

Minutes

Council Meeting



16th December 2019

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

Present:

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

48 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 7th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to additional wording in respect of the last paragraph under Minute 40 as set out below:

In response to Councillor Butland's comments, Councillor Abbott welcomed the apology in respect of the libraries issue and accepted that the Leader may have been unaware that Councillor Abbott had been in attendance at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18th November 2018. Councillor Abbott then stated he had responded in full to the Leader's request in writing previously. Councillor Abbott confirmed that Councillor Unsworth had accepted the advice of the Monitoring Officer at Full Council on the 1st August 2018, and Councillor Abbott affirmed the right of the opposition to ask questions of the Leader and Cabinet.

49 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12g, "Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members – Councillor Mrs W Schmitt – Environment and Place," as he was a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council. Councillor Abbott was also an Elected Member at Essex County Council.

Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as she was an Elected Member at Essex County Council.

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as he was an Elected Member at Essex County Council.

Councillor S Hicks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12a, "Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members – Councillor G Butland – Leader of the Council," in relation to the Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre as one of his clients was seeking to relocate their business to the site on its completion. Councillor Hicks also declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12g, "Councillor Mrs W Schmitt – Environment and Place," as he was previously involved with a littering campaign that was organised by fast food outlets in the District such as KFC and McDonalds.

Councillor Miss V Santomauro declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12i, "Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members – Councillor P Tattersley – Health and Wellbeing," as she was a member of the judging panel at the Active Essex Sports Awards that took place on 4th December 2019 at the Chelmsford City Racecourse.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as she was an Elected Member at Essex County Council.

Councillor N Unsworth declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 9g, "Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members – Councillor Mrs W Schmitt – Environment and Place," as he was a Member of Coggeshall Parish Council.

For the purposes of clarification, Members were advised that it was not necessary for them to declare an Interest if they were Members of Town or Parish Councils.

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

50 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There was one registered speaker who gave their apologies for the meeting. There were no other statements made, or questions asked.

51 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Chairman's announcements covered the following:

Former Councillor Joan Kimberley

The Chairman was saddened to announce that a former District Councillor, Mrs Joan Kimberley, had passed away. Mrs Kimberley served as a Conservative Councillor for Kelvedon Ward from 1991 to 1995 and was a member of the Housing; Corporate and Personnel; Witham Area Committees; Health Services Sub-Committee; and the Licensing Sub-Committee.

On behalf of Members and officers, the Chairman expressed her condolences to Mrs Kimberley's family and friends.

Halstead in Bloom

The Chairman was pleased to announce that Halstead in Bloom had experienced success in the Britain in Bloom Awards 2019, having won Gold in the "Town" category and joint category winner in the "Wise Ways with Water" category. Congratulations were extended to all involved in Halstead in Bloom's continued success.

The Leader had no announcements to make.

52 **PRESENTATION OF LONG SERVICE AWARD TO KATHY CARPENTER**

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited Kathy Carpenter, Senior Planner at the Council, to join her on the main floor of the Chamber and receive the Long Service award in recognition of her achievements and outstanding commitment to her role.

Ms Carpenter said she had very much enjoyed her time at the Council, of which spanned a 40 year career. She first undertook her role because of her belief in Planning, Local Government and democracy as a whole, and this was a view she continued to uphold today.

53 **PRESENTATION OF THE ESSEX PLAYING FIELD AWARDS**

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, to present the Essex Playing Field Awards. Officers Rob Jarvis, Dave Lawrence and Rick Sargeant were invited to join Councillor Mrs Schmitt

on the main floor of the chamber in order to accept the awards on behalf of all staff within the Operations Team at the Council.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt expressed her delight at the Operation Team's achievement of the award and her appreciation on behalf of all Members for the hard work of the staff involved in maintaining such high standards across the District each year.

Mr. Sargeant thanked Councillor Mrs Schmitt on behalf of officers and stressed that the achievement of the award was the result of a team effort by the Operations Team.

54 **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR GRAHAM BUTLAND**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion submitted by Councillor G Butland:-

The Motion:

“Braintree District Council is signed up to the Essex Faith Covenant which is a joint commitment to a shared set of principles that guide engagement between faith communities and the public services. It aims to promote open, practical working and strengthen community cohesion. The Essex Faith Covenant principles are:

- Faith communities are free to practice their beliefs and religious observances, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.
- Public services and faith-based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, without discrimination.
- The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important and good engagement with the public services should enable them to be brought to bear for the benefit of the wider community.

Braintree District is rightly proud of its efforts to tackle discrimination in all forms but the Council, in the light of the rise of antisemitism in recent years across the United Kingdom, agrees to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) guidelines on antisemitism which defines antisemitism thus:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

This Council resolves to:

- Reconfirm its commitment to the Essex Faith Covenant.
- Restate its condemnation of all forms of racism in all its manifestations, including Islamophobia.
- Adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism as the working model for challenging and confronting incidents of this form of racism.”

There followed a general debate on the Motion submitted by Councillor Butland. On being put to vote, the Motion was approved.

MOTION BY COUNCILLOR JAMES ABBOTT

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion submitted by Councillor J Abbott:-

The Motion:

“Trees, hedgerows and wooded areas Motion.

This Council agrees that in delivering on its commitments to tackling climate change and to support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, it will:

- Draw up plans working with key partners to substantially increase tree planting in Braintree District on public and private land.
- Use its powers and influence to protect existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands to the best of its ability.”

The Chairman then informed Members that Councillor G Butland had submitted an amendment to the original Motion submitted by Councillor Abbott. Councillor Butland stated that prior to the meeting, he had briefly discussed the proposed amendment with Councillor Abbott, who requested that the word “significantly” be inserted between the words “further” and “increase” in the first bullet point. Councillor Butland confirmed he was happy to agree with this. Therefore, the amended Motion was as follows (changes underlined):

“Trees, hedgerows and wooded areas Motion.

This Council agrees that in delivering on its commitments to tackling climate change and to support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, it will request the Climate Change Working Group:

- To consider how, working with key partners, the Council could further significantly increase tree planting in Braintree District on public and private land.
- To examine ways in which the Council might use its powers and influence, in appropriate circumstances, to protect existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands in the Braintree District.”

Councillor Butland then explained his reasons for the proposed amendment to the Motion in its original form that was submitted by Councillor Abbott. Firstly, Members were advised that the Leader was keen that the final report submitted by the Climate Change Working Group was inclusive of all aspects of the issues being debated and as such, incorporated the two bullet points set out within the Motion. The alteration to the first bullet point, “to consider how” as opposed to “Draw up plans,” was proposed in order to allow the Working Group greater scope to consider how the Council could increase tree planting in the District on both public and private land. Lastly, the changes proposed within the final paragraph of the Motion were included to highlight that the protection of existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands related to those within the Braintree District only.

There followed a general debate on the proposed amendment to the original Motion. On being put to vote, the proposed amendment to the Motion was approved.

Further to a brief discussion, the Substantive Motion as amended was put to vote. The Motion as amended was then approved in the following form:

“Trees, hedgerows and wooded areas Motion.

This Council agrees that in delivering on its commitments to tackling climate change and to support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, it will request the Climate Change Working Group:

- To consider how, working with key partners, the Council could further significantly increase tree planting in Braintree District on public and private land.
- To examine ways in which the Council might use its powers and influence, in appropriate circumstances, to protect existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands in the Braintree District.”

56 **RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET – 2ND DECEMBER 2019 – COUNCIL TAX – COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS – ALLOCATION TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the Council’s Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus. Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, was invited to introduce the report.

Members were informed that the target for the collection of Council Tax for the current year was 98.3%. In the event that the target in respect of Council Tax collection was over-achieved, the extra sums collected were required legally to be returned to the tax payers. The total surplus for the year was estimated to be £1,229,000, which was to be redistributed as follows: Essex County Council would receive £888,303, Braintree District Council would receive £155,120, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Policing and Community Safety would receive £134,919 and Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner – Fire and Rescue Authority would receive £50,658. The Council had also agreed to allocate part of its surplus to the Town and Parish Councils; the allocations were made in proportion to each Council’s precept for the current year. The allocation calculated for Town and Parish Councils for 2020/21 was £29,450 to be returned.

In response to a question raised on the allocation of funds between District and Parish Councils, Councillor Bebb agreed to provide a written response.

DECISION: That Full Council agreed that a total of £29,450 of the surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund be allocated to Parish/Town Councils in 2020/21.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree the allocation of the surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund for 2020/21 in advance of the Council’s own Budget setting process in order that the Parish/Town Councils can be notified in sufficient time to enable this resource to be discussed as part of their budget and precept setting process for 2020/21.

57 HATFIELD PEVEREL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - ADOPTION

INFORMATION: Members considered a report which concerned the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan and the proposal to “make” the Plan under Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, was invited to introduce the report. Councillor Mrs Spray commended the hard work and dedication of Hatfield Peverel Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group towards developing the Plan over a prolonged period of time.

Members were informed that, following a review of the Plan by an independent examiner, it was agreed that subject to modifications, the Plan could proceed to referendum as it met the necessary “basic conditions” of the Examiner’s report in July 2019. The Neighbourhood Plan was then the subject of a referendum held on 28th November 2019. It was reported that 92.66% of those who voted were in favour of the Plan.

For the purposes of accuracy, Members were advised that there were a small number of errors within the report, as follows: on page 11 of the Agenda, Paragraph 2.2, the correct date on which the referendum for the Neighbourhood Plan took place was 28th November 2019, not 27th June 2019 as indicated in the report. Similarly, on page 13 of the Agenda, Appendix 1, under “Decisions and Reasons,” the date of the referendum was also given incorrectly.

DECISION: That the Decision Statement attached at Appendix 1 was approved, and the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan was “made” under Section 38A(4) of the 2004 Act.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan to be used in the determination of planning applications within Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Area.

58 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited the Leader and the Cabinet Members to introduce their reports. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to ask questions. Questions were not limited to the content of the reports and could be about matters relating to a portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council, or the District.

Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, commented on two separate areas of his report. In respect of Item 5, Members were advised that the Council had given its full support towards the proposed exemption of care leavers from Council Tax by Essex County Council (ECC). Councillor Louise McKinley, ECC Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, was commended for having brought the proposal forward. The second update related to changes that had been made to the South-East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which was comprised of Essex, Kent and East Sussex. As Local Enterprise Partnerships were now under a national constitution, this meant that they were now required to have a majority composition of business associates on their boards. Subsequently, the Greater Essex Business Board would in future be entitled ‘Success Essex’ with a new membership to ensure that there would

be greater business representation on the Board. With regard to SELEP, there would be no allocation in future for District, Borough or City Councils in the Partnership, although there would be two co-opted places from 1st April 2020. It was confirmed that Councillor Butland would represent all 12 Local Planning Authorities in Essex on SELEP.

Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, highlighted several areas within his report; the first was in relation to the Essex Business Rates Pooling Scheme, which Braintree District Council (BDC) had agreed, alongside 14 other Authorities, to request that the scheme continued for the 2020/21 period. The estimated share for Braintree was £560,000. Secondly, Councillor Bebb was delighted to report that BDC had retained the Customer Service Excellence Standard accreditation, further to the assessment in November 2019. Gratitude was then expressed towards the Finance Team for their hard work and dedication towards the recovery of Council Tax. Lastly, attention was drawn to the recent winner of the Employee of the Month Scheme, Jenny Izard, Collections and Welfare Officer for the Recovery Team within the Revenues Department. It was reported that Ms Izard had been in contact with a customer who was Council Tax arrears; the customer later that they had fled a domestic violence situation with a small baby. Ms Izard treated the customer with great care, respect and kindness, and later referred them to the Housing Department and other services for help with their situation. Councillor Bebb commended Ms Izard for working beyond the duty of her role in order to help and reassure a customer who was in dire need.

Councillor K Bowers, Cabinet Member for Homes, highlighted a communication that Members had received in regard to the Housing Briefings Programme 2020. Members were encouraged to attend the Briefings in order to learn more about how affordable housing was let through choice based letting under the Housing Options Programme.

Councillor T Cunningham, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, gave an update on the latest progress in respect of the pedestrianisation of Braintree Town Centre. A capital budget report was due to be presented at the meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday, 18th December 2019; subject to the agreement of the proposals by the Cabinet, a process of consultation would be implemented for the whole of Braintree. Highways issues within the Town Centre would be fully addressed once the schemes and proposals in terms of the overall pedestrianisation were addressed. The importance of community engagement and feedback in this area was emphasised. The success of the Braintree Town Christmas Light Switch On event, which took place on 16th November, was also commented upon with grateful thanks expressed towards the officers involved and to the town. The feedback that had been received further to the event was very positive, and local retailers had reportedly seen an increase in the town's footfall since the event.

Councillor McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, responded to an earlier question raised in relation to the housing sites that were originally allocated for development in the District, but were now due to be sold. Councillor McKee's report included a statement about the development sites which stipulated that there were two separate communications taking place between the Council and registered housing associations regarding potential sites in the District. Members were also provided with an update on the Council's option agreement with Marshgate Developments in respect of Horizon 120; the five-year option was for 20 surfaced acres of land at market value, the development of which would contribute to the Local Development Order (LDO).

Physical work on the site was expected to commence in March 2020, and with this, the creation of 450 jobs for the area as a result.

Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism, had nothing further to add to his report.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, informed Members that the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner had launched another survey; a link to the survey would be sent to all Members, who were encouraged to participate should they wish. In respect of the Climate Change Working Group, Councillor Mrs Schmitt was pleased to announce that the Group had now filled its vacant membership spaces; the Group was comprised of Councillor Mrs Schmitt as Chairman, Councillor Mrs Garrod, Councillor Unsworth, Mr John Parish (Green Heart Champions representative), Mr Nick Shuttleworth (Executive Director of Rural Community Council of Essex), Mr Richard Gormley (Executive Director of Greenfields), Dr Lauren Crabb (Coventry University) and Ms Lily March (Braintree Sixth Form). It was added that Mr Ruggles-Brise, of Spains Hall Estate in Essex, would also be joining the Group, along with Ms Cherie Mckean (from the 'Eco Colnes in Halstead' Group).

It was confirmed that the 'Say No to Plastic' campaign would be launched officially on 6th January 2020. Special mention was also made of a local six-year old boy named Ollie, who was described as a "young environmentalist" who would help broadcast the campaign more widely. Similarly to this, in respect of the 'Keep Britain Tidy Awards,' it was announced that a young Green Heart Champion named Daniel had been entered into the Keep Britain Tidy's 'Young Litter Hero' award. Councillor Mrs Schmitt was delighted to announce that Daniel had since been shortlisted in his award category, the award ceremony for which was to be held on 2nd February 2020.

Councillor Mrs Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, congratulated the Development Management Team on the improvements that had been implemented within the department. Councillor Mrs Spray also noted that there were several errors within the Development Management Performance report, in that the national indicator targets achieved were far more positive than had originally been indicated: in respect of the second quarter of the year, the target achieved under the major indicators was actually 92.8%, the minor indicators target achieved was 76.7%, and the other indicators target was 86.5%; the correct figures would be included within the next report to Full Council. The figures were indicative of the vast improvements that had taken place within the team, of who were commended for their hard work and efforts, especially while under-resourced in terms of staffing levels. It was also announced that where there were originally four vacancies in the Planning Department, two of the spaces had now been filled for a new Senior Planner and Planning Officer. The final two vacancies were due to be advertised in the New Year.

Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, made reference to the sporting national and world champions within the District. Congratulations were expressed on behalf of all Members, both to the competitors and their trainers.

Members asked several questions arising from the reports. A webcast of the questions to and responses of Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website at www.braintree.gov.uk.

The main topics raised by Members in response to the reports were as follows:-

Councillor Abbott welcomed the potential future support for the District to embark on a programme that supported care leavers in terms of exemption from Council Tax. Two questions were asked; the first related to the Transport for East Forum that took place in October and how the major expansion of trunk roads (such as the A12) in Essex complied with the aim to reduce carbon emissions. The second question regarded the Leader's response to the decision by Colchester Borough Council (CBC) to cease funding the North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) for the present time.

Councillor Mrs Beavis requested further detail on the meeting that took place with BDC and Uttlesford District Council (UDC) on the subject of the Garden Communities. A further question was raised in relation to the issue of paving quality in the Braintree Town Centre.

Councillor Unsworth raised a question in relation to CBC's decision to cease funding NEGC and the potential impact this would have on BDC's contribution.

Councillor Mrs Pell requested an update, if possible, in relation to the housing sites that were originally allocated for development but were now due to be sold off.

Councillor Thorogood queried the reasons why BDC had not progressed the direct delivery of Local Authority homes within the District.

Councillor Pritchard expressed his delight at the Council's plans to undertake improvements within the Braintree Town Centre in respect of pedestrianisation.

Councillor Radley asked for consideration to be given towards the relaunching of the regeneration initiative for Halstead in order to help develop and improve the Town Centre.

Councillor Mrs Beavis congratulated the Cabinet Member on the success of the Christmas Light Switch On event and added that it would be good to see events of a similar scale taking place throughout the year.

Councillor Hensman requested that a holistic approach be taken towards the pedestrianisation of the District.

Councillor Rose stressed the need for regeneration initiatives to encompass Witham, perhaps through means of partnership working to enable there to be improvements to the Town Centre and more facilities (e.g. entertainment venues) for local residents.

Councillor Rose asked for clarification as to the Council's current position in respect of the Witham Enterprise Centre, as the transfer of the site from the developer had experienced no recent progress due their breach of the Section 106 agreement.

In light of concerns raised by local residents following improvements to the A131, Councillor Mrs Pell queried how the Council intended to relieve some of the pressures caused by road congestion issues experienced within the Town Centre.

Councillor Mrs Garrod sought reassurance that the delivery of the Premdor Health Centre remained a priority for the Council.

Councillor Abbott welcomed the car litter campaign that was implemented throughout September and October, but stressed that littering remained a notable issue for the District, with some of the major culprits considered to be customers from local McDonalds and KFC chains. Councillor Abbott queried what, if any, sanctions the Council could apply to fast food restaurants in the area in order to help reduce littering.

Councillor Hicks enquired about the possibility of using a car registration number scheme, whereby registration numbers were included on the inside of food bags. Such a scheme was known to have been implemented previously by McDonalds.

As Ward Member for the area, Councillor Johnson would keep all Members who had expressed an interest informed of the latest progress regarding the development of the Premdor Health Centre.

Councillor Abbott asked three questions. The first question related to the reasons why there were no litter picks of the rural grass verges ahead of the autumn verge cut. The second question related to a request submitted previously for an extension to the green waste collections that would enable this to be carried out until just before the start of Christmas. The third question concerned Rivenhall Parish Council's active and financial support towards extending local CCTV in order to monitor fly tipping in the area.

Councillor Thorogood enquired as to whether any updates had been received from Viridor in relation to the discovery of the plastic recycling bag in Malaysia earlier in the year.

Councillor Miss Weeks raised a query about the future of tetra pack recycling, and whether recycling bins for tetra packs would be provided in designated areas.

Councillor Mrs Sandum was pleased by the support pledged by BDC towards ECC's extension of the road verges scheme and requested that Members be kept informed of the latest progress in respect of this. The news of six-year old Ollie's involvement in the 'Say No to Plastics' campaign was also received with enthusiasm.

Councillor Schwier raised a question in regard to the Local Plan and CBC's decision not to provide any further funding towards NEGC Ltd and the likely financial impact this would have on BDC and the future operation of NEGC.

Councillor Mrs Garrod requested clarification in respect of a recent e-mail that was forwarded to all Members which stipulated that BDC would have "over-delivered" by 423 homes without the presence of the garden communities.

Councillor Abbott raised an issue in relation to a comment made within the Cabinet Member's report for the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan which concerned the protection of Cressing from speculative planning applications as a result.

Councillor Walsh had a number of queries that were in relation to CBC's decision to withdraw its funding for the garden communities, and whether BDC would subsequently review its own financial contributions.

Councillor Radley asked a question in regard to Section 106 contributions and underspent funds for public open space in Halstead.

Councillor Mrs Walters requested further clarification as to an e-mail that was sent to all Members on behalf of Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE) which claimed that the public had not been consulted on the updated housing numbers for the summer period.

Councillor Unsworth raised a concern about the Wood House Farm property in Bradwell, a Grade 2 Listed Building which was reportedly protected under Section 106 permissions but was now experiencing neglect and decay.

Councillor Hensman had two questions; the first was in relation to the pressures being implemented on local infrastructure in Braintree and other towns within the District, especially with the increasing number of approvals for new housing developments. The second question related to the garden communities and whether their development would ease some of the pressures being faced by town centres.

Councillor Mrs Sandum asked several questions; the first regarded the possibility of linking the assessment of conservation areas in with the assessment of trees for Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The second question regarded plans for improvements to the Planning Enforcement Team's ability to respond within an appropriate time frame to correspondence received from Members and residents. The third question queried the likelihood of the reinstatement of regular Planning Enforcement reports, once the department was back to full staffing capacity.

Councillor Mrs Beavis raised a concern about the number of speculative developments taking place within the District and the increasing pressure this was placing on local infrastructure, such as GP Practices and other NHS services.

Councillor Everard asked a question in respect of housing delivery figures and whether the Council issued interim figures in order to obviate potential speculative developments.

Councillor Wrench questioned the perception of public opposition to the implementation of garden communities.

Councillor Mrs Garrod questioned the focus of some questions being directed to Cabinet Members.

Councillor Miss Santomauro drew attention to the six Braintree residents who had been shortlisted at the Active Essex Sports Awards which took place on 4th December 2019 at Chelmsford City Racecourse. A question was raised as to whether the District's sporting successes and achievements could be used to promote sports locally and thus encourage healthier lifestyles.

Councillor Rose requested that the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing joined him in acknowledging Witham Town Football Club's "soccability" initiative.

Councillor Mrs Beavis raised a query in regard to "Play Champions" and the Livewell Child project and the options for the future implementation of this scheme. A question was asked in relation to the recent loss of the play area in Castle Hedingham and how the Council intended to help young children in the area to live well. A second question was asked about the increasing use of food banks within the District, and the third

question related to inactive men and health inequalities between the ages of men and women.

The following actions were agreed in response to questions raised by Members:-

Councillor T Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, confirmed that he would request a meeting for all four of the Halstead District Councillors to meet with himself and the Town Centre Regeneration Officer in order to provide them with a full update as to the latest progress of improvements for Halstead. Councillor T Cunningham also advised that he would make similar arrangements to meet with the Witham District Councillors in the New Year in order to update them on the latest progress in respect of the Witham Town Centre regeneration and improvements.

Councillor T Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, agreed to correspond with Essex Highways in order to obtain further information in respect of the A131 improvements and their subsequent impact on Halstead.

Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, agreed to seek legal advice as to what powers the Council had to take action against fast food restaurants whose customers contributed largely to littering across the District. The advice would be directed towards Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, as the relevant portfolio holder.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environmental and Place, agreed to provide a written response to the query regarding any proposals made by the Council to introduce bring bank sites or opportunities for tetra packs.

Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, agreed to investigate underspent Section 106 monies in respect of open spaces in Halstead and to discuss her findings with the Halstead District Councillors.

Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, agreed to investigate concerns raised in respect of the Wood House Farm property in Bradwell.

Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, agreed to provide a written response further to a question raised regarding the recent loss of the children's play area in Castle Hedingham.

Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, would review health inequalities for men in the District and consider whether future action was required.

59 **LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

INFORMATION: There were no matters raised.

DECISION: Members were invited to note the Minutes published.

REASON FOR DECISION: Not applicable.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.01pm.

Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin
(Chairman)