

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7:15pm

Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,  
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB

**THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
*(Please note this meeting will be audio recorded)*  
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**Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.**

Councillor P Barlow (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs D Garrod  
Councillor J Goodman  
Councillor A Hensman  
Councillor P Horner  
Councillor D Hume  
Councillor G Maclure

Councillor D Mann  
Councillor Mrs I Parker  
Councillor R Ramage  
Councillor B Rose  
Councillor P Schwier  
Councillor C Siddall  
Vacancy

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

A WRIGHT  
Chief Executive

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

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

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members 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.

### **Question Time**

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak. Members of the public wishing to speak are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) by midday on the working day before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee Meeting is due to be held on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Monday, (where there is a bank holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Friday).

The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time. Members of the public can remain to observe the public session of the meeting.

Please note that there is public Wi-Fi in the Council Chamber, users are required to register in order to access this. There is limited availability of printed agendas.

### **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 an alarm you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by officers. You will be assisted to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building.

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### **Webcast and Audio Recording**

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### **Documents**

Agendas, reports and minutes for all the Council's public meetings can be accessed via [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)

We welcome comments from members of the public to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended, you can send these via [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk)

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
  
- 2 Member Declarations**

  1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests 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.
  2. To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.
  
- 3 Public Question Time**  
(See paragraph above)
  
- 4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6th February 2019 (copy previously circulated).
  
- 5 Role of the Highway Authority - Final Draft of Scrutiny Review Report** **5 - 19**  
Members are asked to consider and approve the Scrutiny Review Report into the Role of the Highway Authority before its submission to Full Council on 25th March 2019.
  
- 6 Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review Report - Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce** **20 - 31**  
Members to receive and approve the final draft of the Scrutiny Review Report.
  
- 7 Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review Report - Social Isolation and Loneliness** **32 - 42**  
Members to receive and approve the final draft of the Scrutiny Review Report.

**8 Decision Planner**

To consider the Decision Planner for the period 1st March 2019 to 30th June 2019 (copy previously circulated).

**9 Urgent Business - Public Session**

To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**PRIVATE SESSION**

**Page**

*There were no Items for Private Session at the time that this Agenda was published.*

<b>Scrutiny of the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District</b>		<b>Agenda No: 5</b>
<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Environment and Place</b>	
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	<b>A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services</b>	
<b>Report presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor Phil Barlow, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Report prepared by:</b>	<b>Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19</u></a>	<b>Key Decision: No</b>	
<b>Executive Summary:</b>		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered the role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District in line with the terms of reference set out in the attached report.</p> <p>The Committee gathered evidence from a variety of sources, from which they have drawn their conclusions and make the following recommendations:-</p> <p><b>Improvements to the Essex County Council Highways customer service system are needed. Multiple reporting of the same issues is frustrating, a waste of public resources and an unnecessary inconvenience to customers.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Makes revisions to the reference number system to make it simpler and more intuitive;</li> <li>(2) Builds on the highways interactive website to provide customers with an on-line tracking facility to monitor progress on maintenance issues (to be widely advertised when in place). Furthermore, Essex Highways should extend the period of time during which responses to queries remain on its website after the determination of the outcome, such as for a six-month period to avoid the same defect being reported again and to help clarify for those reporting issues when exactly the outcome of the issue was determined. The system should also state on what specific date reported defects were inspected to enable website users to monitor the time taken for this and the subsequent repair to occur.</li> <li>(3) Publishes up to date service standards on its website and communicates these to Braintree District Council and Parish and Town Councils.</li> <li>(4) Refers where appropriate on the website to the clear criteria where, for instance, potholes and other obstructions, such as raised parking slabs, are in need of</li> </ol>		

repair.

**The Essex County Council intervention criteria for maintenance issues are too rigid and this, combined with the inefficient customer services system, can lead to long delays in basic maintenance issues being addressed.**

- (5) Develops a more flexible intervention criteria, especially in responding to issues reported by Parish Councils who have a useful role to play as the 'eyes and ears' of their local communities;
- (6) Considers extending the principle of the existing Highways Ranger service to Parish and Town Councils that are willing to carry out minor works at a local level. This should be considered together with the development of the devolution initiative that was promoted during the evidence gathering sessions.
- (7) Reviews and extends the role of the existing Highway Ranger service to cover as many of the locally reported issues as possible to facilitate the speedy completion of minor works.
- (8) Conducts an assessment of the effectiveness of speeding deterrents within Parishes (e.g. Vehicle Activated Signs) and whether value for money was being achieved in their implementation. The assessment findings could then be made available to Parish Councils for their consideration before any large-scale future potential investments in new speed deterrents took place. The assessment conducted by Essex County Council could also encompass the level of road accidents in areas where speed deterrents signs were situated.

**Under the previous Essex County Council highway structure that covered the Braintree District, a designated team of officers with local knowledge was accessible by Elected Members. The removal of this vital link has had a perceived detrimental effect on the service. Therefore, there needs to be a named Essex County Officer, preferably working for at least part of the month, based in the Braintree District who could be a point of contact for Parish and Town Councils and Braintree District Council Officers and Members on local highways issues, including for local site meetings.**

- (9) Nominates a named permanent officer (who could be based at Causeway House) to work with District Members, officers and town/parish councils on local highways issues, including attending site meeting.
- (10) Publishes the expected protocols for escalating local highways issues.

**The new arrangement for Local Highway Panels based on the Braintree model is welcome. However, the lack of financial transparency and evidence of value for money remain concerns for the Committee.**

- (11) Provides independent scrutiny and evidence of Value for Money achieved from the contract with Ringway Jacobs.
- (12) Provides reassurance that a structured audit process is in place to monitor and challenge the services provided by the contractor and make the audit findings publically available.
- (13) Provides scrutiny on outsourced contracts, such as that with Ringway Jacobs.

The performance of contractors should be monitored on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness and whether value for money is being achieved, thus increasing their accountability.

- (14) Considers whether there is scope for introducing some form of competition into the contract for the whole of the county, and whether this would entail separate contracts for different areas of Essex.

**There needs to be greater clarity in public information as to “who does what” in highways roles to remove confusion currently experienced by service users.**

- (15) Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and Highways England ensure that clear and concise information is made available on their websites and in relevant publications, as to which organisation is responsible for the various elements of the highway service, with contact details to access the correct service provider.
- (16) Closer communication should be made between Essex Highways and the Planning Department at Braintree District Council in respect of commercial planning applications and large schemes being considered by the Local Highways Panel.
- (17) Essex County Council Highways together with the District Council to consider at an early stage the community gains that Section 106 agreements that could be negotiated with developers and to share these appropriately with local Members to get some localised input.

**Decision:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.

**Purpose of Decision:**

To enable the Committee’s report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

<b>Corporate implications</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Legal:</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	The recommendations contained within this report are intended to bring about improved service delivery within the Braintree District and create improved accessibility and lines of communication between Essex County Council (the Highway Authority) and officers, Councillors and residents of the District in respect of highway related issues.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	Evidence was sought from Councillor R Mitchell and Councillor J Abbott in their capacity as Essex County Councillors, as well as from representatives of Essex Highways, Braintree District Council and the Braintree Association of Local Councils.  Consultation also took place with Parish and Town Councils about their experiences of the service provided by the Highway Authority.
<b>Risks:</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Officer Contact:</b> Samir Pandya	
<b>Designation:</b> Strategy and Policy Manager	
<b>Ext. No.</b> 3335	
<b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:samir.pandya@braintree.gov.uk">samir.pandya@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO THE ROLE OF THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

# **C O N T E N T S**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Terms of Reference and Scope of the Scrutiny Review**
  - 2.1 Terms of Reference
  - 2.2 Scope of the Scrutiny Review
- 3. How Work was Progressed**
- 4. Witness Evidence**
  - 4.1 Presentation by Samir Pandya – Overview of the Highway Functions
  - 4.2 Braintree District Council Planning and Essex County Council Strategic Development Management
  - 4.3 Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways – Essex County Council
  - 4.4 Essex County Council Member for Silver End and Cressing
  - 4.5 Chairman of Braintree Association of Local Councils
  - 4.6 Observations of the working of the Braintree Local Highway Panel
- 5. Consultation With Key Stakeholders**
  - 5.1 Summary of Consultation Responses from Stakeholders
- 6. Our Findings**
- 7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 7 March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to look at the role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District as part of its annual programme of work.

The review was prompted by concerns from District Members about the highways service provided by Essex Highways (EH) which is part of Essex County Council (ECC), the Highway Authority. A particular concern was that the lines of communication with EH had deteriorated following their major reorganisation in 2010/11 and that routine repair requests were taking longer to deal with.

EH are responsible for all non-trunked public roads and associated land (e.g. pavements and verges) in the Braintree District, whereas Highways England are responsible for trunked roads and associated land. In the Braintree District, these are the A12 and A120.

## 2. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCOPE OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

2.1 **Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1):** To explore the functions of the Highway Authority to give:-

- A broad understanding of the functions and the role of the Highway Authority.
- An understanding of the relationship between the Highway Authority and the District Council.
- The functions of the Braintree District Highways Panel and how that fits in to the relationship between the Highway Authority and Braintree District Council.
- The management of highway functions including:
  - Highway maintenance including Public Rights of Way (PROW).
  - Management and maintenance including cutting of grass verges.
  - North Essex Parking Partnership.

2.2 **Scope of the Scrutiny Review:** To broadly encompass the following highway related areas:-

- The functions that the highway authority undertakes within the Braintree District.
- The process/conduit for raising local highway issues with the relevant authority.
- How maintenance issues are prioritised.
- How highway enforcement is pursued (e.g. PROW infringements).
- How the Highway Authority defines a 'local issue' and how they consult with the local community including Parish and Town Councils.
- The relationship between statutory highway functions and the Braintree Local Highway Panel.
- The highway input to planning decisions.

## 3. HOW WORK WAS PROGRESSED

The Committee set out with the aim of completing the Scrutiny Review by the end of the 2018/19 Civic Year, although it was acknowledged that this would depend to some extent on the Council's committee timetable and the

availability of key stakeholders.

It was agreed that there would be monthly meetings, and that it would be key to work around the availability of officers from the highways services as without their full evidence, the review could be undermined.

The Committee met on seven occasions from April to December 2018. Evidence gathering included presentations from officers from both Braintree District Council and Essex County Council and these were followed by Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions.

The Committee felt it important to gather evidence both from the service providers and from service users, so letters were sent to Parish and Town Councils inviting them to participate in the review by sharing their experiences of highways issues. The consultation ran for four weeks during October 2018 and a total of 14 responses were received including comments from both Parish and Town Councils.

#### **4. WITNESS EVIDENCE**

**4.1 First Session for the Scrutiny Review into the Highway Authority – A** presentation was given by Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, who provided an overview of the main Highway Function. A link to the presentation slides is included in **Appendix 2**.

**4.2 First Evidence Gathering Session – A** presentation was given by Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer at Braintree District Council (the Council) and by Matt Bradley and Martin Mason of Essex Highways (EH) Strategic Development team. The salient points from the meeting are summarised below:

- Responsibility for the management of roads and open spaces within new developments has changed greatly in recent years. The Council no longer adopts areas of open space. The criteria for the adoption of roads by EH had also changed to reduce the number of roads that are adopted as public highways. Developers are required to establish management companies to oversee the ownership and maintenance of open space and in some cases private roads.
- Transport Assessments and Transport Statements submitted with planning applications are assessed by EH Officers who may obtain specialist technical support from third parties e.g. Ringway Jacobs has assisted with transport modelling.
- It can be difficult for the Planning and Highway Authorities to ascertain the exact impact of new planning proposals due to factors such as new residents shifting their mode of transport (relying more on walking and cycling) and peak spreading (traveling outside the traditional peak hours to avoid congestion). Impartiality upon receipt of any representations was stressed; however, members of the public often had differing views on what constitutes a severe impact. Therefore, the process of assessing representations could be made more transparent to the public to enhance their understanding.

- The issue of heavy goods vehicles on inappropriate local roads was raised. Officers explained that there were limited routes available for lorries accessing major roads such as the A120 and A12; as a result, this can add to congestion and create pressures for vehicle weight restrictions.
- The Strategic Development Team Officers who provide the Council with advice on planning applications have an expedient overview of issues across the highway spectrum. The Highway Authority comprises a number of different teams who carry out various functions, but in terms of enforcement (i.e. encroachment), the Highways Authority does not have a substantial resource.
- Members felt it important to understand the process behind issues reported to EH through the online portal. A general concern was the lack of response on whether issues reported via the portal had been received and actioned. It was suggested that an officer from Essex County Council (ECC) attend the next meeting to provide an insight into the field of highways maintenance and answer any questions posed by Members regarding Public Rights of Way and signage.
- Members were reminded to watch the webcast of the Highways presentation given at the Member's Evening on 14 March 2018 (available on the Members' Hub), and pose any further questions to relevant officers at future meetings.

A link to the presentation and details of the Q&A session are included in **Appendix 3**.

**4.3 Second Evidence Gathering Session** – It had been hoped that a representative of Essex Highways (EH) would attend this meeting to give a presentation, but the County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways made it clear, via the Director of Highways, that EH officers would not be attending any Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings as part of its evidence gathering process. Whilst disappointed with the news, Members used the opportunity to seek clarification on a number of points which were answered by the Samir Pandya, Policy and Strategy Manager (Braintree District Council) – see **Appendix 4** for details. In summary:

- Section 106 funds cannot be used for highway maintenance works.
- EH are not obliged to adopt roads where developers have gone in to liquidation.
- EH employ inspectors who record highway defects including damaged signs and potholes.
- Parking restrictions including outside schools are managed by the North Essex Parking Partnership on behalf of EH.

**4.4 Third Evidence Gathering Session** – Members heard from Essex County Councillor Robert Mitchell (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways) who offered his personal perspective on highways issues. Details of the Q&A session are set out at **Appendix 5** but the key issues highlighted were as

follows:-

- Over several years, Essex Highways (EH) has had significant reductions in its funding for both capital schemes and revenue funded maintenance programme which has had an impact on the prioritisation of highway defects.
- All maintenance issues are managed by EH from a risk-based approach (e.g. use of an impact and probability matrix) and defects are attended to in a consistent manner.
- Committee Members (and residents/stakeholders) are able to access all of the EH policies and procedures via Essex County Council's [website](#).
- Highway defects and issues should be reported via the EH online portal in the first instance, or the dedicated Highway Liaison Officer or the Essex County Councillor.
- EH manage 127,000 street lights across Essex; a loan from the government has helped fund the conversion of approximately 40,000 street lights to LEDs (37%), 32,000 of which had been completed (including 17,000 all-night lights and 15,000 high wattage lights) and a further 8,000 were to be completed by the end of 2018.

**4.5 Fourth Evidence Gathering Session – Essex** County Councillor James Abbott attended a meeting on 19 September 2018 to provide an account of his experience of the Highway Service, especially in his constituency. Pre-prepared questions were sent to Councillor Abbott and the Committee was impressed by the extent and depth of the information given in response. The Committee was equally impressed by the depth and honesty of the replies during the question and answer session – **see Appendix 6**.

**4.6 Fifth Evidence Gathering Session -** During this session on 21 November 2018, Members considered a report which contained the responses of Parish Clerks on behalf of Parish and Town Councils in respect of the Scrutiny Review. The enquiry sought the views of Parish and Town Councils as to their knowledge of the Highways Authority and the services provided, their experiences when engaging with the Highways Authority and how accessible they found the services provided to be, as well as any suggestions they had for improved liaison with the Highway Authority - **see Section 5 and Appendix 7**.

**4.7 Sixth Evidence Gathering Session –** The final evidence gathering session took place on 5 December 2018 when Councillor Don Smith (Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC)) attended as a witness. As with previous witnesses, Councillor Smith, who is also a member of the Braintree Local Highways Panel, was sent pre-prepared questions and again, the Committee was impressed with the depth of information provided and appreciated the candidness with which it was conveyed. **Appendix 8** shows the report provided by Councillor Smith.

## **5. CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS**

By the third evidence gathering meeting (on 6 June 2018) it was clear that the Cabinet Member for Highways was not prepared to allow Essex Highways (EH)

officers to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to take questions from Members. After several failed attempts to influence a change in the County's position throughout the summer, following discussions the Chairman agreed three specific actions to ensure the widest sources of evidence were available for the final report.

- i. Invite comments/observations of the Highway Service from Parish and Town Councils.
- ii. Write to the Director of Highways requesting answers to specific questions raised by the Committee.
- iii. Observe the workings (processes, procedures, etc.) of the Braintree Local Highway Panel to gain an insight into its remit and how it affects the highway service in the District.

The letter (email) to the Parish and Town Councils was agreed by the Chairman and sent on 8 October 2018 – **See Appendix 7**. The consultation period ran for four weeks, ending on 5 November 2018, although a late representation was accepted from Halstead Town Council knowing that their meeting cycles might not match the consultation period.

## 6. OUR FINDINGS

- All budgets at Essex County Council (ECC) are under pressure and Essex Highways (EH) has had to make significant cuts both in its Capital and Revenue funding. An example of this is the 50% (approx.) reduction of the Local Highway Panel budget in 2016, from £800k to £407,789.
- Overall, it was felt that the EH website had improved greatly over the past few years; it is informative and relatively easy to navigate. However, the most common complaint from Members (Parish, Town and District) was the frustration in trying to track progress with reported defects on the EH website, and the inaccessibility of a Highway Officer who understands the local issues and can follow up a complaint.
- A lack of transparency regarding the cost of highway schemes is evident from the Local Highway Panel. This issue has been raised by panel members several times over the years but with very little tangible evidence provided on Value for Money.
- There is little or no evidence to show how the Highway Contractor (Ringway Jacobs) is held accountable for 'above-inflation' costs of minor repairs e.g. replacement of signs as well as medium (£10k-£50k) sized schemes.
- There is inconsistency in the way some highway defects are dealt with in different areas of the District.
- Member participation and interaction with the Local Highway Panel has greatly improved in the last two years with a more inclusive approach from the Chairman and a very effective Highway Liaison Officer.
- The long turnaround of Local Highway Panel Schemes remains frustrating, especially with a 50% cut in budget meaning that the scheme list gets longer and the output lower.

- An underfunded maintenance programme has led to an unacceptable quality of the carriageways, footways and verges in some parts of the District (e.g. Braintree High Street).
- Lack of Public Rights of Way enforcement; the response time of ECC Officers when infractions are reported on the website is insufficient, and there is a lack of clarity as to the definitive time scale for maintenance and enforcement actions.
- Poor customer service owing to lack of access to officers with local knowledge and understanding of highway issues.
- The overwhelming view that, based on witnesses and the evidence gathered, Essex County Council's (ECC) willingness to engage and provide effective actions or responses has deteriorated substantially over the last few years. Furthermore, as a consequence of this, the District Members and public who try to contact Essex Highways (EH) often become disappointed as they don't feel they get any meaningful response, especially when issues reported on the website are seemingly extinguished from the website. The impression gained throughout is that the culture of EH is autocratic and there is almost a positive unwillingness to engage with its various partners. EH seemingly fails to understand the need to facilitate Local Government Scrutiny, and it is perceived that EH is focused purely on its own internal matters and is not interested in engaging with or learning from others. It is acknowledged that there is a degree of improved liaison between the Highway Authority and Braintree District Council in the form of the Assistant Highways Liaison Officer and a limited number of other examples. Financial issues were a possible contributor to ECC's unwillingness to engage with the Council, although this did not assist the Council as a District or Members attempting to hold the Highways Authority to account, as it is the public who hold the Council to account.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

Improvements to the Essex County Council Highways customer service system are needed. Multiple reporting of the same issues is frustrating, a waste of public resources and an unnecessary inconvenience to customers.

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (1) Makes revisions to the reference number system to make it simpler and more intuitive;
- (2) Builds on the highways interactive website to provide customers with an on-line tracking facility to monitor progress on maintenance issues (to be widely advertised when in place). Furthermore, Essex Highways should extend the period of time during which responses to queries remain on its website after the determination of the outcome, such as for a six-month period to avoid the same defect being reported again and to help clarify for those reporting issues when exactly the outcome of the issue was determined. The system should also state on what specific date reported defects were inspected to enable website users to monitor the time taken for this and the subsequent repair to occur;

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**The Essex County Council intervention criteria for maintenance issues are too rigid and this, combined with the inefficient customer services system, can lead to long delays in basic maintenance issues being addressed.**

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (5) Develops a more flexible intervention criteria, especially in responding to issues reported by Parish Councils who have a useful role to play as the 'eyes and ears' of their local communities;
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It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

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- (17) Essex County Council Highways together with the District Council to consider at an early stage the community gains that Section 106 agreements that could be negotiated with developers and to share these appropriately with local Members to get some localised input.

## APPENDICES

Appendix	Description	Section of report where referenced
1	Terms of Reference: <a href="#">Link</a>	2

<b>2</b>	First Session for Scrutiny Review into the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District - Samir Pandya's Presentation Slides: <a href="#">Link to Presentation Slides and Minutes - 11 April 2018</a>	<b>4</b>
<b>3</b>	Q&A from First Evidence Gathering Session and Presentation Slides by Neil Jones, Braintree District Council and Matt Bradley, Essex Highways <a href="#">Link to Minutes and Presentation Slides</a> – 10 May 2018	<b>4</b>
<b>4</b>	Q&A from Second Evidence Gathering Session: <a href="#">Link to Minutes</a> – 6 June 2018	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	Q&A from Third Evidence Gathering Session: <a href="#">Link to Minutes</a> – 11 July 2018	<b>4</b>
<b>6</b>	Q&A from Fourth Evidence Gathering Session: <a href="#">Link to Minutes</a> – 19 September 2018	<b>4</b>
<b>7</b>	Q&A from Fifth Evidence Gathering Session and Consultation Letter to Parish and Town Councils <a href="#">Link to Minutes and Consultation Letter</a> – 21 November 2018	<b>4 &amp; 5</b>
<b>8</b>	Sixth Evidence Gathering Session - Report from Cllr. D Smith, Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils – 5 Dec 2018 <a href="#">Link to Minutes</a>	<b>4</b>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to record its thanks to all those who took part in the scrutiny review and in particular, expresses its appreciation and thanks to the under mentioned individuals who contributed their time and expertise during the information gathering stage of the process:-

Mr Neil Jones, Principal Planner at Braintree District Council

Mr Matt Bradley and Mr Martin Mason, Essex Highways

Councillor Robert Mitchell, Essex County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways

Councillor James Abbott, Essex County Council Elected Member

Councillor Don Smith, Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils

We would also like to thank Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, Emma Wisbey, Governance and Members Manager and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer for their valued support and advice throughout the process.

**Councillor Phil Barlow**

**Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review: Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce</b>		<b>Agenda No: 6</b>
<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Environment and Place</b>	
<b>Corporate Outcome:</b>	<b>A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play</b>	
	<b>Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers</b>	
<b>Report presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor Chris Siddall, Chairman of Task and Finish Group into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce</b>	
<b>Report prepared by:</b>	<b>Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>	
Reports and Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee <a href="#">7 March 2018</a> and Task and Finish Group: Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce 2018/19.	<b>Key Decision: No</b>	
<b>Executive Summary:</b>		
<p>As part of the Committee's annual programme of work, a Task and Finish Group was established to look at Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce in line with the Terms of Reference outlined within the attached report.</p> <p>The Group was comprised of the following Members:</p> <p>Chris Siddall (Chairman), Phil Barlow (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Julia Allen, Andrew Hensman, Peter Schwier, Bill Rose, Patrick Horner, and John Elliott.</p> <p>The attached report outlines the key findings of the Group and the recommendations arising from this Scrutiny Review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.</p>		
<b>Recommended Decision:</b>		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Review Report into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce and refer it to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and Cabinet in the new Administration.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group makes the following recommendations:</p> <p>That Braintree District Council:-</p>		

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.

<p><b>Purpose of Decision:</b></p> <p>To enable the Committee's report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.</p>

<p><b>Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.</b></p>	
<p><b>Financial:</b></p>	<p>Some of the recommendations will have a financial impact, but these will be considered as part of a business case with any recommendations taken forward.</p> <p>In respect of the new Resource and Waste Strategy, there will be financial implications for the Council, depending on any changes to service delivery that are imposed by the Government or adopted by the Council. These are subject to consultation and the Government has indicated that it may assist with funding based on costs identified by local authorities. A separate report on this issue will be provided to Cabinet.</p>
<p><b>Legal:</b></p>	<p>The recommendations within this report are in line with current legislation on waste management practices, although this may change as a result of the Government's new Resource and Waste Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Safeguarding:</b></p>	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
<p><b>Equalities/Diversity:</b></p>	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
<p><b>Customer Impact:</b></p>	<p>Potential charge for garden waste. More robust enforcement of side waste. Potential major change in how the waste service is delivered, depending on outcome of the Government's consultation on the new Resource and Waste Strategy.</p>
<p><b>Environment and Climate Change:</b></p>	<p>Reduction in overall amount of household waste generated, improved recycling performance and more sustainable use of valuable resources.</p>
<p><b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b></p>	<p>Feedback was sought from local schools on their experiences of waste and recycling. Advice was also sought from industry experts and Council officers with relevant knowledge/experience.</p>

	Following consultation by Full Council on 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Scrutiny Review Report will be referred to the Cabinet to receive and respond to in the new Administration.
<b>Risks:</b>	None arising from this report.
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Samir Pandya
<b>Designation:</b>	Strategy and Policy Manager
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**TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW  
RECYCLING, RE-USE AND REDUCE**

**28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2019**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's annual programme of work, a Task and Finish Group was established to look at Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce using the following Terms of Reference:-

1. To examine and review the Council's key methods and tools that are used to communicate waste minimisation messages and recycling initiatives to residents and businesses so that we help users to:
  - a) Fully understand what products are recyclable within the Braintree District *at the point of purchase* so that they can make informed shopping choices; and
  - b) Use this knowledge to understand what can be included in the Council's recycling collections to minimise contamination and increase the amounts recycled.
2. To identify examples of best practice at a national level that could be adopted by the Council to meet its aims and objectives.
3. To consider how the Council can engender positive behaviours at an early age (grass roots level) e.g. school children.
4. To look at how the Council's digital strategy can be used more widely to promote waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.
5. To consider opportunities to include recycling infrastructure in new housing developments paid for by the developers.
6. To explore how we can influence waste policy at a national level to reduce waste at source (manufacturing).

The following items were specifically excluded from the review:-

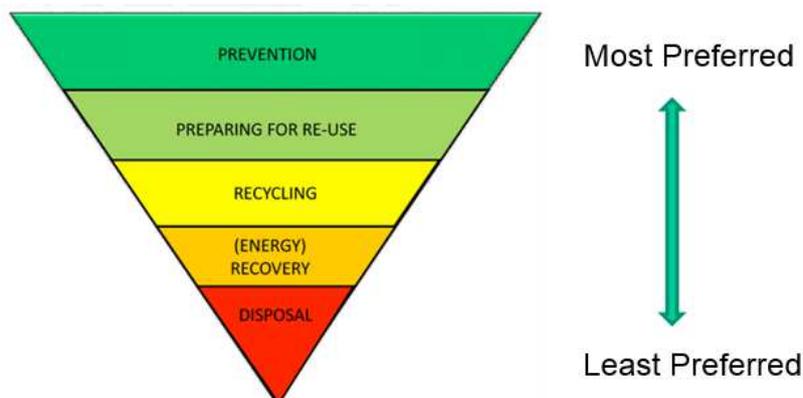
- a. Tovi Eco Park
- b. Existing contracts and Service Level Agreements.
- c. Operational resources used to deliver front-line services.

Membership of the Group was comprised of Councillors Chris Siddall (Chairman), Phil Barlow (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Julia Allen, Andrew Hensman, Peter Schwier, Bill Rose, Patrick Horner, and John Elliott, supported by Samir Pandya, Operations Strategy and Policy Manager, and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer.

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Group and sets out the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review.

## 1 BACKGROUND

The Council's waste management services are delivered in accordance with legislative frameworks set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Waste (England & Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (TEEP) and the EU Waste Framework Directive 2008 (50% recycling target by 2020) which sets out the principles of a Waste Hierarchy in terms of managing waste, as follows:-



Over the past two decades, there has been great emphasis on recycling as a means of reducing waste by diverting as much as possible from the residual waste stream. However, whilst the Council has seen a vast improvement in its recycling performance over that time, the volume of residual waste generated by each household is increasing every year. This is a trend that is reflected nationally and there is now a renewed focus on waste *prevention* alongside re-use and recycling, in an effort to reduce the overall amount of waste generated.

Furthermore, there has been much in the media about the global impact of waste plastics and a growing desire to dispense with unnecessary packaging and single use plastics and we are already beginning to see changes taking place at a national level to address some of these concerns. The publication of the Government's Waste and Resources Strategy for England in December 2018 will undoubtedly present further challenges in how we manage our waste.

We welcome this new long awaited Strategy, as it will help deliver some fundamental changes to incentivise businesses, local government generally, and residents to protect the environment, address stagnating recycling rates, and tackle the environmental impacts of food and plastic. It will also place greater emphasis on manufacturers and producers to take more responsibility for the cost of recycling and disposing of their waste, as well as the cost of items that are harder to recycle. The Panel felt a more common waste handling system shared by councils throughout the country will enable a more cost-effective recycling plant to be developed.

## 3. EVIDENCE GATHERING

It was agreed that Members would work in pairs on four separate work streams:

- (1) Performance and Efficiency;
- (2) Communication and Education;

- (3) Policy and Strategy; and
- (4) Community Interaction/Engagement.

Under each work stream, Members in their pairs undertook their own research in addition to formal evidence gathering sessions which took place on 11 June 2018, 9 August 2018, 17 September 2018, 15 October 2018, 19 November 2018 and 17 December 2018.

Key stakeholders invited to give evidence included:-

- Emily Martin, Sustainability and Resilience Manager at Essex County Council who gave presentation entitled '*Waste Reduction Communications*'.
- Gabriella Asara, Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer, and Ros Alam, Marketing Officer and Account Manager, who gave a presentation on the recycling initiatives undertaken by the Council including education and promotion in schools and via social media.
- David Bowman, Commercial Development Manager at Viridor, who offered a perspective from the recycling processor's point of view and information about the Council's recycling performance.
- Alan Massow, Senior Planning Policy Officer, who gave a synopsis of the role of the Council as a Planning Authority and how it can encourage developers to provide recycling facilities in new developments. Gabriella Asara also provided an update on the work of the Corporate Recycling Group.

In addition, on 25 October 2018, four Members of the Task and Finish Group, accompanied by Samir Pandya, visited Viridor's recycling plant at Great Blakenham in Suffolk to see first-hand how dry recyclable materials collected from households within the District are processed.

Feedback was also sought from local schools, via a short questionnaire, to learn from their experiences of waste and recycling.

Details of the presentations and other evidence gathered can be found using the links below to the Member's Hub:-

Presentation by Emily Martin: Waste Reduction Communications. <a href="#">Link</a>
Presentation by Gabriella Asara/Ros Alam: Recycling initiatives, education and promotion. <a href="#">Link</a>
Presentation by David Bowman, Viridor: A Recycling Processor's perspective. <a href="#">Link</a>
Presentation by Alan Massow: Role of the Planning Authority in relation to recycling infrastructure on new developments. <a href="#">Link</a>
Gabriella Asara: Update on work of Corporate Recycling Group. <a href="#">Link</a>
Report from Performance & Efficiency work stream. <a href="#">Link</a>

Report from Policy & Strategy work stream.

[Link](#)

Report from Communication & Education work stream including feedback from schools.

[Link](#)

#### 4. KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 The Braintree District's recycling performance has remained within the top quartile in Essex for many years now, with a recycling rate of over 50%. This has largely been achieved through restricting bin capacity for residual waste and offering a user-friendly recycling collection scheme. However, it is acknowledged that there is scope to improve the District's performance, particularly in relation to waste prevention and food waste.
- 4.2 There are already some good established methods employed to communicate waste minimisation messages to residents and businesses. These are supplemented by the Marketing and Communications Team at Braintree District Council who use social media to convey key messages to residents and businesses via e-newsletters and text. This is an area which is developing as part of the Council's Digital Strategy. A specific focus should be on simplifying our key messages about which materials can be recycled. In addition, the Council has established a corporate working group to review its own internal waste practices and has published an action plan for staff to help reduce waste.
- 4.3 Members of the Group were particularly pleased to see that the Council has been very proactive in rolling out recycling collections to schools. The Council's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Team engages with all primary schools in the District to promote positive behaviours at an early age. However, it has been more challenging to gain access to secondary schools to reinforce the key messages (e.g. at assemblies).
- 4.4 The Council works closely with the Essex Waste Partnership Board (EWPB), and industry experts to incorporate best practice into the management and delivery of its waste collection service. The service is designed to reflect the principles of the waste hierarchy, the importance of which is reinforced in the Government's new Resources and Waste Strategy, including weekly food waste collections.
- 4.5 The Council's Planning and Operations Departments are working jointly to develop a detailed Waste and Recycling Management Guidance document for developers to incorporate best practice for recycling as part of their infrastructure works.
- 4.6 The Council works with the EWPB, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) to influence national policy around Waste Minimisation and Recycling.
- 4.7 The Government has recently published '*Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England*' and will be consulting with local authorities on some sections of this document. The Council will liaise with its industry partners and town and parish councils in order to shape and influence areas of concern and highlight new

opportunities. In addition, the Council should seek to work with and influence Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on both existing and new initiatives including those to deliver greater efficiency of energy from waste plants.

- 4.8 The Panel were mindful of the fact that the Council annually delivers c.6m single-use plastic sacks (annual of £200k). Whilst they recognised the rationale for this system of collection being the most cost efficient and effective at diverting waste from the residual waste stream, the single-use plastic sack is not the most sustainable or environmentally friendly method of collection. The Government's new ambitious Resources and Waste Strategy will seek to reduce reliance on single use plastics.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on feedback received and observations made as part of this review, Members of the Task and Finish Group make the following recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED that Braintree District Council:-

- 5.1 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.**

Purpose: To promote and encourage best practices within the organisation and amongst Members.

- 5.2 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.).**

Purpose: To encourage the sustainable implementation of best practices within schools in respect of Waste Minimisation and Recycling, and to improve the education of younger people in this area.

- 5.3 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.**

Purpose: To help the Council influence Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices at a national level and increase residents' awareness of new online facilities that they can utilise to increase their knowledge of best practices, such as the Re-Use initiative through the *Freegle for Braintree* app.

- 5.4 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.**

Purpose: To help improve the communication channels through which the Council delivers its key messages around Waste Minimisation and Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce to different groups of residents across the District.

- 5.5 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.**

Purpose: To help Members at the Council to influence Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices on a more national scale.

- 5.6 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.**

Purpose: To reduce the amount of contaminated waste throughout the Braintree District, particularly within residential locations such as flatted dwellings.

- 5.7 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.**

Purpose: To ensure that Waste Minimisation and Recycling infrastructure and practices are innate in new housing developments, thus increasing the sustainability of those developments.

- 5.8 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.**

Purpose: To help increase rates of Waste Minimisation and Recycling throughout the District by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of waste practices with the use of new technologies.

- 5.9 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.**

Purpose: To encourage more householders within the District to implement home-composting methods which would ultimately help to offset some of the associated costs of the recycling service, such as that incurred through the maintenance and repair of recycling collection vehicles.

- 5.10 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.**

Purpose: To improve clarity for residents as to correct Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices and thus reduce the risk of miscommunication.

**5.11 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.**

Purpose: To ensure that the Council is compliant with the latest Government initiatives and continues to explore new methods for facilitating new practices around Waste and Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the work of this Scrutiny Review:-

- Emily Martin – Sustainability and Resilience Manager (Essex County Council)
- Gabriella Asara – Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer (Braintree District Council)
- Ros Alam – Marketing Officer and Account Manager (Braintree District Council)
- Alan Massow – Acting Principal Planning Policy Officer (Braintree District Council)
- David Bowman – Commercial Development Manager (Viridor Waste Management)

Members would also like to thank the schools that took part in the consultation and provided feedback to the Group.

Finally, we would like to thank Council officers Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer, for the support and advice they provided throughout the process.

Councillor Chris Siddall - Chairman  
Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce

<b>Report of the Task and Finish Group – Scrutiny Review into Social Isolation and Loneliness</b>		<b>Agenda No: 7</b>
<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Health and Communities</b>	
<b>Corporate Outcome:</b>	<b>Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported</b>	
<b>Report presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor David Mann – Chairman of the Task and Finish Group</b>	
<b>Report prepared by:</b>	<b>Tracey Parry – Community Services Manager</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>	
Minutes of the Task and Finish Group (20 <sup>th</sup> June, 16 <sup>th</sup> July, 13 <sup>th</sup> August, 7 <sup>th</sup> September, 1 <sup>st</sup> & 29 <sup>th</sup> November, 21 <sup>st</sup> January 2019).	<b>Key Decision: No</b>	
<b>Executive Summary:</b>		
<p>A Task and Finish Group consisting of the following Members was formed to explore Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District and make recommendations to Cabinet going forward.</p> <p>Councillors: David Mann (Chairman), Tony Everard, Diana Garrod, Andrew Hensman, Hylton Johnson, Jackie Pell, Sue Wilson.</p> <p>During the Scrutiny Review the Group met with representatives from Essex County Council, the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Community360 and Braintree Area Churches Together to gather evidence in order to understand key issues and the projects/initiatives happening across the District.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the Group were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To understand the prevalence of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the Braintree District.</li> <li>2. To identify what is already being done in the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.</li> <li>3. To understand how people that are at risk of Social Isolation and Loneliness are identified.</li> <li>4. To identify future work/projects that could be undertaken to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.</li> </ol>		

Following its Scrutiny Review and considering its evidence, the Task and Finish Group have made the following recommendations:

1. The Council should, with partners, raise awareness of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the District.
2. District, Town and Parish Councillors should carry out a scoping exercise to identify what services and community assets are available across the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.
3. The Council should support the work streams within the systems based approach of the Essex Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum facilitated by Essex County Council (identification, access and capacity).
4. The Council, with partners, should identify the best method of social prescribing and promotion of activities and services available to those who may be socially isolated or lonely.
5. The Council should support the implementation of a local level forum to help combat Social Isolation and Loneliness.
6. The Council should continue to support and work with the faith community to develop and promote their work to the wider community.
7. The Council should raise awareness of the issues surrounding Social Isolation and Loneliness to all Councillors and provide them with the opportunity to offer their contributions and ideas for local level interventions.
8. The Council, with partners, should explore the use of digital technology in tackling the issue of Social Isolation and Loneliness.
9. The Council should provide training for frontline staff and volunteers to identify individuals that are socially isolated or lonely and signpost/socially prescribe to relevant organisations.
10. The Council should use mosaic profiling to identify potential hotspot areas of high risk or vulnerable groups with a view to developing future targeted work.
11. The Council to measure the impact of the Social Isolation and Loneliness interventions and services available to residents through the commissioning of university graduates.

**Recommended Decision:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

1. Consider the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group into Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District.

2. Refer the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review to Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

**Purpose of 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.

**Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.**

<b>Financial:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Legal:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Safeguarding:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Equalities/Diversity:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	Enhance the information and services to the public.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	As set out in the report. Following consultation by Full Council on 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Scrutiny Review will be referred to the Cabinet to receive and respond to in the new Administration.
<b>Risks:</b>	None arising out of this report.
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Tracey Parry
<b>Designation:</b>	Community Services Manager
<b>Ext. No:</b>	2334
<b>E-mail:</b>	trapa@braintree.gov.uk

## **TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A Task and Finish Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct a Scrutiny Review into social isolation and loneliness in the Braintree District and to consider the following:

- To understand the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness across the Braintree District.
- To identify what is already being done in the Braintree District to address social isolation and loneliness.
- To understand how people at risk of social isolation and loneliness are identified.
- To identify future work/projects that could be undertaken to address social isolation and loneliness.

The Task and Finish Group consisting of the following Members:

Councillors: David Mann (Chairman), Tony Everard, Diana Garrod, Andrew Hensman, Hylton Johnson, Jackie Pell and Sue Wilson.

The Task and Finish Group met with representatives from Essex County Council, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Community360 and Braintree Area Churches Together.

This report sets out the work undertaken and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as a result of the Scrutiny Review.

### **OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS**

Social isolation and loneliness are locally and nationally recognised as important issues that impact on health and well-being.

Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships.

Social isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity, not the quality, of relationships.

Social isolation and loneliness are different but related concepts; one can lead to the other and vice versa. People can experience different levels of social isolation and loneliness over their lifetime, moving in and out of these states as their personal circumstances change.

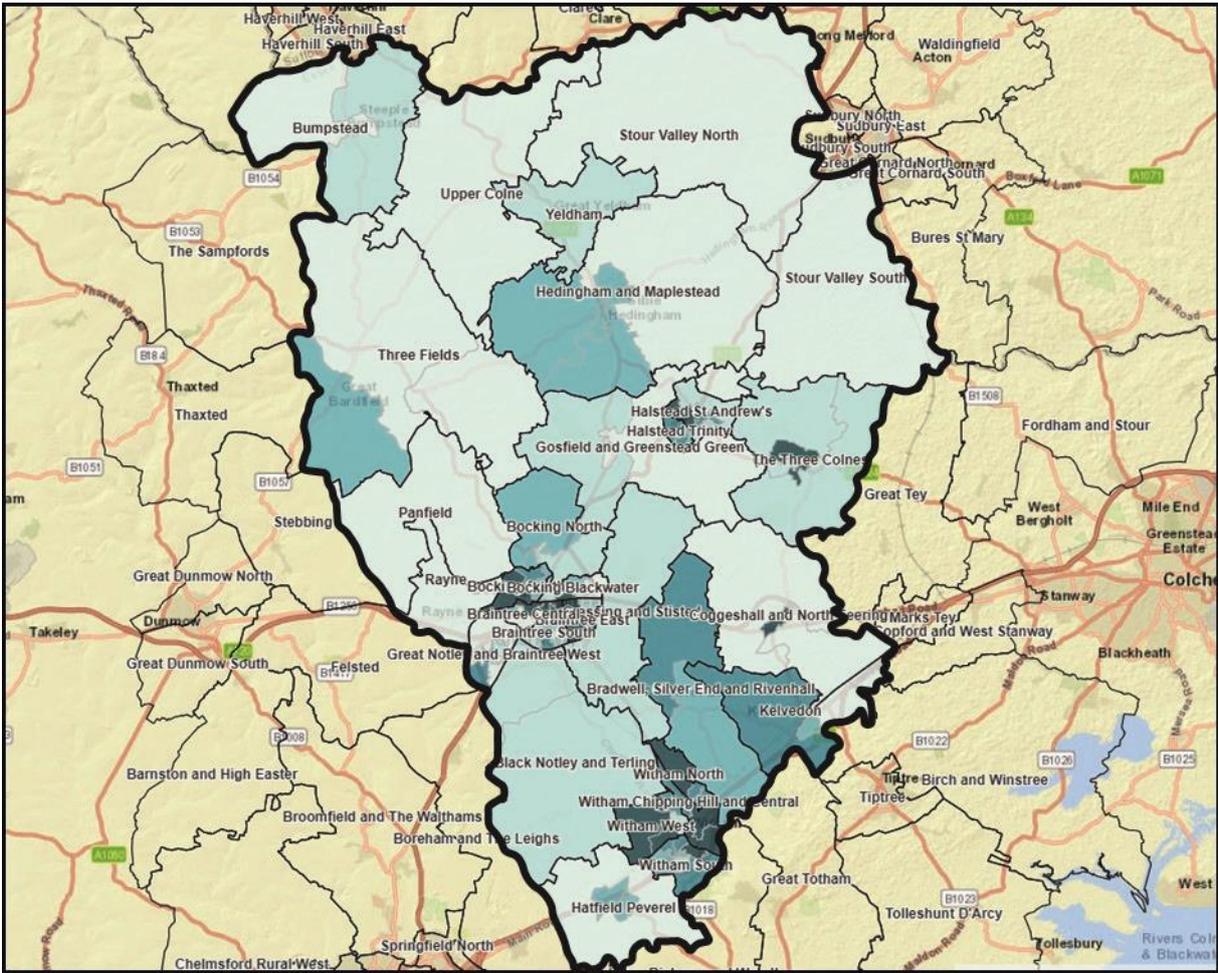
### **Local Picture**

The following information is to put social isolation and loneliness in the Braintree District in a national context.

Data from the Office for National Statistics estimates the Braintree Districts mid 2017 population as:

AGE GROUP	ESTIMATED TOTAL
0 – 17 years	32,514
18 – 59 years	80,137
60 years and over	39,026

The heat map below is data from Age UK, Census 2011 indicating the relative risk of older residents experiencing loneliness.



We know from figures taken from [Essex Insight](#) in 2017 that Essex has an increasing older population and nationally up to 14% of older people report feeling lonely all the time, with loneliness increasing the risk of dementia by up to 50% and those that are socially isolated more likely to enter residential or nursing care early.

An Early Years review and ethnographic research conducted by Essex County Council in 2014 identified that many younger parents in Essex had limited positive relationships and were lonely, and this could link to poor outcomes for young parents and their children.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Latest data available to the Task & Finish Group

The issue of social isolation and loneliness sits within our Corporate Strategy under Health and Communities and supports all the priorities under the outcome of residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported.

In 2018, the District was selected by Essex County Council to be involved in a research action project. The Community Services Team worked alongside the Young Foundation to co-design and co-deliver this project, which took a strengths-based approach to understanding social isolation and loneliness in Halstead.

We have since been instrumental in establishing Meet Up Mondays in the District, an initiative which gives hospitality businesses the opportunity to encourage those in their local areas who are fed up with their own company, or new to an area and may be starting to feel isolated, to attend their premises for a free cuppa and a friendly chat. Anecdotal feedback from these is that new friendships have been formed which in turn has encouraged individuals to attend new activities and meet up socially at other times.

## **PARTNER INPUT/PERSPECTIVE**

During the Scrutiny Review, Essex County Council, the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, the faith community and Community360 (community and voluntary sector) were invited to participate and a summary of their contributions are set out below:

### **Essex County Council**

Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Public Health, advised that there were four key priority areas of the new joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Mental Health, Obesity and Physical Activity, Social Inequalities and Ageing Well, and that three of these priorities were largely influenced by social isolation and loneliness.

Essex County Council is increasing investment in addressing social isolation and loneliness and working with partners to develop a whole system approach to tackling the issue. The approach will be a community driven model supported by formal care and support and has four ambitions:

- Communities have a better understanding of the impact of social isolation and loneliness and how to help each other.
- People who are or are at risk of social isolation and loneliness are identified and are able to access local information and support to live well.
- There is a range of community led support to reduce social isolation and loneliness and build capacity to support people to live well.
- People with complex needs are able to access support to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

### **Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group**

Alison Connelly, Head of Transformation and Community, provided information about the notable impacts of social isolation and loneliness on the health and wellbeing of individuals, including:

- Increases in mortality rates which are comparable to the impacts of commonly known health issues such as obesity and cigarette smoking.

- Increase the risk of mental health issues amongst individuals.
- Dependency on the GP system by groups including the elderly.
- Early entry into residential or nursing homes and on A & E.

Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group have a number of schemes currently in place to help address some of the issues relating to social isolation and loneliness, including:

- Tele-coaching, whereby individuals receive a series of phone calls over a 6 month period which would hopefully mitigate the need for patients to attend GP's or attend hospital.
- Social Prescribing through ConnectWell, which is a directory of services that patients in primary care could be linked to.
- IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service, which aims to reduce waiting times for patients to be referred to the correct service and SilverCloud, which is a digital platform used for IAPT.

### **Community360**

Tristan Easey, Senior Engagement Officer, advised that one of the purposes of Community360 is to connect members of the community with the community and voluntary services and the activities available to them within their own areas. Social Isolation and Loneliness is a specific area of work for Community360 and projects have included i-Tea and Tree-mendous walks. Previous collaborative work has also been carried out with Anglia Ruskin University as to how social isolation and loneliness could be quantifiably measured, the conclusion from this being that it was difficult as there was not an exact measure for wellbeing and emotions.

### **Braintree Area Churches Together**

Representatives from St Paul's, St Mary's, St Peter's and Braintree Evangelical Church shared their experiences with regard to social isolation and loneliness, both within their congregation and the wider community.

Key points included:

- The correlation between deprivation and social isolation and loneliness identified through the use of foodbanks and access to transport.
- Social groups and classes had been implemented by faith groups for the purpose of combating social isolation and loneliness.
- A growing issue with regard to social isolation and single parent families.
- Recognition that faith groups need to work with one another and other partners.
- The need to work with faith groups as part of the community wide approaches to tackling social isolation and loneliness.

### **Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group**

#### **Recommendation 1**

**The Council should, with partners raise awareness of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the District.**

Social Isolation and Loneliness can affect any age group and is recognised as an issue impacting on health and well-being. Essex County Council Public Health were supportive of raising awareness at a local level to partners but also members of the public who could also play a key role in identifying and combating the issue.

## **Recommendation 2**

**District, Town and Parish Councillors should carry out a scoping exercise to identify what services and community assets are available across the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.**

Dr Mike Gogarty, Essex County Council Public Health advised that intervention at a local level was considered the most effective option with regard to tackling social isolation and loneliness; and that District and Parish Councils were ideally situated to assist with identification and to raise awareness.

## **Recommendation 3**

**The Council should support the work streams within the systems based approach of the Essex Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum facilitated by Essex County Council (identification, access and capacity).**

Essex County Council presented an initial report to the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2017 setting out the current provision in Essex regarding social isolation and loneliness giving details of specific services commissioned and to propose a set of principles to underpin a strategic approach to Social Isolation and Loneliness.

A further report was presented in May 2018 that provided an update to the board on the system approach to reducing social isolation and loneliness, including the work of the Loneliness and Isolation Forum and plans to deliver a comprehensive local solution for people across Essex. Council Officers have been part of this forum shaping the whole system approach and have recently supported a collaborative bid from the voluntary sector to Essex County Council. This will see Community Resilience Coaches out in the community creating and developing an infrastructure that enables people at high risk of social isolation or loneliness to improve their social engagement.

## **Recommendation 4**

**The Council, with partners, should identify the best method of social prescribing and promotion of activities and services available to those who may be socially isolated or lonely.**

Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by local councils or local community groups/charities. There are various social prescribing systems in place across the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group area including ConnectWell, tele-coaching, Silver Cloud and IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) which in itself can prove difficult for both users and organisations looking to refer. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019

the Mid Essex Care Navigation plan will be launched; this will take all non-clinical referrals and provide a holistic assessment to determine needs.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**The Council should support the implementation of a local level forum to help combat Social Isolation and Loneliness.**

Essex County Council suggested that a local level conference could be held whereby members of the public attended and awareness of the issues surrounding social isolation and loneliness were raised. Community issues that remained unrealised at a county level could be more successfully identified using a local approach. A conference could also be used to showcase local activities and social groups that currently exist to share good practices.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**The Council should continue to support and work with the faith community to develop and promote their work to the wider community.**

The Believing in Communities event held in November 2018 highlighted the breadth of activities and services hosted or delivered by the faith community across the Braintree District. There is a need to for us to continue supporting this work but also to work with them to identify our most vulnerable residents within the community.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**The Council should raise awareness of the issues surrounding social isolation and loneliness to all Councillors and provide them with the opportunity to offer contributions and ideas for local level interventions.**

Local level activities are more effective in terms of combating cases of social isolation and loneliness. There is a need to identify what community based assets are already available, where the gaps are, how we can assist in promoting these and how we can support new activities moving forward. Meet up Mondays is an initiative that is already proving a huge success, with cafes and pubs in Braintree, Witham, Cornish Hall End and Castle Hedingham already on board.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**The Council, with partners, should explore the use of digital technology in tackling the issues of social isolation and loneliness.**

Social media is an effective method through which awareness of local activities and services could be raised and attendance encouraged. There is a need for us to remember that social isolation and loneliness can have an impact on any age group, not just the older generation. Technology can play a crucial role in enabling people to make social connections and we need to explore how this can be taken forward at a local level.

## **Recommendation 9**

**The Council should provide training for frontline staff and volunteers to identify individuals that are socially isolated or lonely and signpost/socially prescribe to relevant organisations.**

The District Council workforce, including front desk staff are appropriately situated to identify local residents who are socially isolated or lonely and are aware of the referrals routes available to them.

## **Recommendation 10**

**The Council should use mosaic profiling to identify potential hotspot areas of high risk or vulnerable groups with a view to developing future targeted work.**

Mosaic profiling was utilised to select the St Andrew Ward in Halstead for the research action pilot 'Halstead Connected'. The profiling allows us to gain a deeper insight into consumer lifestyles and behaviour to assist us in making more informed marketing decisions.

## **Recommendation 11**

**The Council to measure the impact of the social isolation and loneliness interventions and services available to residents through the commissioning of university graduates.**

Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group advised that the more notable impacts of social isolation and loneliness on the health and wellbeing of individuals included increased mortality rates, the rates of which were comparable to the impacts of commonly known health issues such as obesity and cigarette smoking. Loneliness is also known to increase the risk of mental health issues amongst individuals and the dependency of groups like that of the elderly on the GP system.

Whilst officers are able to measure outputs, it has been difficult to measure the impact/outcomes of any activities/services. Commissioning a research and evaluation piece will enable us to understand the cost benefit of providing and supporting local services.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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- Dr Mike Gogarty – Essex County Council
- Alison Connelly – Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- Tristan Easey – Community360
- Rev Colin Fairweather – St Paul's Church, Braintree
- Rev Rod Reid – St Mary's Church, Bocking
- Rev Keith Ives, Braintree Evangelical Church
- Rev Tim Barnes – St Peter's Church, Bocking

- Tracey Parry – Community Services Manager