

Minutes

Council Meeting



10th October 2022

These Minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A recording of the meeting is available on the Council's YouTube Channel at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Pell	Yes
Councillor J Baugh (from 7.20pm)	Yes	Councillor I Pritchard	Apologies
Councillor Mrs J Beavis (from 8.03pm)	Yes	Councillor M Radley	Yes
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rehman	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Sandum	Yes
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor P Euesden	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor T Everard	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes
Councillor Mrs D Garrod (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor A Hensman (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood (until 9.54pm)	Yes
Councillor S Hicks	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Yes	Councillor Mrs L Walters	Yes
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor Miss M Weeks	Apologies
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin	Yes	Councillor D White	Apologies
Councillor W Korsinah	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Wilson	Yes
Councillor D Mann	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor T McArdle	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Apologies
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Vacancy	
Councillor A Munday	Yes	Vacancy	
Councillor Mrs I Parker	Yes		

At the start of the meeting, Councillor A Hensman the Chairman of the Council was pleased to welcome Mr D Gascoyne, who had been appointed as the Council's Chief Executive with effect from 26th September 2022.

37 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 25th July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Items on the Agenda as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor G Courtauld declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 - 'Cycling Strategy - One Year On' as a proposed cycle path between Earls Colne and Halstead might run over land in which he had an interest.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Items on the Agenda as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Mrs J Pell declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 5 – 'Announcements/Statements from the Chairman and Leader of the Council' as Chairman of 'Friends of Halstead Public Gardens'.

Councillor Miss V Santomauro declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 14 – 'Cabinet's Report to Full Council' as a Trustee of 'Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens'.

Councillor P Schwier declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Items on the Agenda as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Items on the Agenda as an Elected Member of Essex County Council. Councillor Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary interest also in Agenda Item 9 - 'Cycling Strategy - One Year On' as he occasionally attended meetings of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycling Group although he was not a member of the Group.

Councillor T Walsh declared a Non-Pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 - 'Cycling Strategy - One Year On' as a member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycling Group.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors remained in the meeting, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the discussion when the Items were considered.

39 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were eight questions asked/statements made. The questions/statements related to Agenda Items 6 and 7 and to a matter which was not on the Agenda for discussion, as follows:-

'Wethersfield Airbase – Possible Prison Proposal (not on the Agenda for discussion)

Statement read by Mr M Allpress

Statement read by Mrs B Ault

Statement read by Mr R Klee

Statement read by Mr A MacKenzie

Statement read by Mr J Maddox

Statement read by Ms K Trusler

(Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, responded to the statements).

Agenda Item 6 - 'Motion by Councillor J Abbott – Recycling Targets'

Statement read by Mr M Staines

(Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, responded to the statement).

Agenda Item 7 - 'Motion by Councillor Mrs C Dervish – 'Congratulations to the England Women's Football Team'

Statement read by Mr T Harrison

(Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being, responded to the statement).

40 **ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

INFORMATION: The following announcements/statements were made:-

Chairman of the Council - Announcements

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The Chairman referred with great sadness to the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September 2022, which had been a terribly sad loss for the Country. The tributes which had been left for Queen Elizabeth by members of the public across the District had been heart-warming.

The Chairman stated that he had been extremely honoured to deliver the local proclamation for the new Head of State, King Charles III on 11th September 2022 and it had been wonderful to see so many residents observing this event.

The Chairman thanked all staff who had provided assistance.

Councillor N Unsworth and Councillor D Wallace - Resignation

It was reported that Councillor Nick Unsworth and Councillor Dean Wallace had resigned from the Council.

Councillor Unsworth had been elected to the Council in May 2019 to represent Coggeshall Ward and Councillor Wallace had been elected in May 2019 to represent Braintree South Ward.

The Chairman thanked former Councillors Unsworth and Wallace for their service to the District and he wished them both all the best for the future.

Anglia in Bloom Awards

The Chairman was pleased to report that the Council had been successful in the following categories of the 'Anglia in Bloom' competition 2022:-

Wildlife/Conservation Category:-

Mill Chase Playing Field, Halstead - Silver Gilt

River Walk, Halstead - Silver Gilt

Cemeteries and Crematoria Category:-

Halstead Cemetery - Gold

Parks Category:-

Halstead Public Gardens – Gold

All parks in the competition, regardless of size, had been entered into one final category and Halstead Public Gardens had been declared as the overall winner.

The Chairman stated that the awards reflected a high standard of work and he thanked all staff in the Council's 'Operations Service' and Horticultural Team, and the 'Halstead in Bloom' volunteers for their efforts.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment, was pleased to present the awards and certificates to Esme McCambridge, Peter Nice and Andy Potter, who attended the meeting as representatives of the 'Operations Service' and Horticultural Team. On behalf of the Council, Councillor Mrs Schmitt thanked the staff for their work, and she congratulated them on their success.

It was noted that the 'Halstead in Bloom' volunteers had decided not to enter Halstead in some categories of the 'Anglia in Bloom' competition this year.

Engagements

The Chairman was pleased to announce that since the last meeting of Full Council held on 25th July 2022, he had attended 30 engagements, which are summarised below.

Eastlight Community Homes "All in" event, Silver End
 Bike Awareness Day, Causeway House, Braintree
 Halstead Summer Fayre, Halstead
 Eastlight Community Homes "All in" event, Witham
 Braintree District Volunteer Awards, Braintree
 Eastlight Community Homes "All in" event, Braintree
 Community Transport Staff Team Visit (out on the bus), Braintree and surroundings
 John Ray Trust Meeting, Braintree
 Essex Cricket Club Afternoon Reception, Chelmsford
 Ukrainian Independence Day, Braintree Town Hall, Braintree
 Merchant Navy Flag (Red Ensign) Flag Raising, Causeway House, Braintree
 Finance Staff Team Visit, Round Table Meeting, Causeway House, Braintree
 Great Maplestead Parish Council Meeting (to present a 35 Years' Service Certificate to Councillor J Newton), Great Maplestead
 Commemorative Gun Salute, Colchester
 Proclamation Gun Salute, Colchester
 Commemoration and Thanksgiving Service, Chelmsford Cathedral
 The Proclamation, Causeway House, Braintree
 Essex County Scouts, Annual General Meeting, Chelmsford
 John Ray Trust Prize Giving, Notley School, Braintree
 Open Evening at Maltings Academy, Witham
 Civic Service commemorating the life of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Chelmsford Cathedral, Chelmsford
 Completion Event with Kier, Braintree
 Open Evening at Rickstones, Witham
 The unveiling of The Blue Plaque, Marks Hall Estate, Coggeshall
 Essex Equality Meeting, Teams
 The Plaza, Great Notley - Grand Opening
 Rickstones School Visit, Witham
 Annual General Meeting of the Rural Community Council of Essex, Colchester
 Justice Service, High Sheriff of Essex, Chelmsford
 World Mental Health Day, Causeway House, Braintree

Leader of the Council - Announcements

The Leader referred to correspondence, which had been received from the Secretary of State for Housing, Levelling-Up and Communities regarding a proposal to establish investment zones in England as part of the Government's plans for economic growth. Upper tier Local Authorities had been asked to inform the Government by 14th October 2022 if they wished to participate in this initiative. It was reported that Essex County Council would be registering its interest having received the support of most District, Borough and City Councils across the County. Further information was awaited from the Government.

41 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR J ABBOTT – RECYCLING TARGETS

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion submitted by Councillor J Abbott. Appropriate Notice of the Motion had been given to the Chief Executive in

accordance with Council Procedural Rule 12.17 of Chapter 2 of the Council's Constitution.

The Motion:

'Council notes that the targets for recycling have not changed for many years and that in Braintree District and across Essex a significant proportion of municipal waste is still being sent to landfill or incineration.

Therefore, Council agrees to work with its partners, and in particular Essex County Council, through the review of the Waste Strategy, with the ambition of setting new targets and measures which would apply across Essex and in Braintree District to:

1. Progressively reduce the amount of residual municipal waste collected.
2. Increase the recycling target (for collected dry recycling, food waste, green waste, etc, bring bank materials and ECC Recycling Centre materials) to at least 75% of municipal waste by the year 2030.'

Members of the Council were advised, that in accordance with Council Procedural Rule 12.20 of Chapter 2 of the Council's Constitution, Councillor R van Dulken had proposed an amendment to the Motion. This proposal had been seconded by Councillor Mrs W Schmitt.

Councillor J Abbott and Councillor P Thorogood, as the Proposer and Seconded of the original Motion, had accepted the amendment in advance of the meeting. The amended Motion had therefore become the Substantive Motion as follows (changes from the original are shown in italics and underlined):-

The Substantive Motion (following amendment of the original Motion)

'Council notes that the targets for recycling have not changed for many years and that in Braintree District and across Essex a significant proportion of municipal waste is still being sent to landfill or incineration.

Therefore, Council agrees to work with its partners, and in particular Essex County Council, through the review of the Waste Strategy, with the ambition of setting new targets and measures which would apply across Essex and in Braintree District to:

1. Progressively reduce the amount of residual municipal waste collected.
2. Increase the recycling target (for collected dry recycling, food waste, green waste, etc, bring bank materials and ECC Recycling Centre materials) to at least 75% of municipal waste by the year 2030.

In adopting this policy Council recognises the challenge of such an ambition. Before engaging with external partners, the Council will determine what specific viable and costed proposals it should put forward for discussion.

To decide such proposals Council agrees to establish a cross party Working Group to bring forward, once relevant regulations and statutory guidance has been issued, any viable and costed proposals for consideration by Full Council.'

There followed a discussion on the Substantive Motion.

On being put to vote the Motion, as amended, was declared **CARRIED.**

42 **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR MRS C DERVISH – CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ENGLAND WOMEN’S FOOTBALL TEAM**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion submitted by Councillor Mrs C Dervish. Appropriate Notice of the Motion had been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedural Rule 12.17 of Chapter 2 of the Council’s Constitution.

The Motion:

‘Congratulations to the England Women’s Football Team.

This Council congratulates the Women’s England football team on winning the European Championship 2022 in July 2022. In addition to acknowledging their success on the field the Council believes that this leads the way for all women in sport and inspires our young ladies to take up a sport that very much was male dominated until of late.

The Lionesses have proven to also unite us as a nation and have pulled in record support within national and local women’s grass roots football.

Well done Lionesses, good luck for the World Cup. The girls brought it home.

To further support that success this Council agrees to promote and encourage women’s participation in all sporting activity across the District.’

There followed a discussion on the Motion.

On being put to vote the Motion was declared **CARRIED.**

43 **COUNCILLOR D WHITE - ABSENCE DISPENSATION**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the grant of a dispensation to Councillor Darren White, who was unable to attend meetings of the Council due to ill-health.

Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 stated, that if a Member of the Council failed to attend a qualifying meeting of the Council over a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance at any meeting of the Council, they would cease to be a Member of the Council unless the failure was due to a reason approved by the Council before the expiry of that period. It was reported that Councillor White

was unable to attend meetings of the Council on the grounds of continuing ill-health and that his last attendance at a qualifying meeting had been the Council's Annual General Meeting held on 25th April 2022. It was noted that if the Council did not approve a dispensation, Councillor White would cease to be a Member of the Council on 22nd October 2022.

DECISION: That a dispensation from attending meetings of the Council by reason of illness be granted to Councillor D White for a period of six months from 10th October 2022, in order to avoid Councillor White ceasing to be a Member of the Council under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

REASON FOR DECISION: To approve a dispensation from attendance at meetings of the Council for a Councillor, who is unable to attend meetings due to ill-health.

44 **CYCLING STRATEGY - ONE YEAR ON**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a progress report on the Council's Cycling Strategy 2021, which had been approved by the Council on 20th September 2021. The Strategy set out a long-term plan, which it was hoped would lead to a significant and sustained increase in cycling by residents of the Braintree District and visitors. The Cycling Strategy had been accompanied by an Implementation Plan, which contained a number of action points and identified how key elements of the Strategy would be delivered.

The progress report contained four Appendices, namely 'Appendix A – Monitoring Report on 2022/23 Projects in the Draft Cycling Implementation Plan 2022'; 'Appendix B – Performance Indicators and 2022/23 Key Projects'; 'Appendix C – Cycling Strategy and Draft Implementation Plan Communications Campaigns/Activity'; and 'Appendix D – Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2022'.

It was noted that six monthly performance reports on the Cycling Strategy would be published and reported to the Council's Management Board, the Cycling Strategy Steering Group and the Cycling Strategy Working Group detailing progress on cycling and walking projects, and the achievement of internal targets. An annual report for the period 1st October to 30th September would also be submitted to Full Council summarising performance against the Strategy's Action Plan. This annual report would include an updated Action Plan.

In discussing this Item, a Member queried if the end date of the Cycling Strategy could be the same as that for Braintree District Local Plan ie. 2033. It was agreed that this should be investigated.

DECISION:

- (1) That the Cycling Strategy 'one year on' report, and the targets within the Strategy and Implementation Plan that have been met, be approved.
- (2) That the revised, draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2022 be approved.

(3) That the submission of an annual Cycling Strategy report be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To consider a report on the progress of the Council's Cycling Strategy one year after its adoption.

45 **COMBINED SCRUTINY COMMITTEE INVESTIGATION - THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS 2022**

INFORMATION: Councillor Mrs D Garrod, Chairman of the Combined Scrutiny Committee, presented the report and recommendations of the Committee's investigation into the cost-of-living crisis 2022.

Members were reminded that the Combined Scrutiny Committee, which comprised all Members of the Community Development Scrutiny Committee and the Partnership Development Committee had been established in response to a Motion submitted by Councillor Mrs J Beavis and approved by the Council on 20th June 2022. In supporting the Motion, the Council had acknowledged the cost-of-living crisis and the impact it was having on many residents in the Braintree District. The Council had recognised also that the Government had introduced a range of support measures, but that these could not cover all impacts. Therefore, the Combined Scrutiny Committee had been requested to review the measures which the Council and its partners across Essex were already offering, and to recommend any further assistance that could be delivered for residents of the Braintree District in the current financial year. The Combined Scrutiny Committee had been requested to report back to the Council meeting on 10th October 2022.

As required, the Combined Scrutiny Committee had undertaken a short-term Scrutiny Review and it had met on two separate occasions. The Committee's first meeting had been held on 8th August 2022 when it had been agreed to appoint Councillor Mrs D Garrod as the Chairman, Councillor Mrs M Cunningham as the Vice-Chairman, to note the Committee's Terms of Reference, and to undertake the first evidence gathering session of the review. The second meeting had been held on 5th September 2022, at which the Committee's evidence gathering had continued, final information had been collated, and consideration had been given to the Committee's draft scrutiny report and recommendations.

In presenting the report to Council, Councillor Mrs Garrod thanked Councillors, Officers and other contributors who had been involved with the review for their work and support. In response, Members of the Council thanked Councillor Mrs Garrod and the Members of the Combined Scrutiny Committee for undertaking the review in such a short period of time and for their comprehensive report and recommendations. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, endorsed these comments and he asked all Members of the Cabinet to review the report and its recommendations and to consider how their individual portfolio areas may be able to assist, with suggestions being reported to Members of the Council.

There followed a debate by Members of the Council on this Item.

Before concluding this Item, Councillor Hensman, Chairman of the Council, reminded Members that the report was for noting only.

Post Meeting Note:- The Combined Scrutiny Committee's report is to be referred to a meeting of the Cabinet and the Cabinet will provide a response to full Council.

REASON FOR DECISION: To receive and note the report and recommendations of the Combined Scrutiny Committee's investigation into the cost-of-living crisis 2022.

46 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to the Council's Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22. It was noted that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 had been approved by Full Council on 22nd February 2021 and that a mid-year report had been presented to Full Council on 13th December 2021. The Annual Report for 2021/22 had been reviewed by the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 12th July 2022 and no changes had been recommended.

DECISION: That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22 be received and noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's 'Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice' (the CIPFA Code) requires the Council to approve a Treasury Management Strategy prior to the commencement of the financial year; to receive at least one mid-year report; and to receive an annual report after the financial year-end.

47 **MHR iTRENT SYSTEM – AWARD OF CONTRACT**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report regarding a key decision made by the Leader of the Council in accordance with the special urgency provisions of the Council's Constitution. The decision related to the award of a contract for the MHR iTrent human resources and payroll system.

Following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Council had cancelled the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 12th September 2022 and all non-urgent business had been carried over to the Cabinet's meeting on 5th October 2022. However, an Agenda Item relating to the MHR iTrent human resources and payroll system had been time critical and it had been agreed that the matter should be determined in accordance with the special urgency provisions of the Council's Constitution. Appropriate notice of this process and the decision subsequently made by Councillor G Butland, the Leader of the Council, had been published on the Council's website and at its offices.

It was reported that the Council's current human resources and payroll system, iTrent, was provided by MHR in accordance with a contract that had been in place since March 2016. The iTrent system had facilitated the digitalisation of the Council's human resources processes, and it had delivered operational efficiencies, including joint procurement with other Local Authorities in Essex. In order to retain the optimum value of the existing system, the iTrent contract had been renewed, in association with the

Essex Procurement Hub, with effect from 30th September 2022 and subject to existing pricing terms for the period up to 31st March 2023.

DECISION: That the following decision taken by Councillor G Butland, the Leader of the Council, on 9th September 2022 in respect of the MHR iTrent human resources and payroll system be noted:-

- (1) To approve the award of a contract to Softcat Plc for the provision of the MHR iTrent system for the period 30th September 2022 to 31st March 2027 via a direct award through the NHS SBS Digital Workplace Solutions framework with a total contract value of £395,290.59.
- (2) To give delegated authority to the Corporate Director (Support Services) to agree the Service Level Agreement covering the third party permitted agency arrangement for use of the system by other Councils under the Council's contract.

REASON FOR DECISION: To note a decision taken by the Leader of the Council, in accordance with the special urgency provisions of the Council's Constitution, in respect of the award of a contract for the MHR iTrent human resources and payroll system.

48 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Prior to the consideration of this Item, reference was made to an addendum report, which had been published prior to the meeting. The addendum report referred to the resignation of Councillor N Unsworth from the Council.

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to reports on the political proportionality of the Council following the resignation of two Councillors and the impact on the membership of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Change Working Group.

It was reported that Councillor Nick Unsworth and Councillor Dean Wallace had resigned from the Council. Both Councillors had been Independent Members. Initially, Councillor Unsworth had resigned from the Council's Green and Independent Group to become a Green Party Independent Member, but he had subsequently resigned from the Council also.

It was noted that following these resignations, the affiliation of the Council's Members to political groups had changed to 33 for the Conservative Group, 8 for the Green and Independent Group; 4 for Halstead Residents Association; 2 for the Labour Group; and 2 vacancies.

In accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council was required to allocate seats on the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees on a politically proportionate basis. As a result of the change to political affiliations and, in particular, the resignation of Councillor Unsworth, the Council was required to appoint new representatives from the Green and Independent Group to the membership of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Change Working

Group. However, it had not been necessary to change the overall allocation of Committee and Sub-Committee seats to each of the political groups.

DECISION:

- (1) That the update report on the political proportionality of the Council following the resignation of two Councillors be noted.
- (2) That the appointment of Councillor Mrs J Beavis to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee be approved. (The membership of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee (9) shall be Councillor Mrs J Beavis, Councillor J Coleridge, Councillor G Courtauld, Councillor Mrs C Dervish, Councillor T Everard, Councillor M Radley (Chairman), Councillor S Rehman, Councillor B Rose and Councillor P Schwier (Vice-Chairman)).
- (3) That the appointment of Councillor J Abbott to the Climate Change Working Group be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To note the political proportionality of the Council following the resignation of two Councillors and to approve changes to the membership of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee and the Climate Change Working Group.

49 **CABINET'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL**

Before opening the debate, the Chairman reminded Members of the Procedural Rules relating to this Item, as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Each Member may put up to two questions to the Cabinet, which would be responded to by the Leader of the Council, or a Cabinet Member. Councillor Abbott, as the Leader of the Opposition may put up to four questions to the Cabinet.

Questions should relate to the functions of the Leader, or a Cabinet Member, the powers and duties of the Council, or matters pertaining to the District. Members may not ask supplementary questions and no statements may be made.

Where a response cannot be given during the meeting, a written answer will be issued within 10 working days of the meeting and circulated to all Members.

The Chairman stated that a period of one hour was normally allowed for this Item. However, as the time was 10.02pm there were 13 minutes remaining for the consideration of the Item. It was subsequently moved, seconded and agreed by Councillors that, as required by the Constitution, the meeting be extended beyond 10.15pm by 10 minutes to enable the remaining business on the Agenda to be transacted.

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to introduce the Cabinet's report to Full Council. The Leader stated that he had no additions to make to the report. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to ask questions. Questions

were not limited to the content of the report and could be about matters relating to a portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council, or matters pertaining to the District.

Members then asked several questions. A webcast of the questions to and the responses of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website and its YouTube channel at: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

The main topics were as follows:-

- Councillor J Abbott queried why the Council as a whole had not been given an opportunity to discuss the Government's proposed investment zones, why the Horizon 120 site was being put forward and whether it was the only site in the Braintree District being considered.
- Councillor J Abbott queried if the Council would consider purchasing the disused former factory site in Silver End as a regeneration site for a mixed-use development including affordable housing.
- Councillor J Abbott questioned when it was anticipated that the Council's housing land supply would be above the Government's five year threshold and if the Council would be defending two planning appeals that had been lodged in respect of undesignated land.
- Councillor Mrs J Beavis requested an update on the timescale for the provision of Hedingham Medical Centre.
- Councillors Mrs J Beavis asked if chippings could be provided for the paths along the riverside walk between Castle Hedingham and Sible Hedingham.
- Councillor J Coleridge referred to current volatility in the global financial market and its impact on interest rates and he queried what effect this was having on the Council's finances.
- Councillor Mrs C Dervish referred to the Council's lack of a five year housing land supply and she queried whether it would be necessary for the Council to institute another 'call for sites' in order to identify other sites for development.
- Councillor Mrs C Dervish referred to the Cabinet's report and the reference to a forthcoming domestic abuse campaign scheduled for November and December 2022. This would coincide with the FIFA World Cup and Christmas. Councillor Mrs Dervish stated that domestic violence occurred at all times and she queried whether action was being taken throughout the year to address it.
- Councillor Mrs J Pell referred to further delays in the implementation of Halstead town centre's proposed regeneration scheme and she queried when the scheme would be proceeding.
- Councillor Mrs J Sandum referred to the Council's nature enhancement initiative and a proposal to plant wildflowers, or to re-wild verges and green spaces across

the District. Councillor Mrs Sandum queried if the Council would provide explanatory signage in areas where the management regime was being changed; whether the Council could consider sowing a low-level clover grass seed mix in some areas; and the timeline for wildflower planting in Parishes that had indicated their support for the initiative.

- Councillor Mrs S Wilson referred to the important work carried out by volunteers, and she asked the Cabinet Member for Communities if he agreed that the recent Braintree District Volunteer Awards event had provided a great opportunity to acknowledge this work and to thank the volunteers.

The following actions were agreed in response to questions raised by Members. Written answers would be issued within 10 working days of the meeting and circulated to all Members:-

- Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and the Environment, agreed to respond in writing to the questions raised by Councillor Mrs Sandum. However, Councillor Mrs Sandum subsequently submitted the questions to be dealt with via the Council's 'written questions' procedure. The responses have been circulated separately to all Members.
- Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure, agreed to provide an update in writing on the timescale for the provision of Hedingham Medical Centre.
- Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure, agreed to provide an update in writing as to whether chippings could be provided for the paths along the riverside walk between Castle Hedingham and Sible Hedingham.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman reminded Councillors that the next meeting of Full Council would be held on 12th December 2022.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.27pm.

Councillor A Hensman
(Chairman)