

Minutes

Cabinet

1st February 2012



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

Present:

Cabinet Members	Portfolio	Present
Councillor G Butland	Leader of the Council	Yes
Councillor C Siddall	Deputy Leader, Efficiency and Resources	Yes
Councillor J C Beavis	Communities	Yes
Councillor Lady P Newton	Enterprise, Housing and Development	Yes
Councillor W Schmitt	Environment	Yes

Deputy Cabinet Members	Portfolio	Present
Councillor D Bebb	Leader's Portfolio	Apologies
Councillor J McKee	Enterprise, Housing and Development	Yes
Councillor R Mitchell	Environment	Apologies
Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Efficiency and Resources	Yes
Councillor P Tattersley	Communities	Yes

The following Councillors were also present as invitees of the Leader: Councillor Barlow, Leader of the Labour Group, and Councillor Dr Evans, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Abbott, Leader of the Green Group.

The following Councillors were also in attendance: Councillors Horner, Mann and Ramage.

69. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared.

- Councillor P Barlow declared a personal interest in Item 6a, Council Budget and Council Tax 2012/13 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2012/13 to 2015/16, as a member of the Braintree, Witham and Halstead Citizens Advice Bureau Trustee Board;

70. **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There was one statement made, details of which are contained in the Appendix to these Minutes.

71. **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5th December 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

72. **LEADER'S UPDATE**

The Leader announced that he had taken a delegated decision to put on hold the public consultation exercise for the Wind Turbine Project at Great Notley Country Park. The consultation has been put on hold as the Council was about to incur costs of around £60,000 whilst there is growing uncertainty on the anticipated income from the Government's feed-in tariff scheme for renewable energy projects and therefore the financial viability of the scheme. There is also increasing discussion on safe distances between wind turbines and residential areas.

The decision will be reported formally at the next meeting of Cabinet.

73. **CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2012 - 2016**

DECISION: That the Corporate Priorities for 2012 to 2016 set out in the report be recommended to Council.

REASON FOR DECISION: To recommend to Council the Corporate Priorities for the next four years.

74. **COUNCIL BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2012/13 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2012/13 TO 2015/16**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Audit Committee on the Treasury Management Strategy from its meeting of 12th January 2012 and the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny from its meeting of 25th January 2012 in respect of the Council Budget and the MTFS.

Councillor Dr Evans asked to know how many homes had become available as a result of the funds being allocated under the New Homes Bonus.

It was agreed that this information would be provide to Councillor Dr Evans.

DECISION: That it be **recommended to Council** that the following be approved:

1. The budget variations to the current base budget for: inflation (section 5 in the report), investment income (section 6) and reduction in specific grants (section 7).
2. The savings as detailed in Appendices F and G.

3. A new three year service level agreement with the Braintree, Witham and Halstead Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency as detailed in section 3.2.
4. The Investment bids detailed in Appendix B.
5. The three investment bids, listed at Appendix C, be funded from the projected underspend in 2011/12 and from the Business Efficiency Reserve.
6. The unavoidable budget changes detailed at Appendix D.
7. The Council Tax Freeze grant receivable from the Government in 2012/13 be accepted and used to support the General Fund revenue account.
8. The Council's discretionary fees and charges for 2012/13 as detailed in Appendix H.
9. The Council's housing rents and service charges are increased by 6.1% for 2012/13, as detailed in Appendix H
10. That delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Member to agree variations to Trade Waste and Town Hall Centre fees and charges for commercial purposes.
11. An allocation of £425,185 from the General Fund unallocated balance in 2012/13.

Capital

12. The General Fund Capital bids for 2012/13 listed in Appendix M.
13. The Prudential Indicators and limits set out in Appendix O.
14. The Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision as recommended in Appendix O.
15. The Treasury Management Strategy, including annual investment strategy, for 2012/13.

Council Tax

16. The proposed estimates (producing a budget requirement for council tax purposes of £15,415,888) as detailed in Appendix K and the Council Tax for 2012/13 of £162.81 for a Band D property, having taking into consideration:
 - The consultation feedback received;
 - The assessment of risks in the budget assumptions;
 - The Equalities Impact Assessments and
 - The Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and
 - the adequacy of balances (Appendix Q to the report).

Efficiency Review

17. The Efficiency Review programme as detailed in Appendix J be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To determine the budget and council tax level proposals for 2012/13 to be submitted to Full Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution

75. **ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2010/11**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Audit Committee on the Annual Audit Letter from its meeting of 12th January 2012.

David Eagles of PKF, the Council's External Auditors, presented the Annual Audit Letter summarising the work undertaken by PKF during 2010/11. He highlighted the External Auditor's key conclusions of issuing an unqualified opinion on the financial statements an unqualified value for money conclusion.

Mr Eagles thanked councillors and officers involved for their support. The Leader asked that thanks be passed on to officers involved for their work in producing the excellent result of setting a lead for authorities in the area.

DECISION: That the Annual Audit Letter for 2010/11 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To receive and agree a response, if required, to the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter as required under Section 4 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

76. **WORKFORCE PLANNING - RETIREMENT POLICY REVIEW**

INFORMATION: Councillor Dr Evans asked to know if staff who choose to take flexible retirement and then return will continue to pay pension contributions.

Councillor Siddall agreed provide the details on this to Councillor Dr Evans.

DECISION: That the revised retirement policy report be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree the revised retirement policy.

77. **VEHICLE PROCUREMENT AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

Minutes Published: 3 rd February 2012 Call-in Expires: 13 th February 2012

DECISION: That preferred bidder status be awarded to Riverside Truck Rentals on the basis of exploring either Option 2 or Option 6 as set out in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To put in place the most cost-effective solution for the procurement and maintenance of the Council's commercial vehicles from 1 April 2012 for 7 years with the option to extend for a further 7 years up to and including 31 March 2026.

78. **MOTTS LANE FOOT/CYCLE BRIDGE, WITHAM - TRANSFER OF COUNCIL LAND**

INFORMATION: Councillor Dr Evans asked to know if Network Rail would be removing the level crossing gates on completion of the proposed bridge at Motts Lane, Witham. He thought the area would only be safe once the gates had been removed completely.

Councillor Lady Newton agreed to contact Network Rail to ask them what their plans were for the gates on completion of the proposed bridge and to advise Councillor Dr Evans.

DECISION:

1. That the transfer of the Council land for nil cost to Network Rail to enable the proposed foot/cycle bridge at Motts Lane to be constructed be approved. The transfer to be subject to a covenant to create a foot/cycle bridge and ancillary access on the land which is thereafter to be used only as a foot/cycle way available to the public.
2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Development to negotiate the detailed terms of the transfer.

REASON FOR DECISION: To facilitate the construction of the proposed foot/cycle bridge at Motts Lane through the freehold transfer of land owned by the Council to Network Rail.

79. **CABINET MEMBERS' UPDATES**

INFORMATION: There were no updates from Cabinet Members.

80. **REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL/COMMITTEE/GROUPS**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given earlier in the meeting to references from the Audit Committee on decisions taken in respects of Annual Audit Letter from the Council's External Auditors and the Treasury Management Strategy.

81. **REPORTS/DELEGATED DECISIONS/ MINUTES TO BE NOTED**

DECISION: That the delegated decision contained in the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.19pm.

G BUTLAND
(Leader)

Cabinet Meeting, 1st February 2012, Questions Asked/Statements Made

Speaker	Subject
Don Smith Chairman of Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau	Item 6a – Council Budget and Council Tax 2012/13 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2012/13 to 2015/16.