

# 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 29<sup>th</sup> July 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 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 Declarations of Interests have been made, 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 Council meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (Copy previously circulated).

**6. To consider the following Motion submitted by Councillor Butland:**

“This Council recognises the importance to local businesses and residents of having a clear legally binding route to a referendum on future membership of the European Union. It therefore supports the Private Members Bill currently going through Parliament, introduced by Conservative MP James Wharton, to hold a referendum in 2017 or before, thus giving the voters of Braintree District a say on their relationship with the European Union”.

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4 of the Constitution.

The motion has been proposed by Councillor Butland and seconded by Councillors Beavis, Cunningham, McKee, Mitchell, Schmitt, Siddall and Tattersley.

**7. Recommendations from Cabinet, 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013 – Treasury Management – Investment Policy.** Report attached (Page 1).

**8. Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013 – Scrutiny Review of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership.** Report attached (Page 10).

**9. Recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013 – Task and Finish Group Review of Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency.** Report attached (Page 12).

**10. Appointment of the Monitoring Officer.** Report attached (Page 18).

11. **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 20);
  - b) Councillor Beavis, People and Participation (Page 25);
  - c) Councillor Bebb, Performance and Efficiency (Page 28);
  - d) Councillor Lady Newton, Planning and Property (Page 31);
  - e) Councillor Schmitt, Place (Page 33);
  - f) Councillor Siddall, Prosperity and Growth (Page 36).
- (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 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013. (Report attached – Page 38).

12. **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.***

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

***There are none.***

14. 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.

### **PRIVATE SESSION**

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

15. **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.***

16. **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.

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

- (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 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

17. **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 39.

Referral from Cabinet – 15 <sup>th</sup> July 2013		Agenda No: 7
Treasury Management – Investment Policy		
Presented by:		Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency
Background Papers:		Public Report

**Minute Extract:**

**CABINET – 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2013**

**18. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INVESTMENT POLICY**

**INFORMATION:** Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency, agreed to consider the investment policy related to property further with the Council's financial advisers.

**DECISION:** That it be recommended to Council:

That the proposed changes to the Council's Investment Policy as detailed in Appendix B to the report be approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To recommend amendments to the Council's Investment Policy which will enable a wider diversification of the Council's investments and extend the period over which the investment of core monies can be invested.



CABINET  
15<sup>th</sup> July 2013

<b>Treasury Management – Investment Policy</b>		<b>Agenda No:</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> Providing value for money <b>Portfolio Area:</b> Performance and Efficiency <b>Report presented by:</b> Councillor David Bebb <b>Report prepared by:</b> Trevor Wilson, Head of Finance		
<b>Background Papers:</b> Treasury Management Strategy including annual investment policy for 2013/14 agreed by Council 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2013.		<b>Public</b>
<b>Options:</b> To agree to or amend the revised criteria for the selection of counter parties for investments.		<b>Key Decision: NO</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b> <p>The Council's policy objective is and continues to be to invest prudently, with the priority being the security and liquidity of the investment followed by yield achieved.</p> <p>Counterparty risk is monitored using a variety of information, not solely based on credit ratings although these remain an important factor. The default position in times of market stress will be to place money with UK Government via the Debt Management Office or with other UK local authorities.</p> <p>Investments will be in a range of instruments categorised as either 'Specified' or 'Non-specified' in accordance with criteria set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).</p> <p>With short-term interest rates low but an improved credit risk outlook, an investment strategy would typically result in lengthening of investment periods, where cash flow permits, in order to lock in higher rates of acceptable risk adjusted returns.</p> <p>An analysis of the Council's cash available for investment in 2013/14 shows that there is a core element of £10million to £15million which is not required for funding capital expenditure or to meet short-term cashflow shortfalls.</p> <p>The Council's estimated rate return on investments at 0.7% for 2013/14 is significantly less than the rate of inflation therefore the return is being eroded in real terms.</p> <p>As a consequence of these two factors the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Performance and Efficiency requested a meeting with Arlingclose to discuss how these factors may be reflected in a revised investment strategy. The meeting with Mark Horsfield, Director Arlingclose, was held on Monday 10th June 2013 and was attended by the</p>		

Cabinet portfolio holder, Corporate Director, Head of Finance and Financial Services Manager.

Options for alternative investments with a longer-term time horizon included:

Pooled Funds:

- Cash Plus/Short Bond;
- Property;
- Fixed Income;
- Commodities;
- Equities.

And

Investments with Registered Housing Providers (e.g. Housing Associations)

Pooled Funds are considered more suitable than holding government and corporate bonds directly. Details of the pooled fund options for Cash Plus/Short Bond and Fixed Income are provided at Appendix A. The options of pooled funds involving property, commodities and equities have increases in risk which were considered to be unacceptable. The current Investment Policy provides for investment in pooled funds of up to an aggregate total of £5million. It is **proposed** that a maximum limit of £5million is set per Fund Management Company and an aggregate limit for the type of investment is set at £15million.

Arlingclose is currently working with three local authorities to arrange an investment with a housing association. The proposed period of the investment is five years. This is expected to provide a good rate of return for the local authorities, in the region of 3% (net of fees), and also provides a source of funding for housing associations at a time when the traditional sources of bank funding have reduced over the last few years. The Housing Association has a credit rating and it is a condition of the investment that if the long-term credit rating falls to below investment grade, then a 'negative pledge' over a pool of unencumbered assets will be established by the Housing Association and maintained until the investment is repaid at maturity. The asset value for the negative pledge will be at least 110% of the investment.

It is **proposed** to include a maximum limit of £5million for an investment with a housing association and with a maximum duration of 5 years.

The Investment Policy incorporating the proposed changes is provided at Appendix B.

#### **Decision:**

Members agree to Recommend to Council the approval of the proposed changes to the Council's Investment Policy as detailed in Appendix B to the report.

#### **Purpose of Decision:**

To make amendments to the Council's Investment Policy which will enable a wider diversification of the Council's investments and extend the period over which the investment of core monies can be invested.



Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail	
<b>Financial:</b>	The budget for interest from investments for 2013/14 is £220,000, representing 0.7% on an estimated average sum invested of £31.496million. Extending the options for investment and consequentially the duration will allow core monies not required for at least one year to be invested with an anticipated higher rate of return.
<b>Legal:</b>	Local authorities' treasury management activities operate within a statutory framework which refers to a requirement to follow certain professional codes issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and statutory guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	None
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	None direct but the outcomes of treasury management activities impact on the financial resources of the Council to deliver its priorities and service objectives.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	None
<b>Risks:</b>	<p>The Treasury Management Strategy Statement seeks to set a framework to manage the inherent risks around treasury management activities, which effectively comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security – ensuring investments are repaid;</li> <li>• Liquidity – ensuring that cash is available for both capital and revenue purposes when required and where borrowing is necessary this is done on a basis that is prudent, sustainable, and affordable;</li> <li>• Interest rate – limiting exposure to fixed and variable interest rates, and refinancing risks of both debt and maturing investments.</li> </ul> <p>Increases in duration from money market funds causes an increase in risk and volatility to the capital invested.</p>
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Trevor Wilson
<b>Designation:</b>	Head of Finance
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2801
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:Trevor.wilson@braintree.gov.uk">Trevor.wilson@braintree.gov.uk</a>

## **Brief details and examples of Pooled Funds**

### **Cash Plus and Short Bond Funds**

**Cash Plus Funds** – the funds aim to provide capital stability and income through investment in short-term fixed income and variable rate securities.

The fund invests in sterling-denominated investments, including gilts, supranationals, agencies, bank and corporate bonds and other money market securities.

Suggested investment horizon is Minimum 6 to 12 months, but can be withdrawn at short notice.

Example funds are Federated Prime Rate Cash Plus Fund and Payden & Rygel Sterling Reserve Fund.

Arlingclose summary is that the funds are designed for Local Authority Treasurers' core cash and have similar credit characteristics to Money Market Funds but has an increased duration which allows a pickup in return.

**Short Bond Funds** – the fund objective is to provide capital, stability and income.

The fund invests in money market instruments in countries that are members of the OECD. The money market instruments will include Certificates of Deposit (CD), Commercial Paper (CP) and Treasury Bills.

Suggested investment horizon is Minimum 6 to 12 months, but can be withdrawn at short notice.

Example funds are Investec Short Bond Fund and Ignis Sterling Short Duration Cash.

Arlingclose summary is that the funds can invest in money market instruments, developed major government bond markets, supranational and government guaranteed bonds, hedged back to sterling.

### **Fixed Income or Absolute Return Funds**

The funds aim to achieve a positive return over the long-term by investing in interest bearing assets and related derivatives.

The funds are similar to traditional bond fund but can invest in any fixed income opportunity across the world, it can also sell unattractive bonds and use currency to achieve higher yield.

Suggested investment horizon is 3 years or longer, but can be withdrawn at short notice.

Example fund is Investec Fund Series – Target Return Fund.

Arlingclose summary is that the Target Return is an Absolute Return Fund that focuses on fixed income. It can take 'long' or 'short' positions in interest rates, credit quality of bonds, the countries (emerging debt) and the currency in which it invests. This could allow the fund to produce attractive returns in any environment.

### Other Pooled Funds

Other pooled funds include property, commodities and equities. These funds are not considered appropriate for the Council.

The advantages and disadvantages of pooled funds are summarised in the table below:

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Flexibility	Volatility of returns may increase; therefore the Council should be prepared for the possibility of capital value to fall.
Some compliance with current Treasury Management Strategy	The investment horizon is normally at least 3 years.
Greater degree of flexibility in the instruments that can be used	Many of the asset classes and instruments used are complex
Potentially enhanced investment returns	May be new accounting treatments to consider
Diversifies opportunity and risk	There may be liquidity restrictions in some funds
Maybe more appropriate to prevailing economic conditions	
Access to fund manager resources	
Unitised approach can work regardless of scale	
Resource efficient management of funds	
Pooled funds provide opportunities for income as well as capital appreciation	

## **Investment Policy**

### **Specified Investments**

Under Department for Communities and Local Government Guidance an investment is specified if it:

- Is sterling denominated
- Has a maximum maturity of one year
- Is not defined as capital expenditure i.e. excludes acquisition of share or loan capital in any body corporate
- Meets the “high credit quality” criteria as determined by the Council, or is made with the UK Government or another UK local authority.

For the purpose of determining a “highly credit rated” bank or building society the minimum criteria will be the lowest equivalent ratings assigned by either Fitch, Moody’s, or Standard & Poor’s

Rating	Comment
Long-term rating of at least A-	High credit quality with expectation of low risk i.e. institutions are assessed as having strong capacity to meet financial commitments
Support rating (from sovereign/ strong parent) of either 1 or 2	Extremely high and high categories

The Council will also take into account information on corporate developments of and market sentiment towards investment counterparties.

There are no changes proposed to the Specified Investments that may be used and these are as follows:

Instrument	Current Policy	
	Counterparty	Maximum counterparty limits
Term Deposits	Debt Management Office Account (UK Government)	
Treasury Bills	UK Government	
Term Deposits	Other UK Local Authorities (principal, police and fire authorities)	
Term Deposits/ Call Accounts/ Certificates of Deposit or CD's	UK and Non-UK Banks and Building Societies meeting criteria for "highly credit rated"	The higher of 15% of cash balances or £5million. Duration limit of maximum 364 days, subject to shorter limits imposed based on advice from the Council's external treasury management advisors.
Money Market Funds	AAA-rated Funds	Individual MMF 10% of cash balances (rounded up to nearest million) subject also to being less than 0.5% of the net asset value of the Fund. Aggregate All MMF £15 million
Money Market Funds investing in UK Government short-term debt securities	AAA-rated Funds with the aim of maintaining a constant Net Asset Value	Individual MMF 10% of cash balances (rounded up to nearest million) subject also to being less than 2% of the net asset value of the Fund. Aggregate within total MMF limit of £15 million.
Public Sector Reserve Account and/ or overnight/ next working day deposits	Co-operative Bank	Up to maximum of £5million for short-medium term operational/ liquidity requirements. This limit may be exceeded in exceptional circumstances by the Corporate Director (Finance).

Counterparty limits will apply to individual institutions/ Group. Counterparty exposure through the Money Market Funds will not be aggregated with direct placements for the purpose of the counterparty limits, although this total exposure will be monitored.

### Non-Specified Investments

Non-specified investments are any other type of investment not falling within the definition of specified set out above.

The maximum aggregate amount that may be invested in Non-specified investments will be £15million (this will also represent the Prudential Code limit on principal sums invested for periods of longer than 364 days).

The Council will always consult with its treasury advisors before placing any Non-Specified investments.

Having considered the risk associated with Non-specified investments, the following have been determined as appropriate for potential use by the Council:

Instrument	Current Policy		Proposed Policy		Comment
	Counterparty	Maximum counterparty limits	Counterparty	Maximum counterparty limits	
Term Deposits	Other UK Local Authorities	£5 million	Unchanged from current policy		
Gilts	UK Government	£5 million	Unchanged from current policy		
Bonds (max duration 10-years)	Multilateral development banks (E.g. European Investment Bank, World Bank etc.)	£5 million	Unchanged from current policy		
Term Deposits or Certificates of Deposit (or CD's)	UK and Non-UK Banks and Building Societies meeting criteria for "highly credit rated"	£2million / 2 years – subject to shorter limits imposed based on advice from the Council's external treasury management advisors.	Unchanged from current policy		
Investment/ loans to Registered Providers (e.g. Housing Association)			Rated/ Un-rated Housing Associations	£5million Duration limit of maximum 5 years	New category introduced reflecting potential opportunity for diversification
Money Market Funds and Collective Investment Schemes (Pooled Funds) which are not treated as capital expenditure under Statutory Regulation and where the intention is to invest for greater than one-year even if short term access is available	Enhanced cash funds, corporate bond funds, equity income funds, property funds	Aggregate £5 million all funds	Unchanged from current policy	£5million per fund management company with an aggregate limit of £15million.	To actively pursue this option as opposed to holding government or corporate bonds directly. This option removes the need for the Council to maintain its own custodian facility. Would permit short-term access subject to possible variable net asset value.

<b>Referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>		<b>Agenda No: 8</b>
<b>Overview And Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Review of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership</b>		
<b>Presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor Dr Evans, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>	

**Minute Extract:**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

6. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP**

**INFORMATION:** Members agreed that in respect of the draft recommendation that the Council receives a report on the work of the Community Safety Partnership, this should be amended such that the report is received through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Subject to this amendment, Members agreed that the report be referred to Council and to Cabinet.

**DECISION:**

1. That the report be referred to Council and to Cabinet.
2. That it be recommended to Cabinet:
  - a. That consideration is given in the Community Safety Partnership (CSP's) priorities to providing greater prominence to other community safety issues outside of the police and criminal justice system. e.g. Anti-Social Behavior.
  - b. That the Annual Partnership Plan of the CSP be published and that all publically available CSP documents are reviewed to ensure the use of plain English throughout with the aim of encouraging the public to take a greater interest in the CSP.

- c. That the Council, through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, receives an annual report on the performance of the CSP which takes account of how the CSP has delivered against the Council's objectives.
- d. That in the case of the Fire Break project, follow up arrangements are put in place with the aim of ensuring that those young people who have gained certain experiences and qualities as a result of attending the project maintain these positive outcome.
- e. That in the case of the Domestic Abuse project, the benefits are drawn out in terms of the number of people referred to the service and those able to build a new life as a result of using the service.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To consider the Committee's report on the scrutiny review of the Braintree District CSP.

The full report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's scrutiny review of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership is enclosed separately with this agenda.



<b>Referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013</b>	<b>Agenda No: 9</b>
<b>Task and Finish Group Review of Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency</b>	
<b>Presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor Wilson, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

**Minute Extract:**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 29<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2013**

4. **TASK AND FINISH GROUP – REVIEW OF BRAINTREE, HALSTEAD AND WITHAM CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AGENCY.**

**INFORMATION:** Members received the report from Councillor Wilson, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, who thanked all those involved in the work of the group for their support.

Councillor Wilson provided the following responses to questions from members:

- The Group had considered the provision of Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) services in rural areas. The Group was of the view that as the CAB does not have boundaries, people are able to visit any CAB centre including out of the district to receive advice. The CAB is also accessible through online and telephone services;
- The Group recognised that the length of training of 12 to 18 months for volunteers to become a full CAB adviser is an issue. However, the Group also noted that the CAB's telephone "Gateway" process was resulting in people moving through the process quicker;
- The Group recognised that the current Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency (BDVSA) premises are not adequate for BDVSA's needs and discussions have been held with a range of organisations with a view to helping find new premises. The Group also recognised that funding

any move to new premises would be an issue;

- The BDVSA Newsletter provides very useful information on related activities and developments in the district.

The Chairman invited Paul Hart, District Manager, and Don Smith, Chairman, Braintree, Halstead and Witham CAB, who were present at the meeting to add any comments to further inform members in respect of their questions. Mr Hart and Mr Smith provided the following:

- Whilst it can take 12 to 18 months to complete training certification programme for CAB Advisers, those undergoing training are advising members of the public after about 6 months. Completing the certification process is lengthy as advisers are required to build up a portfolio of evidence in order that they can advise in a range of topics. In some cases the opportunity to train on a topic is infrequent resulting in a lengthy process;
- The training to become a Gateway Assessor is shorter, at around 2 months, as Assessors are trained to gather information and not to provide advice;
- Whilst acknowledging that people wish to receive face to face advice, the Braintree, Halstead and Witham CAB does not have the resources to provide this service in rural areas. Funding is not provided through the Service Level Agreement with the Council for an outreach service. An outreach service was trialled in Sible Heddingham. However, there was insufficient demand for the service which therefore, could not be supported. An outreach service is provided in Coggeshall as the Parish Council there provides a donation.

Councillors Cadman and Shelton noted that the CAB acknowledged that it is not providing a face to face service in rural areas due to a lack of funding. Both were concerned that the Council is providing funding to the Braintree, Halstead and Witham CAB supported by council taxes from residents from the whole of the district but not providing a service to rural communities.

Members agreed that the issue of face to face CAB services not being provided in rural areas should be included in the report to Council and Cabinet.

**DECISION:** That the Task and Finish Group Review of Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency be referred to Council and Cabinet.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To consider the Task and Finish Group report.

The full report of the Task and Finish Group is enclosed separately with this agenda.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
29<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Council, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013  
Agenda Item 9



Task & Finish Group Review of Braintree Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency		Agenda No:
Corporate Priority:	Everyone can enjoy a healthy lifestyle	
Report presented by:	Cllr. Sue Wilson, Chairman Task and Finish Group	
Report prepared by:	Angela Verghese	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options:	Key Decision: NO	
Executive Summary:		
The purpose of the Report prepared by the Task & Finish Group is to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine the issues that BDVSA and the CAB face:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Through their work in the community</li><li>○ Through their relationship with the council</li></ul></li><li>• Determine the options arising from 1 &amp; 2 above</li><li>• Recommendations arising from the options</li></ul>		
The full Report is attached and the recommendations are as follows:		
BRAINTREE CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU:		
Recommendations For Braintree District Council:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Financial Support:</b> To continue to provide its core funding contribution and to maintain close partnership working with the CAB. This funding and support is essential for the CAB to provide its services to benefit local residents, who are amongst some of the most vulnerable people in the District.</li><li>• <b>Non Financial Support:</b> To identify ways to increase its non-financial support to the CAB including:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ In addition to the Council’s representative on the Trustee Board, a deputy should be available to make sure BDC is always represented by one/two people. Both of these Representatives to have voting rights.</li><li>○ In kind support eg PR advice, administrative assistance</li><li>○ To provide a Member representative on the Essexwide Group of Citizens Advice Bureaux</li></ul></li></ul>		

- **Partnership Working:** To continue to work in partnership with the CAB and to seek opportunities to develop joint solutions to meet emerging needs.
- **Awareness Raising:**
  - To increase Parish Councils' awareness of the scope and limitations of the CAB's services
  - To increase Members' awareness of the scope and limitations of the CAB's services through wider dissemination of its monitoring information and through the Members' Portal, Member Induction Training and Members' Evenings.

## 2. Recommendations For Braintree Halstead & Witham Citizens Advice Bureau:

- **Gateway Assessment Process:** To implement this process for handling enquiries as quickly as possible with the support of all staff and volunteers. This was strongly supported by the Task & Finish Group who felt that this new procedure should be able to be implemented as quickly as possible and would seem to be the way forward to progress the future increase in enquiries in a shorter amount of time.
- **Volunteers:** To investigate opportunities to recruit volunteers for appropriate tasks that do not require extensive, lengthy training as advisers, e.g. administrative tasks.
- **Fundraising:** They should develop a fundraising strategy to enable the CAB to identify potential sources of funding and achieve increased income from a wider range of sources.
- **Opening Hours:** To investigate whether it is feasible to extend opening hours for appointments at weekends, and/or evenings in order to increase access.
- **Premises:** To seek a satisfactory solution to the problems arising from the Braintree premises through further discussions with the Council's Estates Department

## BRAINTREE DISTRICT VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AGENCY

### Recommendations For Braintree District Council (to Cabinet)

- **Financial Support:** To continue to provide its core funding contribution and to maintain close partnership working that sustains and values both BDVSA and the local voluntary sector.
- **Non Financial Support:** To identify ways in which it could provide non-financial support to BDVSA including:
  - In addition to the Council's representative on the Executive Committee, a deputy should be available to make sure BDC is always represented by one/two people. Neither of these Representatives would have voting rights.
  - To make representations on BDVSA's behalf to support them in securing funding from Essex County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group.

- **Awareness Raising:**
  - To increase Members' awareness of the services BDVSA provides through wider dissemination of its Newsletter, Monitoring
  - Information and through Member Induction Training and Members' Evenings.
  - To provide more information and improved links to BDVSA on the Council's website.

## 2. Recommendations For BDVSA (through Cabinet)

- **New Premises:** To investigate alternative premises to provide a higher standard of accommodation and a more positive environment. This would greatly enhance BDVSA's image, presence and working conditions for its staff. It is the Task & Finish Group's opinion that this could help to re-energize the organisation and encourage it to be more proactive in promoting its services to the voluntary sector. It will enable staff to work more productively in less cramped conditions, with room for volunteers to be used to undertake work to support or expand the activities of BDVSA, e.g. volunteers working on publicity and promotion. Possible accommodation options to be investigated include:
  - The Council's property portfolio: an initial discussion has taken place between the Chair of the Task & Finish Group and Andrew Epsom, Asset Manager
  - Accommodation at Greenfields Community Housing offices: The Chair of the Task & Finish Group has met Greenfields' Community Empowerment Manager who will make further enquiries.
  - Empty shop premises in a town centre.
  - Creation of a community hub for a variety of voluntary organizations (including BDVSA) to operate from.

However, it is noted that BDVSA may struggle to secure adequate premises without incurring additional costs (rent, heat, etc) as they enjoy a peppercorn rent of £620 per annum, excluding electricity, at their current premises.

- **Profile Raising/Publicity:** To consider ways to ensure that more organizations that could benefit from their services are made aware of them e.g. use of in kind specialist advice and/or volunteer support for publicity campaigns.

### Decision:

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

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

Corporate implications	
<b>Financial:</b>	none
<b>Legal:</b>	none
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	none
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	none
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	n/a
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	n/a
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Angela Verghese
<b>Designation:</b>	Community Wellbeing Manager
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2329
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:angve@braintree.gov.uk">angve@braintree.gov.uk</a>

Appointment of the Monitoring Officer		Agenda No: 10
Corporate Priority:	Partnership, Overall Corporate Strategy and Direction	
Report presented by:	Cllr G. Butland, Leader of the Council	
Report prepared by:	Nicola Beach, Chief Executive	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options:	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>The Council appointed Emma Wisbey as the Interim Monitoring Officer, until a new Head of Governance takes up appointment.</p> <p>Ian Hunt has been appointed to the Head of Governance post. He is a qualified solicitor.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer has a statutory role and statutory requirements to meet under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. In order to perform these functions the appointee must be an officer of the Council and it is recommended that Ian Hunt, Head of Governance, is appointed as the Monitoring Officer on taking up his appointment with the Council.</p>		
Decision:		
<p>To approve the appointment of Ian Hunt as the Monitoring Officer with effect from taking up his appointment with the Council.</p>		
Purpose of Decision:		
<p>To ensure compliance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.</p>		

Corporate Implications	
<b>Financial:</b>	None. Costs met from existing budget
<b>Legal:</b>	Set out in the report
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	None
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	None
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	None
<b>Risks:</b>	The designation of the Monitoring Officer is a statutory requirement
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Nicola Beach
<b>Designation:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2002
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:nicola.beach@braintree.gov.uk">nicola.beach@braintree.gov.uk</a>



**LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**Agenda No:11(i)a**

**1. Essex Leaders' Meeting – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

The Leaders of Essex Councils met in the Council Chamber of Chelmsford City Council.

The agenda included the following Items;

**(i) Who Will Care? The Hughes-Hallett Independent Commission into Health & Social Care Strategy in Essex**

Essex County Council has asked Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett to lead an independent commission to look at the health and social care system and make recommendations as to how it could be improved.

**Terms of Reference of the Commission**

The Commission will provide an unfettered, creative and focused appraisal of how the health and social care system in Essex can be improved for the benefit of all. It will focus on out of hospital care, whilst also considering the role played by acute hospitals.

The Commission will consider, in particular, the care system as it relates to frail people, those with dementia, and those with disabilities.

Recommendations will not require changes to primary legislation.

The challenges faced by health and social care from rising demand and constrained public funding constitute one of the most pressing social policy issues of the day. There is general consensus that the system, as currently constructed, is unsustainable.

The Commission will assess the current state of the health and social care system and provide practical recommendations as to how it can be improved. In doing so, the Commission will focus on three areas:

1. Whole systems approach – integration and effective demand management requires a holistic approach to the factors promoting health and social care. The Commission will look at what can be done to create the conditions for greater integration of services across the system of health and social care in the future.

2. Early intervening and prevention – demand pressures can best be dealt with by shifting resources so that more cost-effective interventions, including self-care, take place sooner. The Commission will look at how this shift can be accelerated and the tools that might be considered to improve incentives and rewards across the system of health and social care.

3. Role of communities – the assets in local communities provide important resources to improve health and well-being. The Commission will examine what can be done to nurture community provision and identify the key interventions to build community and individual capacity, encouraging residents to think about their own health, wellbeing and provision for old age.

The Commission will undertake a wide programme of engagement with Essex residents, health and social care professionals, providers and other interested parties – including local authorities, the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board and Healthwatch. This engagement will help shape the Commission's thinking and will feed into the development of a final report that will be published in autumn 2013.

Sir Thomas provided an update on the work that the Commission has carried out so far and answered questions from Leaders.

Members wishing to know more about the work of the Commission should go to the website [www.whowillcare.info](http://www.whowillcare.info)

#### ***(ii) Child Sexual Exploitation***

Leaders received a presentation from Simon Hart, Chairman of the Essex Safeguarding Board. I reported orally on this issue at the last meeting of the Council and indicated that we will be arranging a members evening on this topic.

#### ***(iii) Consultation on options for a New Lower Thames Crossing***

The Project Manager from the Department of Transport attended and updated Leaders on the consultation process.

### **2. Meeting with the Leader of Essex County Council – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

I met with Cllr David Finch, the new Leader of Essex County Council, to discuss matters of mutual concern to both Councils.

I am delighted that Cllr Finch has agreed to remain on the Braintree District Joint Locality Board. We agreed that in future the Board will meet quarterly and that the two Council Leaders will meet between meetings. Both of us are committed to close working between our two authorities.

### **3. Cabinet Strategy Workshop – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

Cabinet & Deputy Cabinet members spent a day reviewing the progress on the Council's Key Objectives. We were joined for the session on Economic Development by Cllr Kevin Bentley, the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development at Essex CC, and our two Members of Parliament, Priti Patel and Brooks Newmark. The presence of these three people was a clear indication of the commitment that there is at local, county and national level to the issue of growth in the District.

### **4. Local Government Association Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

Together with Cllrs Siddall, Cunningham and the Chief Executive I attend the LGA Conference in Manchester.

I felt that there were two key highlights of the Conference. The first was the launch by the LGA of its new policy statement – “Rewiring public services – rejuvenating democracy”.

This paper sets out the changes needed at both a local and national level so that public services can help communities to meet people's future needs and aspirations. It is a proposition which shows how public services can be transformed through local leadership by rebuilding democratic participation, fixing public services and revitalising the economy. The approach contains important challenges to local government, to our communities, to our partners, but most of all to central government.

Members can download a copy of the document at [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

The other highlight was the speech by the Rt. Hon. The Lord Heseltine.

Lord Heseltine called for local government to stand up and fight to make its voice heard, saying that councils who are "representatives of this great nation at a local level" are at present being treated like "servants".

He said that councils must resist central control to drive forward the growth agenda he outlined in his report.

Lord Heseltine told the Conference: "I don't understand how central government can get away with dominating the debate. You are treated as servants and you are the representatives of this great nation of ours at a local level. You should have a voice that reflects that."

He added that, to make sense of local economies, there is a need for partnership between the public and private sectors. He said that a partnership was also needed between central and local government and he expected the government to create a structure that would allow both tiers to have a coherent discussion about bids to run local services.

He also reiterated his view that local government would be much stronger if the 300+ district and borough councils were abolished and local decision making centred around City Mayors and Unitary Councils.

Lord Heseltine reflected on how local government has changed, asking: "What has happened to the buccaneers who have been replaced by councillors?" He asked why the dynamic of wealth creation had been supplanted by a new class of people merely administering social provision.

He finished his speech by saying that the views of local government are not respected in Whitehall, and that his report gave local authorities the opportunity to change this.

He said: "You will have the opportunity to prove what you can do, and if you can prove it then it could be the stepping stone to a revolution in the way this country is run, but you have to set the pace and if you find that you're being obstructed say so in a language that resonates." He ended with the line: "You are treated as servants. You should have a voice".

His speech was well received by members of all parties present.

By contrast, I have to say that the speech of the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP, could at best be described as "low key".

## 5. **Peer Challenge**

A Peer Challenge of Braintree District Council will be undertaken on the 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013. The Peer Challenge is managed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and one challenge is offered free to each local authority. It is a voluntary programme, but one that can bring external challenge to the Council in terms of its local context, political and managerial leadership and organisational capacity and skills. The Peer Challenge is designed to be a proportionate process which is outcome focused with an action plan developed as part of the final report.

Each Council determines the focus and scope of its review. The Leader and Chief Executive, in consultation with Cabinet members and Management Board, have agreed that the focus of the Peer Challenge for Braintree District Council will be:

- **Financial challenge in 2015/16 and beyond** – how does the Council continue to deliver its priorities and good local services whilst providing value for money and being financially sustainable?
- Does the Council now have the right skills, capacity and focus in place to deliver its **economic development priorities**?

The Peer Challenge team for this review is:

Jean Hunter, Chief Executive, South Cambridgeshire District Council;  
Cllr Neil Clarke, Leader of Rushcliffe Borough Council;  
Diane Hayward, Policy Manager (Economic and Community Strategy) at  
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council;  
Marcus Coulson, Programme Manager, LGA

The team are on site for three days (8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October) which will involve interviews with Member, officers, key partners and stakeholders. The final report should be completed by November/early December. All Members will be kept informed of the process and it is intended that the report will be shared with Members and published.

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:11(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 3.3M.  
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.**

Good progress is being made with the building of the new Witham Leisure Centre. Our constructor Barr are launching a dedicated website with web cam which will link to the BDC website and this will provide an update on the build so far. Our leisure providers Fusion Lifestyle are creating a viewing room at Bramston Sport Centre. The room will provide an ideal place for stakeholders and the press to see what is happening on site.

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

1. Braintree Swim Centre - New gym facilities – Completion 2014.
2. Braintree Leisure Centre - Additional gym facilities – Completion 2013.
3. Halstead Swim Centre – Dry side improvements to sports hall, changing rooms and second floor “spin suite” and “dance studio”. Completion 2013.

I will be working with Fusion Lifestyle to ensure a detailed time line for launching events for the refurbished leisure centres in Braintree and Halstead is co-ordinated with stakeholders and the local community.

**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” has launched taking fitness into 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 at the Braintree Leisure Centre. The event will run from 9.30am – 4pm and will include fun for all the family as well as taster sessions including athletics, pilates, zumba and football.

### **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 took place in June. A public health specialist facilitated the workshop. The outcomes of the workshop will be presented at the next Braintree Active Network meeting in July.

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

The first shadow meeting of the Panel was held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July and an update of the meeting was presented to Cabinet that evening. The panels first meeting included stakeholders from Greenfields Community Housing, Essex County Council Public Health Specialist and Director of Strategy and Primary Care, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, as well as political leadership from Braintree District Council. The Panel agreed its terms of reference and started to decide on priorities and outcomes.

I have been nominated to serve on Essex County Council's Essex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee meets on a monthly basis and will provide me with an opportunity to understand the wider issues regarding health across Essex.

### **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. Member training evenings continue to provide our members with an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of some of the key issues affecting our communities. The latest sessions have included: the roll out of Super-Fast Broadband and the corporate strategy of Greenfields Community Housing. Both sessions received excellent feedback from members albeit attendance was quite low. The Member Development Working group will look at the possible idea of linking training to allowances.

### **The Localism programme.**

Nominations for the Community Right to Bid (a provision in the new Localism Act) continue to grow slowly. Sible Hedingham Parish Council has been the latest organisation to list a property of community value. If community assets are subsequently offered for sale by their owners, the community will have a 6 month window of opportunity to bid for the property before it can be sold on the open market.

### **Community Led Planning.**

Conditional awards for grants have been made to Braintree East (pride in our patch community led plan) and Panfield Village Design Statement from the Lottery “Awards for All” grants programme. Witham and Cressing are likely to submit applications to Braintree District Council to designate a neighbourhood area. Community led activity

in your ward is now available on the Members Portal.

### **Advice Services in the District.**

Representatives of the Citizen Advice Bureau, Rural Community Council of Essex, Village Agents, Mid Essex Mind, Age UK, Greenfields Community Housing and Braintree District Council have formed an “Advice Services Partnership”.

The partnership has been awarded £150,000.00 from the Big Lottery Fund Advice Services Transition Fund to look at the way in which advice services are delivering locally, attempt to align services amongst participating agencies and to identify new projects around delivering these services.

### **The Witham Neighbourhood Budget.**

A prospectus setting out the ethos of the Witham Neighbourhood Budget and specific projects is being drafted for circulation to the community alongside a Community Hub which will take place as a “pop up” in the Newlands Shopping Centre in Witham from August. A user friendly name and logo will be developed and used for the Witham Neighbourhood Budget and connected projects. The project will also be seeking funding and support from Government under the new Our Place initiative which is the follow up to the Neighbourhood Level Community Budgets pilots.

### **Community Builders.**

The Council narrowly missed out becoming an Essex Community Builder pilot for health and wellbeing projects which focuses on health concerns in Witham (connected to the Witham Neighbourhood Budget) and Sible Hedingham. It is understood that further funding is being sought by Essex County Council to take this project forward. The initiative would use asset based community development techniques to build passion, enthusiasm and commitment from within the community to take on and lead health and wellbeing activities. Asset based community development works by asking people to identify the skills they have (assets) to bring to projects.

### **Community Services Review.**

A review of the Community Services Department has commenced. The review will enable Cllr. Tattersley and me (also Cllr’s Schmitt and Mitchell from a community safety perspective) to work with officers to identify the priorities for the department. The review will include: Safeguarding vulnerable adults and young children, community transport, the Localism Framework Programme, external funding opportunities, ward profiles and community safety.

### **Safeguarding.**

The safeguarding programme for Braintree District Council staff is progressing well. To date 463 of 466 staff have attended the face to face training.

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>
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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF  
PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

**Agenda No: 11(i)c**

**Council Tax collection**

Up to 30<sup>th</sup> June the cumulative Council Tax collection rate was 30.6% which compares to 30.93% as June 2012. This represents £22.465m collected against the annual net collectable debt for 2013/14 of £73.418m. For Business Rates the collection rate was 32.6% (compares to 31.14% as June 2012)

The first court for 2013/14 council tax debts was held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013. A total of 1,465 liability orders were granted by the court, this compares to 1,140 granted by the court in July 2012. Of the total number summonsed just over 30 attended the court and these were seen individually by a BDC Revenues Officer. Payment plans were agreed with the majority and one is to be referred to the CAB for money advice (and possible assistance from our Exceptional Hardship Fund). A total of seven officers from BDC Revenues were present at the court to meet and agree terms with those non-payers attending the court.

**Statement of Accounts and audit**

The Council's Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 was signed by the Corporate Director as complete and ready for external audit on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013. The External Auditors commenced their audit on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and this is expected to take four weeks.

**Investment Policy**

Following our meeting with our Investment Advisors, Arlingclose, on June 10<sup>th</sup>, proposed revisions to the Council's Investment Policy have been worked up for the Cabinet Agenda of 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013, and subsequently to Council on July 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Further background to the Fourth Quarter and Annual performance Report**

The final quarter of the year, as with previous quarters, has been challenging which has impacted on some areas of performance. Although a number of performance indicators have not quite met their stretching targets at the end of the quarter or end of the year, we have performed very well in the delivery of key projects in respect of our strategic priorities. All underperforming indicators are being monitored and action plans developed to mitigate any down turn in performance. Some examples of good performance and success in projects include:

- *Affordable Homes:* A total of 71 affordable homes have been delivered against a target of 50.
- *Number of empty homes returned to use:* A total of 74 empty homes have been returned to use which has exceeded the target of 55.
- *Call answering times:* we are exceeding our corporate target of 15 seconds to answer calls by averaging a call answering time of 13 seconds for the year.
- *Sickness:* Continues to be good and under the two days target with the fourth quarter averaging 1.68 days. For the year, the Council has approximately 6.29 working days lost to sickness per employee against a target of 8 working days.
- *Increasing our support to vulnerable people to enable them to stay in their own homes:* In 2012/13, 95 disabled facilities grants were approved totalling £500,000 reducing the waiting list by over 40% since the start of the year.
- *Invest in our Town Centres:* We continue to promote and invest in our town centres with the help of the Portas funding. The indi card continues to be a success with over 8,000 cards distributed and the first pop-up shop opened in March assisting new businesses. Additional seasonal markets saw a rise in the footfall across the towns together with the parking initiative which will be continued into next year.
- *Play areas:* Three play areas across the district have now been refurbished ahead of schedule and a further three will be refurbished next year.
- *Community Transport service:* The Community Transport team provided an increase in the number of passenger journeys for 2012/13 with a total of 59,777 which is a 4% increase on last year.
- *Mi Community :* 20 local community groups have benefitted from the funding provided by Mi Community over the last two years.
- *Customer Service Excellence Standard:* The Housing Services Team and Operations successfully achieved the standard in 2012/13 with both services achieving elements of compliance plus.
- *Customer Satisfaction:* 88.5% of residents are satisfied with the way Braintree District Council runs things which is approximately 19% above the national average for councils.

## Human Resources

- **Staff Recruitment:** 10 vacancies were advertised in May and all were successfully appointed. 8 vacancies were advertised in June. Interviews for the post of Head of Governance were scheduled for July 15<sup>th</sup>.
- **Organisational and Management Development:** nearly 120 staff have taken part in a series of Values and Behaviours workshops hosted by Nicola Beach and the Head of HR. A corporate wide management development programme started this month. 65 managers will attend the programme over the next 12 months designed to equip managers with practical tools to enable more effective people and performance management.
- **Apprentices:** Chloe Armstrong – HR apprentice has been successful in gaining employment in Planning at Chelmsford City Council after 8 months with BDC. She will complete her qualifications at CCC but with employed status. This demonstrates how effective our programme can be in enabling young people to develop and access local opportunities.

- **Work Experience:** Requests have been received recently from school pupils, and adults looking for work experience. 2 placements have been arranged for July (Planning, and Environmental Services). HR is working on a more structured approach to enable work experience placements to take place on a regular basis, to support the development of skills in the District, linking with Economic Development regarding NEETS.
- **Staff sickness absence performance** for the first quarter continues to be well within target at 1.1 days (quarter target 2 days)

Cllr David Bebb  
Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency

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

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

**Agenda No: 11(i)d**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION :**

**Broadband**

A campaign is underway over the summer to encourage residents and businesses to register their need for superfast broadband, to ensure that the District is given priority in the roll out of these services through the County Council-led delivery programme. This includes a Parish Summit (22nd July); marketing at community events and through schools; direct mailing to businesses; telephone surveys; and a launch to the business community at the Business Showcase event on the 23rd July 2013.

**A120 Improvement**

Through the Haven Gateway Partnership, the District is continuing to lobby for investment in the A120 east of Braintree. Technical and economic impact studies are underway. Options for improving the Galleys Corner junction are also being undertaken in collaboration with County Council Highways and the Highways Agency.

**ASSET MANAGEMENT:**

**New Witham Town Park Toilet**

The construction of the new toilet has been completed and all of the services are now connected. Witham Town Council and BDC have agreed terms for the grant of a long lease of the new toilet to WTC and Solicitors have been instructed to complete the lease.

**HOUSING:**

**Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation**

The draft Homelessness Strategy has been published on our web-site and consultation closes on 9<sup>th</sup> August.

There are currently 65 homeless households in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council. This compares to 42 households a year ago.

We have established a pilot project with Greenfields for 3 months, restricting some properties to homeless households when they become void. Properties are selected that are less likely to be popular to people seeking to downsize and are in locations that are most likely to meet the needs of homeless households. This helps us to manage the numbers in temporary housing and ensure that we make less use of more expensive emergency accommodation, such as bed & breakfast units.

The Council is participating with 5 other Essex and Suffolk Councils, working towards the 'Homelessness Gold Standard'. This is a commitment for Councils to continuously improve services that seek to prevent and meet the needs arising from homelessness. The scheme provides tailored support, free training provision and peer-review to drive improvements in how we deal with all issues connected to homelessness. The first technical training sessions shared by personnel from the districts is currently being set up and the first steering group meetings established.

### **New Development**

Four affordable housing schemes have been completed and opened since the beginning of the financial year. These are:

- Capel Close, Rayne: Greenfields second new development of 7 family homes;
- Braintree Road, Witham: 9 x 1 and 2 bed homes owned and managed by Home Group;
- Great Bardfield: 12 homes for local people provided by English Rural Housing Association; *and*
- Pavilion Court, Braintree: 5 supported flats and office facilities in Bocking End for NACRO as re-provision for Trinity House in Halstead. The scheme is owned by Colne Housing Society.

### **Housing Research**

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is underway. Questionnaires were sent to 5,000 households across the district and the consultant's report a return rate of just over 23%. This gives a sufficiently large sample size to give representative information about housing in the district. The questionnaire captures detail that is not available from existing published sources. This includes:

- How people move around – where they come from and where they expect to move to;
- Household income and savings that helps us see what capacity people have to meet their own housing requirements and those of their family members; *and*
- What type of housing people aspire to and what they expect.

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF PLACE**

**Agenda No: 11(i)e**

**Climate Change:**

The Council has now received reports back on the solar pv opportunities for a number of our larger sites including the leisure centers. We intend to explore these further by assessing structural suitability of the buildings and the return on financial investment, which with stable Feed-in Tariff rates combined with selling the electricity and low solar panel prices can now secure over 10% return on investment and payback for the Council of less than 8 years on top of reducing carbon emissions.

**Health & Safety Enforcement:**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)'s statutory national enforcement code for local authorities has effectively removed tens of thousands of businesses including most shops and offices from inspection by the Council's Environmental Health Officers.

The code will focus inspections on higher risk activities on a pro-active basis, or where there have been tip-offs about workplaces which endanger employees. Poor performers and sites of special risk, such as cooling towers, which could harbour the potentially fatal legionella bacterium, will still face checks.

Our inspectors have a very important role to play in ensuring the effective and proportionate management of risks in businesses in our district, and the code is designed to guide them on how this needs to be done. It sets out how targeting should be achieved using risk rating. HSE will be working with local authorities to ensure the code is successfully implemented.

**Environmental Health:**

Last year a report found the park homes industry, supplying caravan-like homes to predominantly older residents, has been 'infiltrated by a rogue element', and local councils lacked powers to stop bad practices. The MPs reported legislation was 'beyond inadequate', and failed to protect vulnerable residents from 'widespread' poor practices, including regular harassment of residents, and examples of 'sale blocking' – situations where a site owner prevents residents selling their home on the open market by withholding approval of the buyer. Sale blocking had allowed unscrupulous park home operators to buy residential units at a reduced price, and then quickly sell them on at a sizable profit. New laws, which take effect this month, have been introduced to put a stop to these practices and a new national helpline, operated by the Leasehold Advisory Service will give residents advice when selling or gifting their home.

**Licensing:**

Following an announcement in January and detailed consultation, the Government has now deregulated the following activities; which take place between 8am and 11pm:  
performances of plays (up to audience limits of 500 people)  
and exhibitions of dance (up to audience limits of 500 people)  
and indoor sport (up to audiences limits of 1000 people)

The deregulation will clarify the position on combined fighting sports such as Mixed Martial Arts, so that it is clear in law that such activities remain licensable as boxing or wrestling activities. The Order is also clear that exhibitions of dance of a sufficiently adult nature will not be deregulated.

**Recycling Performance:**

I am delighted to report that last year (12-13) our residents recycled 56.7% of their household waste with Braintree District Council's recycling performance being the 3rd highest in Essex.

In the 1st Quarter of this year recycling performance is estimated to be 60% which is a good start to the year.

**Bocking Cemetery Extension:**

Site infrastructure works to the new extension to Bocking Cemetery and the adjoining allotment area has started. This will provide plots for 1,000 burials and 800 cremated remains which will give us sufficient capacity for the next 40 years. This includes the construction of a new access road along with underground services.

**Fusion Grounds Maintenance Contract:**

Operations has recently secured a new three year contract with Fusion Lifestyle, the Council's leisure operator, to maintain the grounds and sports facilities at all of the leisure facilities from 1 September 2013.

**Gt Notley Country Park - Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area:**

I am pleased to report that a new partnership with Braintree Town Football Academy has recently been agreed to increase the usage of the football facilities at the country park, mainly during the quieter week day periods. The football club will run coaching, holiday soccer camps and after school clubs throughout the year which supports the Council's health and well-being agenda.

**Summer Bedding and Hanging Baskets:**

Over the past few weeks operational teams have been busy planting this year's summer bedding and hanging basket displays on the Council's land as well as supporting local organisations preparing for the annual Anglia and Britain in Bloom competitions.

**Halstead Public Gardens - War Memorial Gardens:**

Work to refurbish the War Memorial Garden in Halstead Public Gardens is completed. This was an excellent example of Halstead Royal British Legion and Halstead in Bloom working in partnership with the Council on a local project that was funded by all three parties and it is a fitting tribute to all those who lost their lives in the armed forces.

**Play Area Consultation:**

Consultation with local residents has commenced on the refurbishment of the play areas at Panners Bridge Great Notley and Templars Witham. Parks and Open Spaces are also working in partnership with Greenfields Community Housing who has allocated £30k to fund replacement play equipment on Council-owned land at Oxford Meadow Sible Hedingham. Consultation has been completed and design briefs are out to tender with a view to work starting on site on site in the Autumn.

**Community Safety:**

The Police Crime and Commissioner (PCC), Nick Alston, will be holding a public meeting on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> August from 16.00 – 18.00 at Causeway House.

**Tree Planting:**

A landscaping scheme is being prepared for the Bramble Road Play Area, it will include a new roadside hedge and 22 trees will be planted in groups around the play areas to provide screening, shelter and habitat.

Discussions are taking place with Witham Tree Group regarding a tree planting scheme off Humber Road.

Unfortunately a number of diseased trees in Weavers Park will need to be felled; each tree will be replaced by 3 others.

Cllr Wendy Schmitt  
Cabinet Member – Place

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

**Agenda No: 11(i)f**

**A. Economic Development**

**1. Business Showcase Event**

The Ignite Business Showcase Event will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2013 at Braintree Arts Theatre with 100 exhibitors. The event will see the consultation launch of the Economic Development Prospectus for the District, setting out how we intend to create the conditions for economic growth and prosperity up to 2026, creating 14,000 jobs above the 2001 baseline. The Prospectus sets out three priorities: infrastructure improvements (road, rail and broadband); business and employment support; and town centre and rural regeneration.

**2. Enterprise Units**

Design work is underway on a suite of 12 new enterprise units at Springwood Drive, with funding contributions from (government) Growth Area Funding (£866,000) and the County Council (£300,000), to be managed by Ignite Business Enterprise. Final plans and elevation drawings have been received from the architect. A meeting is to be held on Thursday 10th July with Liz Storey, Jon Hayden and Cllr. Walters to sign off the plans. A planning application can then be submitted.

**B. Regeneration**

**1. Backing Our Towns – Town Centre Improvement Proposals**

The GVA Town Centre Improvement Studies for the three key towns are nearing completion and will be considered by the Prosperity Project Board in September. These will be launched as a 'Prospectus for Change' document for each town in the autumn and will include prioritised project package proposals and costed implementation plans for the Council and partners.

In advance of this we can share with you the successful approval of the planning consent for the South Street/ Fairfield Road junction widening project which was formally given approval by the Secretary of State on the 5th July 2013. We are now going to be working with our partners, including Essex County Council's Highways, to ensure that this scheme is delivered.

## 2. Portas Pilot

### *Braintree Town Team*

The Braintree town team has been the focus of a high profile visit from Mark Prisk MP, Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government and Conservative MP for Hertford and Stortford. He visited Braintree on 6th June to meet with Town Team representatives. We took him on a tour of the town introducing him to a number of the “Braintree Buddys” who talked about their experiences as retailers and their role in the Town Team.

The Longest Day Event was held on the 21st June when the Town Team partners held a day of summer solstice celebration which included an Italian Market; 21 retailers took part in a Pirate Trail around the town and finishing at the museum. Over 100 families took part in the trail winning prizes donated by the retailers. Alongside this there were dance and sporting activities and music took place around the town throughout the day with local retailers being encouraged to open late.

### *Witham and Halstead Town Teams*

We continue to work with our Partners in each of the Towns to deliver the Portas Pilot aspirations. Halstead is looking to raise its profile by developing a website and recently BDC worked with Witham Town Team to support the Love Your Market campaign 2013 which was held between 15-29th May and supported a number of new businesses to try out trading on the market.

### *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 by a panel. I am pleased to announce that the second tenant, ‘Party Pavilion’ launched their business in the popup shop at the end of June.

Alison Jennings, Regeneration Manager has been approached by a number of other authorities about sharing our experience and learning from the popup shop project.

Cllr Siddall  
Cabinet Member – Prosperity and Growth

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

Cllr Siddall, telephone: (01376) 565302; e mail: [Cllr.csiddall@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.csiddall@braintree.gov.uk)

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<b>LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING</b>		<b>Agenda No: 11(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 10<sup>th</sup> June 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 – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2013</li> <li>(2) Council – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013</li> <li>(3) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013</li> <li>(4) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013</li> <li>(5) Governance Committee – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013</li> <li>(6) Planning Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013</li> <li>(7) Braintree District Local Highways Panel – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013</li> <li>(8) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013</li> <li>(9) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013</li> <li>(10) Cabinet – 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (to follow)</li> <li>(11) Planning Committee – 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (to follow)</li> <li>(12) Licensing Committee – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (to follow)</li> <li>(13) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 24<sup>th</sup> July 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
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