

Minutes

Annual General



Meeting of the Council

22nd April 2024

These Minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A recording of the meeting is available on the Council's YouTube Channel at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor L Jefferis	Yes
Councillor D Abram	Yes	Councillor J Martin	Apologies
Councillor M Ault	From 7.18pm	Councillor S Mason	Yes
Councillor J Ayten	Yes	Councillor A Munday	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Apologies	Councillor I Parker	Yes
Councillor J Beavis	Yes	Councillor J Pell	Yes
Councillor J Bond	Yes	Councillor G Prime	Yes
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rajeev	Yes
Councillor L Bowers-Flint	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Yes	Councillor G Spray	Yes
Councillor M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor M Staines	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor B Taylor	Yes
Councillor C Dervish	Yes	Councillor W Taylor	Yes
Councillor T Diamond	Yes	Councillor M Thorogood	Yes
Councillor J Edwards	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood	Apologies
Councillor C Finch	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor M Fincken	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor D Garrod	Yes	Councillor L Walters	Yes
Councillor M Green	Yes	Councillor E Williams	Yes
Councillor J Hayes	Yes	Councillor T Williams	Yes
Councillor P Heath	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor D Holland	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Yes
Councillor A Hooks	Yes		

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF LONG SERVICE CERTIFICATES

INFORMATION: The Chairman announced that she had the pleasure of acknowledging two achievements for long service by Members.

The first presentation was to Councillor Abbott for 25 years continuous service as District Councillor. The Chairman added that this was an incredible achievement and on behalf of the Council, she presented Councillor Abbott with a Certificate to commemorate his service and in appreciation in his dedication to service to the residents and communities in the Braintree District and to this Council.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Beavis as the Group Leader of the I&G Group to say a few words.

The second presentation was to Councillor Butland for 20 years of continuous service as Leader of the Council. The Chairman acknowledged that this was the first ever presentation the Council had made to a Leader.

It was added that since the Council adopted the Executive Model of administration and following a pilot, the Executive as it was known was established with its first meeting being held on 3rd September 2001. Councillor Butland joined the Cabinet June 2003 and was appointed as the Cabinet Member for Health and Community, and on 28th April 2004 Councillor Butland was appointed Leader of the Council, which he has served as continuously for 20 years.

This was an incredible achievement and on behalf of the Council, the Chairman presented Councillor Butland with a Certificate to commemorate his service and in appreciation in his dedication to service to the residents and communities in the Braintree District and to this Council.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Tom Cunningham as Deputy Group Leader of the Council to say a few words.

The Chairman then made her final address to Full Council. She advised that it had been an absolute honour and privilege to serve the Council as Chairman and First Citizen of the Braintree District, and before she passed over the baton, she shared with Members what the past year had brought.

The Chairman had attended around 85 engagements and being mindful of the current Cost-of-living Crisis, had tried to limit unnecessary costs by using her own transport with all but one. She had avoided enticing dinner invitations outside the District from well-meaning Mayors and Chairs in order to focus her time and energy into local charities, organisations, schools, businesses and communities which make Braintree such a great place to live, work and play.

The Chairman had visited some of the wonderful tourist attractions such as Hedingham Castle and Bocking Windmill, and whilst the District's tourist industry was doing okay, it

had not yet reverted to pre-pandemic levels. Youth organisations such as the Scouts and Jack Petchey Foundation had seen numbers rise. The Chairman asked every Councillor to consider ways in which they could provide support, even if just through digital promotion, because to be without them would be unthinkable.

Some of her engagements had been to charities and organisations who were assisting those who were struggling; whether it be with physical or emotional health challenges, homelessness or financial issues. The Chairman had been humbled to be invited to understand the complex workings of these organisations and provided an additional link of communication to the Council with a view to assisting wherever possible.

Last August the Chairman attended an event to celebrate Ukrainian Independence Day, where she heard from those who had been displaced. She added it gave her a sense of enormous pride to be part of a Council that was helping people who were faced with such serious conflict, death of loved-ones, and the loss of their homes and livelihood.

She had also enjoyed some experiences such as; stroking reindeer and ponies, and cuddling a penguin – all therapy animals at a Christmas event for the residents of a care home and their families. She added it was truly heart-warming to see the wide smiles of people in their twilight years, sitting outside with blankets on their laps and enjoying a sing-song with a mug of hot chocolate.

There had also been one or two unexpected challenges. When invited to Ernest Doe & Sons to present awards at their Graduation Ceremony Apprentice Day in a celebration of their skills development and achievements, the Chairman was told how the apprentices had spent the morning having a bit of fun driving the company equipment with a few light-hearted games and competitions. She added 'that there in the background was the biggest combine harvester she had ever seen, with a cutting width of 60ft. "We've left it there for you to have a drive" said Mr Doe, and after half a second, I could see from the look on his face that he was not joking. Even though this was pushing my comfort boundaries, it was an exhilarating experience and amazing opportunity which I will not forget.'

The Chairman added that her chosen theme had been 'Health in every aspect', to include; mental, emotional, physical, environmental, spiritual, recreational and social. She had attended many engagements in these areas, including a tour of Braintree Hospital, the remarkable Fellas Fair in partnership with Healthwatch Essex held at Braintree Town Football Club, and had participated in a Park Run in blistering heat at Great Notley Country Park during a joint event with the NHS. She added that she was so pleased to see some friendly faces from the Council.

The Chairman also gave mention to her chosen Charity; The Salvation Army and in particular David Mann and Captain Rachel Hepburn; the lead with the Salvation Army in Braintree. She added that she had raised funds throughout the year, and I knew it will be put to good use.

The Chairman advised that she became a trustee for the John Ray Trust and thanked their members for giving her such a warm welcome. She also thanked Robert Rose

and the Braintree District Museum Trust for their kindness in allowing her the use of this wonderful venue for my Chairman's Autumnal Event and Quiz. Also, to Father Richard Chand at St. Peter's Parish Church for making the Chairman's Christmas Service so memorable. Mayor of Witham; Councillor Susan Ager for her kind invitations, and Mayor of Halstead; Councillor Jackie Pell, whose experience and sound advice should never be underestimated.

The Chairman thanked her husband, Ian, who had been a tower of strength; making sure the car had fuel, listening to endless speeches, and arranging her Chain of Office whilst offering words of reassurance. The little things that add up to so much.

The Civic team had been marvellous, and she could not forget Stacey Cosens, who had come out in all weathers to take photographs. The Chairman passed on a very sincere thank-you to all and added that she had had a wonderful year and one that she would not forget.

Full details of the Chairmans final address to Council can be viewed on the Councils YouTube Channel at the following link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B12PrUbOPeA>

2 PRESENTATION TO OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

INFORMATION: On behalf of the Council, Mr D Gascoyne, the Chief Executive thanked Councillor D Garrod, the outgoing Chairman for her successful year. Mr Gascoyne presented Councillor Garrod with a signed citation and past Chairman's badge denoting her Chairmanship, and also an album recording the events from her year in Office.

Councillors Butland, Beavis, Jefferis and Pell on behalf of the Conservative Group, the Independent and Green Group, the Labour Group, and the Halstead Residents' Association respectively, all commended Councillor Garrod for her term of office and congratulated her for her dedication and work throughout community and for her continuous support and raising awareness and funds for her chosen charities.

Full details of the presentations can be found on the Councils YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B12PrUbOPeA>

3 ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2024/25

DECISION: That Councillor L Walters be elected as Chairman of the Council for the Civic Year 2024/25.

Councillor Walters received the Chain of Office for Chairman of the Council, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and gave an acceptance address.

4 ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2024/25

DECISION: That Councillor J Wrench be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the Civic Year 2024/25.

Councillor Wrench received the Chain of Office for Vice-Chairman of the Council, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and gave an acceptance address.

5 **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL**

INFORMATION: The Chairman had no formal announcements to make.

6 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 18th March 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

8 **APPOINTMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

DECISION: That it be noted that Councillor G Butland is the Leader of the Council as appointed at the Annual General meeting of the Council held on 25th May 2023 for the four year term of the Council ending in 2027.

9 **LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – CABINET UPDATE**

INFORMATION: The Leader informed Members of two brief updates. The first was in respect of the Cabinet Member Portfolios, in particular to the roles of the Deputy Cabinet Members who would take the lead on specific roles to enable capacity for Cabinet Members to focus more of their role on any challenges that may arise from the upcoming Fit for Future initiative.

The Leader also informed Members that it was his intention to continue to invite all group Leaders to attend and participate in meetings of Cabinet for the coming year as has been done in previous years.

DECISION: That Members agreed:

1. To note the appointment of the Cabinet Members and their assigned Portfolios as set out in Appendix A;
2. To note the appointment of Deputy Cabinet Members as set out in paragraph 3.10;

3. To note the appointments to the Cabinet Sub-Committees and Working Groups, as set out in Appendix B.
4. To note the appointment to the Joint Committees, as set out in Appendix C.
5. To note the Cabinet appointments to Outside Bodies, as set out in Appendix D.

10 **COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS**

INFORMATION: The Chairman advised Members that before introducing the report she had been informed of a small amendment required to the nominations for Substitutes to the Licensing Committee. Currently the report included Councillor Walsh and Councillor Mason as Substitutes, Councillor Walsh had been added incorrectly and should not appear in this list, and Councillor Mason had been put forward as a nomination for the membership of the Committee and therefore her inclusion as a Substitute was no longer necessary. That seat would be held as a vacancy at this time.

Members were asked to note these amendments to the report.

The Leader then introduced the report and drew Members attention to section 3.13 – 3.18 of the report, in relation of the appointment to the Independent Remuneration Panel and added that a successful recruitment process had taken place, and the Panel were now well underway in conducting a review of the Members Allowance Scheme. The Leader added that whilst it was his intention to bring the findings of the IRP to this meeting, the Panel had requested additional time to complete their review and the report would be brought to Council at its next meeting in June.

The Chairman then advised that as part of this item, Members had been asked to appoint the Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. The report set out that 3 nominations had been received for this role, namely Councillor Abbott, Councillor Bond and Councillor Heath. As more than 3 nominations had been received, the decision would normally be determined by way of a ballot. However, in order to support the Council's effort to conduct its business in an open and transparent way, the Chairman requested that Members suspend the Standing Orders so as to allow the Council to undertake the vote for the nominations by way of a simple majority by a show of hands.

This was agreed by Members and thereon followed a vote by way of show of hands from Members.

Following the vote the Chairman confirmed that Councillor Heath had successfully been appointed as the Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

DECISION: That Council agreed the following:

1. To approve the appointments to Council Committees as set out in Appendix A.
2. To approve the appointments to the Outside Bodies as set out in Appendix B.

3. To appoint the Chairman of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
4. To note the appointment of the Independent Remuneration Panel Members.

10 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

INFORMATION: The Leader introduced the report and made reference to section 3.7 in relation to key decision thresholds and advised Members that following a review of the Council's key decision thresholds, it was recognised that this Council's thresholds was considerably lower than that of other Local Authorities across Essex and neighbouring Counties. It was noted that this could cause delay in action key decisions and therefore the threshold for key decisions would need to be reviewed to reflect this.

It was therefore proposed that the following updates be made;

	Current Threshold	Proposed Threshold
Key Decision Threshold	£150,000	£250,000
Cabinet	Over £150,000	Over £250,000
Cabinet Member	Up to £150,000	Up to £250,000
Corporate Director	Up to £100,000	Up to £200,000
Head of Service	Up to £50,000	Up to £100,000

DECISION: That Members agreed:

1. To approve the amendments to the Council's Constitution as identified in this report and as set out in Appendix A.
2. To delegate authority to the S.151 Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to revise the Financial Procedure Rules, if the recommendations set out in 2.1 above are approved.

12 **MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT**

INFORMATION: The Leader reported that the Local Government Association (LGA) was tasked with providing a model Code of Conduct for local authorities as an outcome of the report of The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CoSPL) on Local Government Ethical Standards. This report sets out the new Model Code of Conduct for Councillors produced by the LGA, in Appendix A.

The Leader added that if the Council adopted the Model Code it would be necessary for Members to undertake additional training on the Model Code to ensure that all Members were aware of the obligations contained within it. This would be delivered by the Monitoring Officer in late May or early June, and dates would be circulated to Members as soon as possible.

DECISION: It was the recommendation of the Developing Democracy Group, that Braintree District Council (the Council) adopts the LGA Model Code of Conduct with

immediate effect.

13 **ANNUAL TIMETABLE OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2024/25**

INFORMATION: That the following Council and Annual General Meeting dates, as set out in the Timetable of Meetings 2024/25, be confirmed:-

Ordinary meetings of Full Council (to be held on a Monday starting at 7:15pm):

10th June 2024
23rd September 2024
4th November 2024
9th December 2024
17th February 2025
24th March 2025

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held on 28th April 2025 starting at 7:15pm

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.17pm.

Councillor L Walters
(Chairman)