

# COUNCIL

## AGENDA



**THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

*(Please note this meeting will be webcast and audio recorded)*

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk>

**Date: Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Time: 7:15pm**

**Venue: Council Chamber, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

### Membership:

Councillor J E Abbott	Councillor J S Allen	Councillor M J Banthorpe
Councillor P R Barlow	Councillor J Baugh	Councillor J C Beavis
Councillor D L Bebb	Councillor E Bishop	Councillor R J Bolton
Councillor L B Bowers – Flint	Councillor G Butland	Councillor C A Cadman
Councillor S Canning	Councillor T G Cunningham	Councillor J G J Elliott
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Councillor A V E Everard	Councillor J H G Finbow
Councillor M J Fincken	Councillor T J W Foster	Councillor M E Galione
Councillor C Gibson	Councillor M Green	Councillor P Horner
Councillor S A Howell	Councillor H D Johnson	Councillor S C Kirby
Councillor M C M Lager	Councillor C Louis	Councillor D J Louis
Councillor E Lynch	Councillor D Mann	Councillor J T McKee
Councillor R G S Mitchell	Councillor J M Money	Councillor Lady P Newton
Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Councillor I C F Parker	Councillor J A Pell
Councillor R P Ramage	Councillor D M Reid	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor D E A Rice	Councillor W J Rose	Councillor V Santomauro
Councillor W D Scattergood (Chairman)	Councillor W Schmitt	Councillor A F Shelton
Councillor L Shepherd	Councillor C Siddall	Councillor G A Spray
Councillor J S Sutton	Councillor J R Swift	Councillor P Tattersley
Councillor C M Thompson	Councillor M Thorogood	Councillor L S Walters
Councillor R G Walters	Councillor S A Wilson	Councillor B Wright

### 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 Chloe Glock in the Council's Member Services Section on 01376 552525 or email [chloe.glock@braintree.gov.uk](mailto: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 in the Council offices 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 the fire evacuation 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. Any persons unable to use the stairs will be assisted to the nearest safe refuge.

**Mobile Phones.** Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent or is switched off during the meeting.

**Documents.** Agendas, reports and minutes for all the Council's public meetings can be accessed via the internet at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk>

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.....

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.....

.....

.....

Contact details.....

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to Alastair Peace on 01376 552525 or email [alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk)

### **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS**

#### **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest:-**

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest to indicate in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Such Member must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

**Members of the Council are requested to attend the above meeting to transact the following business: -**

## **PUBLIC SESSION**

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **To receive any announcements/statements from the Chairman and/or Leader of the Council.**
3. **Declarations of Interest.**

To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest 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.
4. **Question Time.** (See page i).
5. **Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Council meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013 (Copy previously circulated).
6. **Recommendations from Cabinet, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013 – Provisional Financial Outturn 2012/13.** Report attached (Page 1).
7. **Review of the Community Housing & Investment Partnership (CHIP) Fund.** Report attached (Page 3).
8. **Question Time Reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members**
  - (i) **Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members.** To receive the following reports from each Portfolio Holder:
    - a) Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council (Page 7);
    - b) Councillor Beavis, People and Participation (Page 9);
    - c) Councillor Bebb, Performance and Efficiency (Page 11);
    - d) Councillor Lady Newton, Planning and Property (Page 14);
    - e) Councillor Schmitt, Place (Page 17);
    - f) Councillor Siddall, Prosperity and Growth (Page 20).
  - (ii) **Oral questions** without notice on matters related to a particular portfolio, the powers or duties of the Council or the district. (Procedure Rules 7.1 to 7.3 apply). Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all members.

*(A period of up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item).*

- (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements. ***None have been received.***
- (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of **meetings that have been held in public session** since the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013. (Report attached – Page 23).

9. **Statements by Members**

To receive any statements by Members of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6.

***There are none.***

10. To receive reports about and receive questions and answers on the **business of external organisations.**

***There are none.***

11. Exclusion of Public and Press: - To give consideration to adopting the following Resolution: -

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

12. **PRIVATE SESSION**

Note: At the time of publication there are no items for Private Session.

13. **Statements by Members – Private Session**

To receive and give responses to statements by Members which contain confidential or exempt information of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6. The Chairman will invite the Leader or relevant Cabinet Member to comment on each statement.

***There are no statements***

14. **Question Time - Private Session**

- (i) **Leader's Statement** or statement by Cabinet Members containing exempt information on a key issue.
- (ii) **Oral questions** without notice on matters related to a particular portfolio, the powers or duties of the Council or the district. (Procedure Rules 7.1 to 7.3 apply). Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all members.

*(Please note that the time set aside for item 14(ii) shall not exceed 30 minutes)*

- (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements containing exempt information from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements - ***There are none.***
  - (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of meetings that have been held in private session since the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.
15. **Private Session Policy Recommendations.** To consider any policy recommendations (in private session) that have arisen within the last meetings' cycle – ***There are none.***

N BEACH  
Chief Executive

The last page of this agenda is numbered 23.

<b>Recommendations from Cabinet, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>		<b>Agenda No: 6</b>
<b>Provisional Financial Outturn 2012/13</b>  <b>- Provision of Growth Area Funding underspends towards access improvements at the Twin Oaks site.</b>		
<b>Portfolio Area:</b>	<b>Performance and Efficiency</b> <b>Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>	

**Minute and Report Extract:**

**CABINET – 20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2013**

**Extracts relate to Twin Oaks only**

**Minutes**

**5. PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2012/13**

**DECISION:**

5. That it be recommended to Council:
- i. That the provision of £400,000 Growth Area Funding underspends toward access improvements at Twin Oaks be approved.
  - ii. That delegated authority be given to the portfolio holder and Corporate Director to negotiate final details of the scheme.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To recommend to Council additional funding provision for access improvement works at Twin Oaks.

## **Report to Cabinet**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Growth Area Funding**

The report identifies a potential funding gap on the proposed works for access improvements at Twin Oaks and makes a recommendation to Council to reallocate £400,000 of Growth Area Funding project underspends toward a provision for these works.

#### **Background**

The report provides an update on the estimated total cost of access improvement works at Twin Oaks and recommends to Council provision for additional funding through the reallocation of Growth Area Funding project underspends

Growth Area Funding (GAF) of £250,000 has already been identified by the Council for the Twin Oaks access improvement, of which £49,000 has been spent to date on the design of the access by the Highways Agency. The overall cost of the provision of an access has been estimated at £600,000. It is proposed that provision of a further £400,000 funding towards delivery of the junction is made. The further funding would be reallocated from underspends from other GAF projects. Financial contributions would also be sought from third parties. The recommendation to Council includes a request that delegated authority be given to the portfolio holder and Corporate Director to negotiate final details of the scheme.

<b>Review of the Community Housing &amp; Investment Partnership (CHIP) Fund</b>	<b>Agenda No: 7</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> Prosperity	
<b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr Lady Newton	
<b>Report prepared by:</b> Tim Lucas, Housing Research & Development Manager	
<b>Background Papers:</b> None	
<b>Options:</b> None – for information only	<b>Key Decision:</b> No
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Community Housing Investment Partnership (CHIP) Fund was established at the time of the Council's stock transfer to Greenfields Community Housing in 2007. £11 million pounds were set aside from the transfer and whilst the monies are held and administered by Greenfields, the CHIP Board are the decision makers. The CHIP Board is made up of six members, three members from Greenfields (Alan Wyatt, Allan Millam, and Ian Marshall) and three from BDC (Councillors Butland, Schmitt and Lady Newton).</p> <p>When the fund was established five priorities were set out in the Transfer Agreement for use of the fund. These were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The development of new affordable social housing</li> <li>2. The development of facilities for community benefit</li> <li>3. Environmental improvements</li> <li>4. Regeneration activities</li> <li>5. Additional priorities identified in the Annual Funding Review.</li> </ol> <p>The CHIP Board originally agreed for half of the fund to be earmarked for affordable housing development, with the balance for the other themes.</p> <p>Some of the investments made over the first 5 years of the fund are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £910,000 was invested in perpetuity into a 'Grassroots Fund' to extend the life of the CHIP Fund. The investment attracted part-match funding making the value of the fund £1.73 million as at 30th September 2012. The interest is available to be re-allocated to other grant-giving activities and assures a long-term grant capacity of around £50,000-100,000 per year.</li> <li>• £1.39 million has been invested in a number of projects in Braintree and Witham. These include the new skate bowl in Braintree, the establishment of Alec Hunter Learning Village and environmental improvements to the Templars Estate in Witham.</li> <li>• More than 40 grants have been made to community organisations to help with a wide range of projects that include:</li> </ul>	



- refurbishment of Scout and Guides HQ;
- funding to support a welfare benefits advisor for Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau;
- installation of a climbing wall; *and*
- help to purchase a wheelchair accessible mini-bus for Halstead Day Centre.

Over £800,000 has been allocated for these types of grant.

- The research project that culminated in the launch of the Housing StatNav was funded by the CHIP fund, with a research worker operating on behalf of both organisations. She has also led a project to provide 3 larger (5 bedroom) family homes in Braintree and Witham.

The fund to support new affordable homes has had less obvious success. Initially, Greenfields asked for an allocation that would cover all the costs of new development on new sites. Funding was originally allocated to their schemes in Rayne and Hatfield Peverel. As Greenfields have built up their development capacity they have joined a consortium of housing associations and have successfully secured grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. They have also been able to secure borrowing to support the cost of development. This has meant that none of the funding earmarked for development was required for the original schemes put forward.

### Changes to the CHIP Fund

During the last 12 months, officers and CHIP Board members have considered and adopted changes to:

- the way the fund is targeted; *and*
- the operation of the Board

The proposed split of funding is as follows:

Growth: additional affordable homes £7,250,000

Place: improvements to public areas and to help communities: £750,000

People: projects to benefit people (particularly skills and education): £750,000

The proposed investment strategy is as follows:

### Investment in Growth:

<b>Short Term</b>	Open-market purchase of 20 homes during 2012 & 2013 at £25,000 per unit.	£500,000
<b>Medium Term 2013-18</b>	Up to 240 new homes at an average £25K per unit. Possible loan use to enable development of new homes.	Up to £6,000,000
<b>Long Term 2018 and beyond</b>	Combination of non-refundable/refundable grant. Additional funding recycled from repayment of loans to provide 34 new homes	£750,000

**Investment in 'Place' and 'People':**

<b>Place</b>	Improvements to public areas and to help local communities, targeted where Greenfields and BDC have shared interest in improving assets.	£750,000
<b>People</b>	Funding split between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adult skills, training and NEETS</li><li>• Alleviating fuel poverty</li><li>• Research Projects</li><li>• Tackling health inequalities</li></ul>	£750,000

Greenfields consulted with their Tenants earlier this year prior to the CHIP Board in April 2013.

The Board also considered how the fund is administered and governed and made the following recommendations:

1. That the Board meets twice yearly, in April and October to give strategic direction and delegate the detail to officers to monitor, produce reports and deliver projects.
2. That the panel that currently agrees grants/awards from Greenfields Community Fund (which comprises of a Councillor, a Greenfields Board member, an independent and a BDC employee) manage the grant-giving from the 'Grassroots Fund'.
3. The Board agreed to have joint Chairman for future CHIP Board meetings, one from BDC and one from Greenfields who would alternate each meeting.

**Decision:** Members are asked to note:

- The revised investment strategy.
- The introduction of joint Chairmanship.
- The change to 6 monthly Board Meetings
- The change to the management of the grant-giving element of the fund.

**Purpose of Decision:**

- To target the CHIP Fund investment most effectively
- To change the way the CHIP Board functions to help make more strategic use of the Fund.

<b>Corporate Implications</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	The CHIP Fund is administered by Greenfields in accordance with the Transfer Agreement and CHIP Board direction. The changes do not diminish the Council's ability to influence the expenditure of the fund but should help focus expenditure more effectively.
<b>Legal:</b>	Appendix 3 of the original stock transfer agreement sets out the establishment of the Fund and the Partnership Board to oversee its investment. The main relevant element of the agreement is the requirement that at least 2 nominees of both BDC and Greenfields are present in person at Partnership Board meetings. It is not proposed to alter this requirement.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	No specific impacts arising directly from this report. Impacts will be considered on a project-by-project basis.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	<p>The funding is to invest in people, locations and new homes that benefit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenfields tenants</li> <li>• People living in all tenures in the neighbourhoods where investment is made</li> <li>• People seeking social housing in the district as the programme of new build helps meet our housing need.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	No specific impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	The changes were consulted with a representation group of Greenfields' residents including Community Gateway Group members. It was agreed by the CHIP Board as a result to increase the funding to 'people' and 'place' by £50,000 each, compared with the original proposal. The changes are reflected by the figures in this report
<b>Risks:</b>	No specific risks arising directly from this report
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Tim Lucas
<b>Designation:</b>	Housing Research & Development Manager
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2124
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**LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**Agenda No: 8(i)a**

**1. Essex Police & Crime Panel – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

The Panel met to hold a confirmatory hearing for the post of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel was required to consider the process adopted to select the successful candidate as well as the Commissioner's proposed nominee.

The Panel were satisfied that the post had been publicly advertised and the Procedures for drawing up a short list were consistent with good practice.

The Commissioner's nominee was Mr Lindsay Whitehouse who was Deputy Governor of HMP & YOI Chelmsford. The Panel asked the candidate a number of questions and was satisfied that he was an appropriate appointment. The Panel noted that Mr Whitehouse had no political affiliations.

**2. Briefing by the Department of Transport on Options for a New Lower Thames Crossing – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013**

Along with representatives of Councils from Essex and Kent I attended a briefing by the Roads Minister Stephen Hammond MP on a new Lower Thames Crossing.

The 3 possible options are:

- option A: at the site of the existing A282 Dartford-Thurrock crossing
- option B: connecting the A2 Swanscombe Peninsula with the A1089
- option C: connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30

the variant to option C would additionally widen the A229 between the M2 and M20

All the 3 options have been proposed based on a number of successive studies investigating the need for additional crossing capacity in the lower Thames area and its location.

A decision on where to locate a new Lower Thames Crossing will be based on consideration of economic, environmental and social impacts including the extent to which a new crossing at each location contributes to the national economy, reduces congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and avoids unacceptable impacts on environmentally sensitive areas. The decision will also be informed by potential cost, affordability and value for money implications.

The existing Dartford-Thurrock crossing experiences high levels of traffic with typical daily traffic flows of 140,000 vehicles compared to the original design capacity of the crossing which was 135,000.

Traffic flows are expected to increase by 10 to 20 per cent southbound and by 2 to 10% northbound between 2009 and 2041.

Full details can be seen on the Department's website and anyone wishing to respond to the consultation can do so by using the online response form.

Cllr Graham Butland  
Leader

<b>Contact:</b>	Cllr Graham Butland
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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF  
PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION**

**Agenda No: 8(i)b**

**The new Witham Leisure Centre.**

A 25m '6 lane swimming pool – seating for 50 spectators.

A 13m learner pool with moveable floor to a maximum depth of 3.4m

A large fitness suite with gym and weights area.

Two glass backed squash courts.

Two dance studios.

Wet and dry changing areas.

Steam room and sauna.

Treatment rooms and café area.

**Cost of the project = £9.5 million – opening summer 2014.**

Construction of the new Witham Leisure Centre started on the 7<sup>th</sup> May. A soil cutting ceremony took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> May to mark the official start of the build. We can now look forward to seeing the building take shape. The new communications plan will ensure that community focused initiatives will enable local school children, residents and sports groups to get involved with the various stages of the build.

**Improved gym facilities. £1m capital investment by the Council.**

1. Braintree Swim Centre - New gym facilities – Plans in progress for 2013.
2. Braintree Leisure Centre - Additional gym facilities – Plans in progress for 2013.
3. Halstead Swim Centre – Dry side improvements to sports hall, changing rooms and second floor “spin suite” and “dance studio”. Plans in progress for 2013.

Detailed plans are now currently commencing for all three sites. The plans will be presented at the next Leisure Partnership Board. The next Leisure Bulletin will summarise the capital projects and will be shared with members, stakeholders, partners and sports groups in the usual way.

**The Fusion Leisure Contract.**

- Participation month-by-month since January has rapidly increased.
- Over 600 new Reward Cards have been issued since the new contract.
- Concessions are now available at all times and are not restricted.
- A new Community Sports Development Officer has been employed by Fusion.
- “Open Air” launches this spring to take exercise out to parks and open spaces.
- Fusion working with Greenfields CH to use sport to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Fusion working with Health to develop a GP referrals scheme.
- Fusion will commence Summer Activity days across the district from August.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2013 an “Inspired Sports Festival” will take place in the Braintree district. I will be able to update members on the festival as the plans are created. The festival is being designed to encourage more residents in the Braintree district to take up sport and wellbeing activities.

## **THE ACTIVE BRAINTREE NETWORK.**

Vision – *“The Active Braintree Network will use Sport and Physical Activity to ensure that the Braintree District is a place where individuals and communities have the opportunity to take part in their chosen activity and are inspired to achieve”.*

I'm pleased by the partnership working being demonstrated by the Braintree Active Network. Partners including Essex County Council, Braintree District Council Greenfields Community Housing and Fusion are working with our communities across the Braintree district to deliver sports and wellbeing based projects. The projects benefit all age groups across the district and, include those with disabilities.

A physical activity needs assessment workshop has been organised for June. A public health specialist will facilitate to workshop. The outcomes of the workshop will be presented at the next Braintree Active Network meeting in July.

### **Health and Wellbeing Panel.**

Plans to create a new Braintree district based Health and Wellbeing Panel are being worked up. Key partners have been identified and the panel will meet within the next few weeks to discuss: terms of reference and priorities/direction. The panel will ensure that priorities of both the new Clinical Commissioning Group and the Health and Wellbeing Board are integrated at a local level.

### **19/21 Bocking End – Hollywood.**

The Braintree and Bocking Community Association will be moving to their new premises during May 2013. I met with representatives of the Association in early April to discuss the move and official opening. I was very pleased to see the representatives looking forward to life at their new premises. The official opening has been planned for early June.

### **Localism**

**Member development.** As part of the process to define the role of the “Community Councillor” interviews have begun, with some members, to establish their views on being a councillor. The findings of the interviews will be presented to the Member Development Working group at a later stage.

### **Strengthening Communities.**

A strand of work coming from the Whole Essex Community Budget is called “Strengthening Communities”. The aim is to create connections between individuals and across communities to encourage community led activity between the public, private and voluntary sector. Essex County Council has been working with Braintree District Council to research two areas of the Braintree district that could benefit from the “Strengthening Communities” proposals. The two areas are: Sible Hedingham and Witham. An evidence based bid has been submitted to Essex County Council. Details will be presented to the next Localism Board.

Cabinet Member – Cllr. Joanne Beavis.

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting: Cllr Joanne Beavis and Cllr Peter Tattersley.

<b>Contact:</b>	<b>Cllr Joanne Beavis</b>
<b>Designation:</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF  
PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

**Agenda No: 8(i)c**

**Local Authority Mortgage Scheme update:**

ECC gave approval, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, for its own LAMS scheme and to match fund LAMS schemes of district/borough councils in Essex. At the time of compiling this report we had just received notification from ECC that they would be about to make contact to progress the necessary paperwork to get our scheme up and running. Contact for those interested in the scheme will be to the lender, likely to be Lloyds TSB, after the launch, possibly from July.

**Cooperative Bank -Moody's downgade**

At the May 20<sup>th</sup> Cabinet meeting I reported on the recent downgrade by Moody's of the Cooperative Bank, our bankers. We have a five year contract with the Co-operative bank for everyday banking services, this terminates on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The Council's investment policy provides a limit of £5million to be invested overnight or in a call account with the Co-operative bank. On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013 on news of the Moody's downgrade we reduced our monies with the Co-operative from £4.45million (Thursday night) to £1million, with diverted funds invested with the Government Debt Office.

In consultation with Arlingclose, our financial advisers, we agreed that we should only hold an amount we would require for operational liquidity purposes, this we assessed to be £1million. The Cooperative Bank is part of a diversified business with annual turnover of more than £13bn, the largest mutual in the UK, with almost 5,000 retail trading outlets, employing more than 100,000 people. The bank has commented that they have high liquidity levels and a healthy loan to deposit ratio of 92% primarily funded by customer deposits meaning that they have more customer deposits than they lend out. It is of note that another rating agency, Fitch, in their update commented upon the Cooperative Bank's strong funding profile and good liquidity. Whilst on present evidence and advice no precipitative further action is warranted, we are closely monitoring the issue, and will be reviewing as part of a forthcoming meeting with Arlingclose addressing our wider investment strategy.

**Council Tax collection**

Council Tax collection for April was 11.37% compared to 11.62% for April 2012. It would be incorrect to suggest that the collection rate is 0.25% lower due solely to the introduction of the Local Council Tax Support scheme as the option of twelve monthly instalments was introduced from April 2013. 5650 reminders have been sent out , and of these 2,275 reminders sent to households paying council tax for the first time or an increase amount as a result of the local council tax support scheme. The estimated



number of working age claimants that would be impacted by the new scheme was 5,500. We have recently received and approved the first application for an award from the Exceptional Hardship Fund. The application was received following a review of the claimant's finances by the Citizens Advice Bureau in accordance with the agreed process.

### **Payment of invoices**

We aim to pay invoices to suppliers within 30 days of receipt of goods and services. We achieved 99.13% payment within 30 days for April 2013 against target of 98.5% (Cumulative for year is 99%).

There has been a recent change in UK law meaning that existing provisions for suppliers to obtain compensation as a result of late payment of invoices has been strengthened. Once goods and services have been accepted, public authorities have a maximum of 30 days to pay invoices, otherwise compensation arrangements apply. At present a watching brief is being maintained on this issue and to date only one supplier has made reference to the revised rules.

All managers have been reminded to ensure that they and their staff process invoices as soon as possible, reiterating the Council's payment objective to pay local suppliers within 10 days of receipt of invoice. And, that where invoices are being disputed, this is communicated to both the supplier and the payments section.

### **Business Plans**

In April the Annual Plan and all business plans were agreed formally, setting out our priorities as an organisation for the year.

### **IT Services**

We have started a project to refresh our server estate and some of our key applications. This will give us improved functionality, security of data and ensure that our systems continue to be supported.

We have rolled out Windows 7 and Office 2010 to the organisation and trained everyone to be able to use the new technology.

We are currently working on improving the way that customers can access our services, looking at all methods and making sure that they are fit for now and the future. (Channel Strategy)

### **Human Resources**

Performance reviews and personal development plans are currently being conducted across the organisation and should be completed by the end of May. Performance reviews of the CEO and 2 Corporate Directors were conducted in April.

The HR team are working with the organisation to develop behaviours which will support our key values (PRIDE) and give us a framework to measure and improve these.

Sickness outturn for 12/13 was 6.6 days which is roughly half of the average for the public sector currently.

BDC's Operations team successfully achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard accreditation in March following a two day assessment. They passed with 5 partial areas and 6 areas of compliance plus in how the team deal with disadvantaged customers, improved customer journeys, corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery, the range of access channels used and partnership working in which some are market leading.

### **Strategic Risk Management Strategy**

BDC's profile of strategic risk was reviewed at a Members evening on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and with subsequent additions and amendments the Strategic Risk Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

Cllr David Bebb  
Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting:

Cllr David Bebb or Cllr John McKee

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF  
PLANNING AND PROPERTY**

**Agenda No: 8(i)d**

**ASSET MANAGEMENT:**

**Land East of High Street, Halstead**

Tesco has now served notice to terminate the contract. The Consortium of Vendors have agreed to appoint Savills to market and dispose of the site on the open market. Prior to the commencement of marketing the site, a new Vendor Consortium Agreement will need to be completed. A Solicitor has been appointed and a new agreement is being drafted with a view to being completed as soon as possible.

**19/21 Bocking End, Braintree**

The refurbishment works have been completed and a Certificate of Practical Completion has been issued. Solicitors have been instructed to complete the lease agreement with the Braintree and Bocking Community Association ready for occupation.

**Unit 1 Lakes Industrial Park, Braintree**

This property has now been acquired by BDC. The next stage of the process is to submit a planning application for a vehicle maintenance and office scheme which will be jointly used by Operations and their contractor Riverside Truck Rentals.

**Mayland House, Witham**

Cofunds Limited is currently progressing the refurbishment works to this building and is on track to relocate from Chelmsford in October 2013.

**HOMELESSNESS UPDATE:**

We have recently published the new draft Homelessness Review and Strategy 2013 to 2018 for consultation which runs until the 9th August 2013 and will then be considered by the Cabinet on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

This is the link to the Draft Homelessness Strategy and Review:-

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200248/housing/38/homelessness/4>

**The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)**

DCA were appointed by the Essex SHMA Consortium (Braintree DC, Maldon DC, Colchester BC, Chelmsford CC and Brentwood BC) to undertake a SHMA and provide individual reports for each local authority. A household survey will be sent to 5,000 households across the Braintree District selected at random at the beginning of July. The survey will aim to gather household data that is not available through any other source such as incomes, savings and equity.

### **Affordable Housing and Empty Homes**

By the end of April there were 20 affordable housing completions and 13 empty properties brought back into use.

Work started on the South Street Garage site (at the traffic lights near Braintree Station) in April. A scheme of 24 one and two bedroomed flats for rent will be completed in early summer next year. This has been an eyesore for many years and it has taken some complex negotiations to finally bring the scheme to fruition. The Council pledged over £700,000 to give Colne Housing the confidence to continue with the purchase of the site and the costs associated with undertaking survey work and gaining planning approval. Now that the scheme is certain to proceed, Colne have secured grant from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and our pledged funding will not be required.

Delegated approval has been granted for £825,000 grant funding to Home Group. Home are working with Parklands to build 55 affordable rent flats on the former site of Riverside swimming pool, Braintree. This project is jointly funded by the HCA and is due for a start on site late Summer 2013.

### **PLANNING POLICY**

#### **Site Allocations and Development Management Plan**

The Draft Plan was published on 10<sup>th</sup> January for a six week period of public consultation. There have been a large number of representations made to the Council about the plan site proposals, which are being reported to the LDF Sub Committee who are recommending amendments to the plan. It is intended that the amended plan will be submitted to the Council on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013 for approval.

#### **Motts Lane Railway Foot/cycle Bridge Witham**

The funding agreement has been signed by the Council and Network Rail. Bridge delivery and on-site construction scheduled for Christmas Day 2013 (as there are no mainline services).

#### **Essex County Council Replacement Minerals Local Plan**

Essex County Council (ECC) published its Replacement Minerals Local Plan in January 2013 with a public consultation on the draft plan running between 17 January and 28 February 2013. Following the decision of Braintree District Council at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the Council objected to several sites put forward in the draft plan in the district and to the amount and proportion of the proposed minerals extraction proposed in the district.

The Replacement Minerals Local Plan will be submitted by ECC to the Planning Inspectorate who will examine the soundness of the Plan and will consider objections to the soundness including those put forward by Braintree District. Braintree District Council will be able to give evidence to the Inspector to back up the objections that it has already made. The date for the examination has not yet been agreed.

### **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

The government has introduced a number of changes to the Town & Country Planning General Permitted Development Order (GPDO) which will come into effect on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013. These changes will mean that larger house extensions will be allowed (as permitted development) for a temporary 3 year period although the householder will need to go through a prior approval process. Other changes to the GPDO which will

widen the range of changes of use that are permitted by the GPDO will also come into effect on the same date. A comprehensive note on full details of these changes will be prepared for Members and there will be further guidance on the Council's website.

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting:

Cllr Lady Newton  
Cabinet Member – for Planning and Property

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<b>REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF PLACE</b>	<b>Agenda No:8(i)e</b>
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## ENVIRONMENT

**Water Strategy for Council owned sites:** Efficient water use is not often thought of in the same light as Electricity and Gas but BDC own a number of sites which amount to a significant usage and cost. This year, as part of a water strategy that officers will be working on, a piece of work has been commissioned (at no cost) where all our supplies will be reviewed to ensure that each site is set on the correct tariff. This exercise alone may provide some initial reduction in the council water bill but, later in the year, more detailed assessments will take place, helping to develop a new water strategy.

**BBE – Further Extension of the Food Sampling Project:** Following the news that goat meat was found in processed lamb, I can confirm that the joint project between our Food Officers and Trading Standards continues. The sampling of food to check for the correct composition is a Trading Standards function but, as part of the BBE project, our food inspectors are taking samples of processed meat, for Trading Standards testing, whenever undertaking food hygiene inspections of local butchers and supermarkets.

**Town Centre Cleanliness:** As part of the Backing Our Town's Strategy, enforcement officers are making concerted efforts to clean up our town centres of cigarette butts. The campaign involves providing town centre establishments, with associated smoking activities, with a wall mounted cigarette bin where there is no current provision. Emptying and disposing of the cigarettes will be down to the establishment but, by providing a facility, this should reduce the amount of cigarette litter. The campaign will then be followed up with enforcement officers patrolling those premises where bins have been issued.

**Countywide Emergency Planning Exercise Stansted:** As part of Stansted airports CAA certification, they have to run a full scale emergency exercise every two years. This year they requested help from BDC Emergency Planning Team to play the part of survivors and relatives following an air disaster. In taking part, the Emergency planning team were able to look around the airport - which was set up to replicate an emergency situation. Six BDC apprentices accompanied the Emergency Planning team, receiving an interesting and valuable insight into airport emergency organisation, and how the airport operates behind the scenes.

## OPERATIONS

**General:** I am delighted to report that the Council's Operations Department has secured a Customer Service Excellence Standard Award for its services. The Department scored highly including six compliance-plus scores, which is uncommon and therefore a significant achievement.

**Street Cleansing:** Street Cleansing Teams have been working with offenders on the Community Payback Scheme, helping with a number of projects including clearance of a ditch at Humber Road; cleaning the underpasses at Flora Road and Spa Road Witham; and carrying out a blitz on the Humber Road estate. Further work is planned including a programme of graffiti removal across the District.

There has been the formal unveiling of the art work boards on the walls of the 120 underpass at Galleys Corner. This project was led by Braintree East – Pride in Our Patch, who have been exceptionally complimentary about the help offered by the Council, both in advance of and after installing the artworks. This was an excellent example of partnership working between Operations and Community Services, as well as working with the local community.

The Council and Greenfields Community Housing Association have renewed their partnership with Templars Residents' Association to carry out litter-picking on the Templars estate and act as the eyes and ears of the community, reporting any problems to the Council or Greenfields. It is pleasing to see local communities being empowered to take responsibility for their local environment which, of course, helps to engender pride.

**Waste Management;** The Council has recently purchased the redundant MRF site at Lakes Road, facilitating the redevelopment of that site by its vehicle procurement and maintenance contractor Riverside Truck Rental Limited to provide new workshops and a co-located depot with office and mess facilities for BDC Operations. The design brief is in progress and planning permission will be submitted shortly, with the aim of construction commencing on site in the second half of the year.

Plans are underway to trial a different approach to recycling from flats, in an effort to improve the quality of the material collected. The new system is based on providing separate bins for the different materials and the residents separating the waste at source. It is hoped that this will reduce contamination and make flats recycling more viable. A small number of bins have been purchased for the pilot, which will involve three blocks of flats (two in Braintree and 1 in Halstead), with the first containers being delivered next month. The trial will be evaluated after 3 months of operation and progress will be reported to Cabinet later in the year.

**Highways:** The annual cutting of the rural verges in the District (and associated litter-picking) commenced mid-May. This is a six-week programme of work undertaken by Operations in conjunction with Essex County Council, which enables the coordination of litter-picking in advance of and following verge cutting.

**Parks & Open Spaces:** Work on planting out the Strategic Gateway shrub beds has now been completed, with five different designs being created at the main entrances into Witham and a further three appearing at the entrances to Braintree.

The refurbishment of the War Memorial garden in Halstead Public Gardens has just taken place, with the creation of a new Knot Garden containing box hedging, topiary and seasonal bedding plants. The project was collaboration between the Royal British Legion, Braintree District Council and Halstead in Bloom, with additional labour being provided by young people from the "Green Team" initiative, being championed in the District by Groundwork UK.

## **LANDSCAPES AND COUNTRYSIDE**

On June 1<sup>st</sup> a public consultation will be held to designate Hoppit Mead (including Marshalls Park) as a Local Nature Reserve to protect and enhance the natural habitat and its associated wildlife and to also improve community engagement. A key feature will be to form a community group who will work with the Council to manage and look after the area and to raise awareness of the open spaces across the district.

Cllr W Schmitt  
Cabinet Member – Place

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting:

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF  
PROSPERITY AND GROWTH**

**Agenda No: 8(i)f**

## **Backing Braintree Capital Projects**

### **South Street & Fairfield Road Junction**

The application for consent to demolish the existing properties at 75 & 77 South Street and to provide a new junction and area of open space was heard at the 21<sup>st</sup> May Planning Committee. The scheme was recommended for approval by BDC Officers with a number of conditions which must be discharged prior to the scheme going ahead. This application has now been referred to the Secretary of State for final approval due to BDC being the Landowner of the site (up to 12 weeks).

It is anticipated that demolition will be undertaken in summer 2013 and the highways works are scheduled to be delivered in autumn 2013/2014 through the ECC Highways programme.

### **Sandpit Lane**

The project involves a range of public realm improvements to Sandpit Lane (e.g. prominent signage, improved lighting and planters). The Council continues to liaise with Essex County Council Highways and other stakeholders on the project. Professional services appointments are about to be made and various consents are being sought to take the project forward. The project is due for completion in October 2013.

### **St. Michael's Fountain**

The project involves landscape improvements to the fountain area (e.g. paving repairs, planting and planters). Following condition surveys and exploratory work in March 2013, quotations are now due back on 31<sup>st</sup> May for professional services (mainly engineering) covering the preparation of estimates and contract documents as well as for contract administration. Work on site is due start in Mid-September and be completed in October 2013.

### **'Backing Witham' and 'Backing Halstead' Town Centre Improvement Strategies**

A second set of workshops were held in May in both towns with Witham and Halstead Members and key organisations. Our consultants, GVA, presented the 'long list' of potential interventions and projects in each town and an explanation of the expected benefits and impacts they will have on enhancing the town centre and preserving the vitality and viability of the offer. This information is being made available to Members and a newsletter is being prepared for wider distribution.

# **Portas Pilot Update**

## **Town Teams**

The Town Teams have been established in all three key towns.

The Braintree town team is pushing ahead with the implementation of its programme, and I am delighted to report the Braintree Town team continues to build in strength with members, not only from our independent retailers and business from the town, but now also from some of our larger retailers such as Boots and Townrow, the input from the town team members is absolutely vital in shaping Braintree towns future, the larger retail outlets have a role to play, it's great to have them on board and be able to tap into their expertise and resources going forward.

## **“Wake Up And Smell the Coffee”**

This monthly event is attended by in excess of 30 of the town's retailers, it is a great way to get wider input from any business that has something to contribute, it continues to give invaluable feed back to the town team building on past events and making future planned activities even more successful.

## **Witham and Halstead Town Teams**

Both the Witham and Halstead teams are now well established, and whilst they have limited financial resources, they have created a great link to the towns and its retailers which I am confident we can use to great effect in the future. Braintree DC has Member and Regeneration Manager representation on each of the teams and continues to help support their proposals as they move forward.

We are working with national Portas Pilot representatives to ensure that the benefits of being a Portas Pilot are maximised in all of our 3 towns and to a wider audience, this is all key to being a Portas town and includes mentoring schemes and sharing Braintree's success.

## **Pop Up Shop**

The application deadline for round 2 for applications for our Pop Up Shop was extended slightly, and this has allowed us to attract a number of new applications which will be reviewed shortly by a panel.

The business mentoring support that we have been able to provide with our partner Ignite Business Enterprise to the first “Pop Up Shop” business, “Tynska Designs”, has been first class and invaluable, this will also be provided to subsequent Businesses who take on the Pop Up Shop. The Council can very be proud of this amazing package of both opportunity and business support which has been offered. This without doubt will enable the best possible chance of a new business being successful, at what is often a very challenging and daunting time.

## **Local and National Media interest**

I was delighted to have been invited on BBC Essex and BBC 5 Live in May to discuss the work we have been doing in Braintree as a Portas Pilot and initiatives we implemented to date and our future plans. This kind of publicity helps us to put our three towns and Braintree District Council firmly on the map.

Councillor Chris Siddall  
Cabinet Member – Prosperity and Growth

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<b>LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING</b>		<b>Agenda No: 8(iv)</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> Not applicable <b>Report presented by:</b> Not applicable <b>Report prepared by:</b> Alastair Peace – Member Services Manager		
<b>Background Papers:</b> Published Minutes of the meetings listed within the report below.		<b>Public Report</b>
<b>Options:</b> Report for noting		<b>Key Decision:</b> No
<b>Executive Summary:</b>  <p>Since the last Council meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013, the following minutes have been published for the meetings held in public session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Planning Committee – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013</li> <li>(2) Council – 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013</li> <li>(3) Planning Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(4) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(5) Council Annual General Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(6) Licensing Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(7) Cabinet – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(8) Planning Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013</li> <li>(9) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013 (to follow)</li> <li>(10) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013 (to follow)</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Hard copies of minutes are sent to members of the relevant meeting. Copies are available for all members to view on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.braintree.gov.uk/meetings">http://www.braintree.gov.uk/meetings</a></i></p>		
<b>Decision:</b> <p>Members are invited to note the minutes published.</p>		
<b>Purpose of Decision:</b> Not applicable		
<b>Officer Contact:</b> Alastair Peace		
<b>Designation:</b> Member Services Manager		
<b>Ext. No.</b> 2602		
<b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk">alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk</a>		