

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6th March 2019



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P Barlow (Chairman)	Yes	D Mann	Yes
Mrs. M Cunningham (Vice Chairman)	Yes	Mrs. I Parker	Yes
Mrs. D Garrod	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	Apologies	B Rose	Yes
A Hensman	Yes	P Schwier	Yes
P Horner	Yes	C Siddall	Yes
D Hume	Apologies	Vacancy	
G Maclure	Yes		

46 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6, “Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Report – Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce,” as he was a supplier of plastics equipment.

47 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

48 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

49 **ROLE OF THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY – FINAL DRAFT OF SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT**

INFORMATION: Members were asked to consider the final draft of the report for the Scrutiny Review into the Role of the Highway Authority, presented by the Chairman.

The Chairman identified a typographical error within the report under Recommendation 5 (Page 6 of the Agenda), whereby the letter ‘a’ had been mistakenly included after the word “Develops” at the start of the paragraph. The sentence was therefore amended to instead state “Develops more flexible intervention criteria” to indicate that there was multiple intervention criteria.

The Chairman made reference to Recommendation 9 of the report and sought the views of Members as to whether the recommendation to Essex County Council (ECC) should be made more specific, as the current Highways Liaison Officer for the Local Highways Panel was available to Braintree District Council (BDC) on a trial basis only. A "...named permanent officer" nominated to work with District Members would have the ability to provide a greater frequency of visits to BDC and to examine the details of highways matters more thoroughly. There followed a brief discussion, the main points of which were as follows:-

- It was suggested by a Member that the condition of the recommendation should be that ECC did not withdraw the support of the current Highways Liaison Officer, of whom had gained invaluable insight and knowledge of local highways matters in the Braintree District. In response to this, the Chairman advised that the recommendation could be amended to recommend the provision of a named permanent officer for BDC, either in addition to the current Highways Liaison Officer or in the form of a separate individual.
- A further suggestion was made that the role of the nominated officer from ECC be extended to encompass highway improvements and repairs as well as Local Highways Panel issues.
- Members stated that they would like to see the role of the Highways Liaison Officer made a permanent fixture and the scope of the link increased to enable all highways matters to be referred to ECC in this fashion.

Further to the discussion and the points raised, several revisions arose as to the appropriate wording to be inserted under recommendation 9:-

- Members agreed that the word "all" be included in front of "local highways issues" to enable the scope of the nominated officer's role to be increased.
- Members also agreed with the Chairman that in addition to the current paragraph under recommendation 9, the following wording should be included: "We acknowledge the value of the current Local Highways Panel Highways Liaison Officer in providing liaison, and would wish that this became a permanent position but would seek further liaison outside of purely Local Highways Panel issues."

The Chairman then invited Members to submit any other observations they had in relation to the report. A query was raised in relation to ECC's Cabinet Member's decline of the invitation to attend an evidence gathering session of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at BDC and the reasons behind this. In response, Members were advised that although there was no formal indication as to why ECC had endeavoured not to engage with BDC on this matter, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the lawful right to submit their finalised report directly to the Highway Authority and to request that they consider and respond accordingly.

Further explanation was provided for Members as to the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as per the Local Government Act 2000, with a focus around the referral of reports to the appropriate County Council. In taking this into account, it was proposed that an additional recommendation be included under the heading of "Decision" within the report, as follows: "As the recommendations relate to ECC as the Highway Authority, we agree to serve notice on ECC as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and

respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We ask officers to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.”

DECISION:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report and approved the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.
2. As the recommendations related to Essex County Council as the Highway Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Committee. Officers were asked to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION:

1. To enable the Committee’s report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.
2. To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Committee.

50 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – RECYCLING, RE-USE AND REDUCE**

INFORMATION: Members considered the final draft of the report for the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce. Councillor Chris Siddall, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, was invited to present the report. During the report, reference was made to the Waste Hierarchy and the growing importance of waste prevention as opposed to recycling alone. It was added that a key priority of BDC was the need to avoid the use of single-use plastics as such items were unable to be reused.

Further to the report, the following points were raised:-

- In response to a query about the schemes available for the promotion of “re-use” practices, Members were advised that TREE (Tendring Re-use Employment Enterprise) was a collection service available to Braintree District residents for bulky waste (e.g. such as furniture and waste electrical equipment) for the purposes of re-use, some of which was re-sold. In addition to this, it was reported that the Resources and Waste Strategy (which included prominent re-use practices) was due to be sent out for consultation by the Government and would affect all sectors. Other local re-use schemes also included Freegle and the increasing usage of the app, as well as electrical goods collections in libraries.
- Members were advised that there was no plastic that could not be recycled and that it was often the sheer volume of plastics that hindered the success of recycling practices in the area. It was also considered that the implementation of a more common recycling system throughout the country would help to generate increased capacity for a wider range of plastics, such as hard plastics.
- The Chairman reminded Members that as part of the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review, local schools were contacted on the subject of recycling in order to help

increase awareness of the associated issues and correct recycling and waste minimization practices amongst younger children. National awareness of the issues associated with recycling was also increasing as a result of televised programmes, such as the BBC's 'Blue Planet.'

- Members expressed their appreciation for the external visitors who attended meetings of the Task and Finish Group as part of its evidence gathering; specific reference was made by one Member to David Bowman, Commercial Development Manager at the Viridor Waste Management site, who provided a comprehensive presentation and detailed information to the Group further to questions posed by Members.

DECISION: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Review Report into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce and agreed to refer it to Full Council on 25th March 2019 and Cabinet in the new Administration.

The Task and Finish Group makes the following recommendations:

That Braintree District Council:-

1. Supports and promotes the work of the Corporate Working Group for Waste Minimisation and Recycling and continues to work with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and other Essex Councils on waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.
2. Promotes and encourages best practice and schemes amongst schools within the District in respect of waste minimisation and recycling, with a particular focus around secondary schools (e.g. letters to school governors, workshops, assemblies, etc.).
3. Helps to promote national and local events and various schemes that support Recycling, Re-use and Reduce initiatives and raises awareness of apps such as *Freegle for Braintree* which will help meet the Council's objectives.
4. Asks the Marketing and Communications Team to consider how they can enhance communication of the key messages around waste minimisation and recycling using social media, with greater emphasis placed on the waste hierarchy.
5. Supports active participation in schemes promoted by the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) e.g. "Campaign at Shop" schemes to help combat issues surrounding marketing and packaging of products, and uniform colours and sizes for waste bins across different local authorities.
6. Adopts more robust enforcement in relation to side waste (excess grey bin waste) and approves a protocol to address this. Schemes such as "Pay to Throw" would be potential deterrents to householders who produce excessive waste.
7. Takes a holistic approach as part of the planning process when considering design features of estates, particularly for mixed hereditaments and flats, and includes within the planning policy framework a requirement for developers to design and incorporate facilities for the segregation and storage of recyclables, food waste, etc. that are aesthetically pleasing, with easy access to facilitate loading, storage and pick-ups of both residual and recyclable waste.

8. Maintains an overview of advancements in new technologies in the waste industry, particularly those that seek to minimise waste whilst maximising recycling and adapts its service accordingly.
9. Considers introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste. This would help to offset some of the cost of the recycling service and may encourage more householders to home-compost their waste.
10. Approves the installation of a continuous video 'loop' in the reception areas of the Council's offices and other locations within the District that affirm household recycling and waste minimisation best practices. This can include raising awareness of the Council's bulky household waste collection service and the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Braintree and Witham.
11. Supports the new Waste and Resources Strategy and, where appropriate, aligns its future service delivery, work programmes and initiatives around the principles outlined in this document. This includes working with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on initiatives that seek to drive greater efficiency of energy from waste.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee's report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

51 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS**

INFORMATION: Members considered the final draft of the report for the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Social Isolation and Loneliness. The Chairman also introduced Tracey Parry, Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Review, to the Members of the Committee. Councillor David Mann, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, was invited to present the report. During the presentation of the report, reference was made to the abundance and variety of triggers associated with social isolation and feelings of loneliness, which included bereavement, moving away, being a carer and so forth, and the fact that the issue could affect any individual at any stage in their life. It was also likely that with evolving modern lifestyles and communication methods, cases of social isolation and loneliness would escalate across the country over upcoming years. However, it was important to stress that with the advent of new technologies, new opportunities were also emerging as well for addressing the issue (e.g. mosaic profiling, services and activities advertised via social media, etc).

Further to the report, the following points were raised:-

- Members expressed their appreciation to all involved the Task and Finish Group, including Members and officers alike, for the work produced.
- In response to a query raised about the implementation of a "scoping exercise" and how this would be achieved, Members were advised that the exercise was intended to identify the services and activities available to residents to help combat social isolation and loneliness in local areas. It was inferred that Parish Councils and District Councillors were ideally situated in terms of their ability to infiltrate local communities and raise awareness of both the issues and opportunities that were accessible to individuals with different needs.

- It was noted that a number of Parish and Town Councils across the District, such as Witham Town Council, already identified the available activities and services in their own areas (e.g. Silver Cinema events) on a regular basis for residents. A potential suggestion for the future was that Parish and Town Councils categorize the activities and services within their own areas to allow them to be broadcasted more widely across the District.
- The Church of England had reportedly agreed that the services provided under the church would now start to decrease, and this would be especially so in some rural areas. In conjunction with this, churches were also experiencing a notable decline in the number of attendants at Sunday church services. As services provided under the church had traditionally supported local communities in terms of church services and as a hub for clubs and activities, the report of the Task and Finish Group was considered to be very timely and welcome as it acknowledged the value of churches as key community assets.
- Further to the comment regarding the decrease in church services, it was reported that the Church of England had also altered the rules in relation to Sunday services in that it was no longer mandatory for churches to provide a weekly Sunday service.
- Encouraging residents to work with their neighbours in their localities was of key importance (e.g. through Age UK avenues). Such support networks often served to benefit both those in need of help and those seeking to provide it.
- It was reiterated that social isolation and loneliness was not limited to particular age groups.
- The role and value of community workers, such as health visitors to the homes of mums with young children, and facilities such as village halls for the provision of social clubs and activities, was not to be underestimated.
- A query was raised in relation to data protection regulations in respect of mosaic profiling exercises. In response, Members were advised that under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, access to data such as single-occupancy homes for the purposes of assisting with profiling exercises required there to be a more substantial process in place before this could be done. There was potential for statistical data to be utilised, but the Council would ultimately need to demonstrate that there was a need to process such data in order for the organization to continue with the delivery of its services for a provision to be determined under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

DECISION: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

1. Approved the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group into Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District.
2. Referred the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review to Full Council on 25th March 2019.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To enable the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny Reviews.

52 **DECISION PLANNER**

INFORMATION: Members considered the Decision Planner for the period 1st March 2019 to 30th June 2019.

The Chairman noted that this meeting marked the final meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the current Civic Year and therefore extended his gratitude to all Members and officers present for their contributions to the Scrutiny Review. Members similarly expressed their thanks to the Chairman for his role throughout the year and the work of the officers involved with the Scrutiny Review.

Final remark was made of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Call For Items process, which normally commenced in the late spring period. Due to the upcoming Elections in May, Members were advised that the Call For Items process would be implemented at an earlier stage and would commence twice, both before and after the start of the new Administration, to allow both current and new Members to participate. It was added that an online form would be circulated soon to Members via an e-mail link to invite them to submit their ideas in relation to potential new Scrutiny Review topics, the online format of which would help to improve the flexibility of the Call For Items process.

In response to a question raised by a Member, it was advised that there was a large number of potential Scrutiny Review topics available but that Members should seek not to repeat any topics from the previous two years. It was requested that Members contact the Governance and Members Manager should they have any other queries in relation to appropriate Scrutiny Review topics.

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st March 2019 to 30th June 2019 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8:12pm.

Councillor P Barlow
(Chairman)