatNav</p> <p>The Housing StatNav was launched in March 2013 and was a joint project between BDC and Greenfields.</p> <p>The Housing StatNav provides extensive data and analysis on local housing needs at parish level across the district.</p> <p>The information available through the StatNav</p>	<p>Specific details about affordable housing shortages in each parish and what opportunities there are to meet these needs.</p>

	helps identify shortages in existing affordable housing stock by size and type, at the level of each town and village.	
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4.0 Key messages and recommendations

4.1 Key messages

Following the group meetings, presentations and discussions the group has undertaken since the end of last year, the key messages identified for consideration as part of formulating the final recommendations are listed below.

- The council has performed consistently well in enabling new affordable housing across the district since early 2000's despite recent market challenges (1,405 affordable housing units completed across the district between 2000 and 2011/12). Despite this "track" record there is still a significant shortage of units and the number of people in 'housing need' on the Council's Housing Register consistently remains at over 1,000 households.
- The council already uses a number of methods to enable affordable housing and is forward thinking in the approach taken to investigating new ideas and opportunities.
- Demand for affordable housing in the district is high, as demonstrated through the number of applicants on the housing register and population projections.
- The older person population in the district is expected to grow significantly over the next few years to 2021 yet the proportion of younger people in the district will decrease. These changes in population composition will influence the type of housing needed across the district.
- Low cost home ownership (LCHO) does provide opportunities for first time buyers to access owner occupation. Moat Homes are contracted by the Homes and Communities Agency as 'Zone Agent' for Essex. Their staff believe that demand would outstrip supply if LCHO options were promoted extensively.
- Existing procedures used to monitor the council's performance around enabling new affordable homes could be improved by reporting the number of starts on sites as well as unit completions.
- Monitoring the implementation of the councils Local Authority Mortgage Scheme will be vital to establishing the effectiveness of the scheme and any scope for repeating the scheme in the future.
- Saffron Building Society may potentially be interested in holding discussions with the council in providing low cost mortgages in autumn 2013.

- Assessing the value of land beyond 'red book' valuations i.e. the value of land to the local community in different uses, could help identify or release more for affordable housing development.
- Explore more creative funding models with housing association partners where units for open market resale of LCHO finance the development of affordable units.
- Help develop more effective partnership working with Essex County Council especially when determining the true value of land. This is of particular relevance in the context of the Whole Essex Community Budget.

4.2 Recommendations

The Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group would like to put forward the following recommendations. An outline action plan detailing how these recommendations could be taken forward follows.

	Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group Recommendations
1	Develop a new Housing Strategy for the district for the period 2014 to 2019 that includes findings from the new SHMA 2013 and data and analysis from the Housing StatNav.
2	Explore what type of intermediate housing is needed locally to meet needs most effectively.
3	Discuss with the CHIP Board the potential for using the CHIP fund to facilitate land banking locally.
4	Develop cost benefit analysis with regard to investing council money, for example, how many households will benefit from a given investment.
5	Agree how information on BDC capital and other resources can be made available to members.
6	Work with Essex County Council to establish a method for appraising the true value of land i.e. in terms of benefits to the local community and to specific customer groups as well as red book valuations.
7	Pilot an equity share scheme based on council owned land. E.g. council puts forward land for a housing association to build out a scheme. A proportion of the units are sold for 60% of market value with the council retaining the remaining equity of the property. When the owner moves on, the equity can be recycled into further affordable housing or property can stay as equity housing.
8	Council to adopt a flexible approach to delivery of affordable housing through

	Section 106 where we may expect private rented units, gifted units or wheelchair units instead of pro-rata mix.
9	Agree methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme.
10	Engage with housing associations and developers to gauge how effective our role in enabling affordable housing is and consider how we compare to our comparator local authorities and whether there is best practice elsewhere.
11	Publish the Help to Buy newsletters produced by zone agent, Moat on the council's website.

5.0 Action Plan – *to be completed when recommendations have been agreed*

Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group Action Plan 2013						
Recommendation	Key actions	Linkages with other areas of the council	By Whom	Resources required within existing budget?	Outcome date	Current status
1) Develop a new Housing Strategy for the district for the period 2014 to 2019 that includes findings from the new SHMA 2013 and data and analysis from the Housing StatNav.						
2) Explore whether it would be possible to establish what type of intermediate housing is needed locally to meet needs most effectively.						
3) Discuss with the CHIP Board the potential for using the CHIP fund to facilitate land banking locally.						

4) Develop a cost benefit analysis with regards to investing council money, for example, how many households will benefit from a given investment.						
5) Agree how information on capital can be published to members.						
6) Work with Essex County Council to establish a method for appraising the true value of land i.e. in terms of benefits to the local community and to specific customer groups as well as red book valuations.						
7) Pilot an equity share scheme based on council owned land. E.g. council puts forward land for a housing association to build out a scheme. A proportion						

of the units are sold for 60% of market value with the council retaining the remaining equity of the property. When the owner moves on, the equity can be recycled into further affordable housing or property can stay as equity housing.						
8) Council to adopt a flexible approach to delivery of affordable housing through Section 106 where we may expect private rented units, gifted units or wheelchair units instead of pro-rata mix.						
9) Agree methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the LAMS.						
10) Engage with housing association and developers to gauge how effective our role in enabling affordable						

housing is and consider how we compare to our comparator local authorities and whether there is best practice elsewhere.						
11) Publish the Help to Buy newsletters produced by zone agent, Moat on the council's website.						

Appendix 1 - Summary of meetings

Meeting 1

Date	7 th November 2012
Main agenda item/s	Consideration of the Project Initiation Document (PID)
Guest/main speaker	Jon Hayden, Jo Albini and Tim Lucas
Topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context setting • Scope of the project • Objectives
Key messages	<p>Project objectives agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use 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. • Consult with stakeholders (HA's, private developers, banks and building societies) as to the barriers to developing affordable housing, specifically properties for low cost home ownership, in the district. • Consider feedback and comments from stakeholders and what role BDC could take to mitigate barriers to new development. • Research and consider actions of other local authorities with regards to meeting local housing needs through low cost home ownership schemes; and • Provide a final report summarising the work undertaken by the group, findings and subsequent recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district. <p>Agreed scope and exclusions The Task and Finish Group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and undertake an appraisal of existing local housing needs • Seek comments and feedback from a selection of stakeholders as to how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district to meet the specific needs identified; • Produce a final report detailing the work undertaken, findings

	<p>and recommendation.</p> <p>The group will not consider the need for specialist housing or consider the processes/procedures around how affordable housing is let.</p> <p>Agreed outcomes/deliverables Provide a report detailing the work undertaken by the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group, to include findings from research and recommendations for how BDC could further support affordable housing in the district.</p>
Task and Finish Group considerations	<p>The various methods already used to help enable new development of affordable homes and opportunities to build on this as well as identifying new possibilities.</p> <p>Seek further information about low cost home ownership from zone agent for Essex, Moat Housing Association.</p>

Meeting 2

Date	12 th December 2012
Main agenda item/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies of previous affordable housing delivery across the district • Planned affordable housing delivery programme. • Overview of what we do about empty homes.
Guest/main speaker	Tim Lucas, Housing Research and Development Manager
Topics covered	<p>Enabling new development through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 • Land owned by BDC and other public bodies, housing associations including Greenfields. • Open market land purchase
Key messages	Consider what and how we provide information to members on new affordable housing development activity.
Task and Finish Group considerations	<p>Explore the capacity of the capital budget to support the development of new affordable homes.</p> <p>The work of the Task and Finish Group, particularly around use of empty homes above shops, should explore links to the Town Strategy Group and the regeneration plans for the three main towns.</p> <p>Whilst the councils work around returning empty homes back to use is valuable, it is not a means by which housing needs can be met on a large scale.</p>

Meeting 3

Date	10 th January 2013
Main agenda item/s	Moat's role as a HomeBuy Agent
Guest/main speaker	Tamsin Seward, Head of HomeBuy, Moat Housing Association Steve Nunn, Executive Director New Business and Development, Moat Housing Association
Topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HomeBuy products • Information about Braintree applicants • General information about market for shared ownership
Key messages	<p>Moat - HomeBuy customers often feedback that schemes should be more widely advertised however there is not enough supply of this tenure to meet increased demand.</p> <p>Moat - More creative ways of modelling this type of tenure are required to make a more sustainable option for the future.</p> <p>Moat - In terms of barriers to new development, availability of land is a big issue. Ways to address this could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a land availability study • Looking at more creative use of land and using open book assessments of land values • Looking at the development potential for small scraps of land such as garage sites. <p>In terms of expense to the council for enabling new development of affordable homes, section 106 agreements are the cheapest option but are now scarce, next expensive is through making use of the councils own land holdings and the most expensive option is through the council purchasing land.</p> <p>Moat has HomeBuy status for another year. The role of HomeBuy Agents in London have moved into the private sector.</p>
Task and Finish Group considerations	The role of the Local Mortgage Scheme in the supporting the council to enable further development of affordable housing.

Meeting 4

Date	21 st February 2013
Main agenda item/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority finance • Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMs)
Guest/main speaker	Chris Fleetham, Finance Director, BDC
Topics covered	
Key messages	<p>£31.5 million is invested for 2013/14 but there is a £6 million debt within that.</p> <p>The main source of income to the council is through council tax. Much of the council's money has been allocated to the new leisure facilities in Witham.</p> <p>Next year the council will receive Revenue Support Grant which will include New Homes Bonus (NHB). NHB will still be identifiable within the total allocation though.</p> <p>The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in other local authority areas seems to be inhibiting provision of affordable housing under viability issues.</p> <p>BDC Planners are indicating the council is ok until 2015 however some elements of CIL will be required by 2014.</p> <p>Proceeds from Right to Buy sales are included in the capital budget for affordable housing which has been £500k per year.</p> <p>Under the LAMS, Essex CC will match fund BDC's pledge of £1 million so a total fund of £2 million will be available. Applicants to the scheme will be required to provide a 5% deposit towards purchasing a home in the district. The council would then indemnify up to a further 20% of the property value to enable applicants to borrow on more favorable terms. The applicants do not need to be existing residents in the district.</p> <p>A cap will be set of approximately £150,000 to £160,000 for properties to be considered for the scheme.</p> <p>The scheme is aimed at joint income households who are probably working full time.</p> <p>It is expected the LAMS will help about 60 households access home ownership in the district.</p>

Task and Finish Group considerations	<p>In view of the LAMS scheme being implemented, is there further requirement to address this particular area of housing need?</p> <p>If so is there scope to repeat the scheme?</p> <p>Task and Finish Group to explore feasibility for the authority to provide low cost mortgages in addition to the LAMS.</p> <p>Investigate potential scope is there for the council to exercise any rights under the Localism Act to help bring forward sites for affordable housing development.</p>
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Meeting 5

Date	24 th April 2013
Main agenda item/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Localism Act • Introducing the Housing StatNav • New Strategic Housing Market Assessment • Update on meeting with Saffron Building Society
Guest/main speaker	Jan Cole, RCCE and BDC
Topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Plans and Development Orders • Community Right to Build • Community Right to Bid • Community Right to Challenge
Key messages	<p>The Task and Finish Group were seeking information around how the Localism Act could support provision of affordable housing across the district, and had identified Crossman House as a potential opportunity within this.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders Approval can be sought from an LA by a “relevant body” (e.g. parish/town council or neighbourhood forum) to start a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) or Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO).</p> <p>An NP assesses land use and infrastructure and sets out a policy on development and use of land.</p> <p>An NDO can be used for a specific site as well as a whole area and provides detailed development proposals.</p> <p>NP’s and NDO’s are subject to a referendum organised by the LA and must follow the same strategic direction of the LA.</p> <p>Community Right to Build This is aimed at rural villages to enable small scale development (between 5 to 10 homes). A village cannot expand in excess of 10% over a ten year period. The community assesses local need, identifies a site and source of finance.</p> <p>Community Right to Bid LA’s keep a register of assets within their areas and community groups are invited to nominate assets to the register.</p>

	<p>Once on the register, if the asset is to be sold, the vendor is delayed by 6 months before advertising the property on the open market to enable interested community groups to compile a business case for purchasing the property.</p> <p>The vendor is under no obligation to sell to the community group.</p> <p>Community Right to Challenge Community Right to Challenge provides an opportunity to express an interest in running local services. Relevant bodies (e.g. a town or parish council) can submit a business case to the LA demonstrating capacity to undertake delivery of a service and relevant experience.</p> <p>New Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) The new SHMA will include a household survey to 5,000 households across the district and will seek information on household incomes, savings, equity and housing aspirations.</p> <p>The final SHMA report will be available in the autumn and will identify what type of homes are needed across the district in terms of number, type, size and tenure.</p> <p>Housing StatNav The Housing StatNav website was launched in March 2013 and provides detailed information about housing needs at individual parish level across the district.</p> <p>The website helps district and parish Councillors and staff to deal with housing queries from the applicants on the housing register and members of the community.</p> <p>The information on the website is available to housing register applicants and can help them make more informed decisions about their housing options.</p> <p>Update on a meeting with Saffron Building Society Saffron has indicated a keenness to be involved with helping the authority provide low cost mortgages. A meeting is to be arranged to discuss this in further detail.</p>
Task and Finish Group considerations	<p>Information available from the SHMA and Housing StatNav can be used to inform the recommendations put forward by the Task and Finish Group in the final report.</p> <p>With regards to the Crossman House site, whilst there doesn't appear to be any obvious route under the Localism Act to utilize the site for affordable housing, a suggestion from the Task and Finish Group was to investigate the feasibility of using the site to provide</p>

	<p>affordable housing through a leasehold arrangement with existing owners, Essex CC, remaining as the freeholder.</p> <p>Further investigation is required into this potential method of providing affordable housing.</p>
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Meeting 6

Date	11 th July 2013
Main agenda item/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on Saffron Building Society • Whole of Essex Community Budgeting – ECC Housing Workshops • Findings from the Strategic Housing Market Interim Report • Recommendations for the final report
Guest/main speaker	The Chair, Cllr Barlow
Topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively with ECC • Promoting Help to Buy • Changes in local population • Activity in the local housing market
Key messages	<p>Saffron Building Society provided an update indicating they are not willing to proceed with any further discussions around working with the council to provide low cost mortgages. This is due to the changes and uncertainties in the global market.</p> <p>Saffron has indicated they should have a better idea about their lending strategy by the autumn and would welcome an approach from Braintree DC at this time.</p> <p>The findings from the SHMA Interim Report indicate the relationship between property prices and local earnings pose significant affordability issues.</p>
Task and Finish Group considerations	To move towards conclusions and recommendations from the work undertaken thus far rather than delay in order to receive views of the Saffron Building Society.

Task and Finish Groups – Operation of the Council’s Council Tax Support Scheme		Agenda No: 7
Corporate Priority:	Supporting vulnerable people in our community	
Report presented by:	Councillor Dr Evans, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Chris Fleetham, Corporate Director Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager	
Background Papers:		Public Report
Options: To agree, or amend the proposed Terms of Reference.		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>At its meeting on 29th May 2013, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be established to review the Operation of the Council’s Council Tax Support Scheme. The Committee also agreed that the Terms of Reference for the review be considered at the Committee’s meeting in September with the aim of starting the review around November.</p> <p>Members are invited to agree the proposed Terms of Reference for the review set out below.</p>		
Decision:		
<p>That the following Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish group reviewing the Operation of the Council’s Council Tax Support Scheme be agreed:</p> <p>To review the first six months of the operation of the Council Tax Support Scheme covering:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Details of the scheme introduced and comparison with other Essex authorities schemes;		

- the impact on and the number of people affected by minority grouping;
- the cost of the scheme and the impact on the Council Tax collection rate;
- use of the Exceptional Hardship Fund;
- public feedback on the changes;
- funding of the scheme in the future.

Purpose of Decision: To agree the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish group reviewing of the Operation of the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme:

Corporate Implications

Financial:	To be considered in the review.
Legal:	None arising from this report.
Equalities/Diversity	To be considered in the review.
Customer Impact:	To be considered in the review.
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising from this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	To be considered in the review including public feedback.
Risks:	To be considered in the review.
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