

Minutes

Council Meeting

12th December 2016



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

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor G Maclure	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Allen	Apologies	Councillor D Mann	Yes
Councillor M Banthorpe	Yes	Councillor J McKee	Apologies
Councillor P Barlow	Until 8.52pm	Councillor R Mitchell	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Apologies	Councillor Mrs J Money	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes	Councillor Lady Newton	Apologies
Councillor D Bebb	Yes	Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Apologies
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor Mrs I Parker	Yes
Councillor Mrs L Bowers–Flint	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Paul	Apologies
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Pell	Yes
Councillor S Canning	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Apologies
Councillor J Cunningham	Apologies	Councillor F Ricci (Chairman)	Yes
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor M Dunn	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
Councillor J Elliott	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor D Garrod	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor J Goodman	Yes	Councillor C Siddall	Yes
Councillor A Hensman	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor D Hufton-Rees	Apologies	Councillor Miss M Thorogood	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Apologies	Councillor R van Dulken	Apologies
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor Mrs L Walters	Yes
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Wilson	Yes
Councillor S Kirby (Vice-Chairman)	Yes		

65 CHAIRMAN'S AND/OR LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman's announcements covered the following:

The Chairman congratulated newly elected Councillors, Councillor Barlow and Councillor Mrs Garrod and welcomed them to Braintree District Council.

It had been announced that Essex County Councillor Joe Pike, MBE, had passed away. Councillor Pike had dedicated 39 years' service to ECC, representing the Braintree District as a Member for Halstead since 1989. He was awarded an MBE for services to Local Government in 2012, a recognition of which he was rightfully very proud. The Chairman passed on the Council's appreciation of Councillor Pike's dedication and commitment to local residents and had written to his daughters to express sincere condolences on behalf of all Members and staff.

The Leader made the following announcement;

Lord Kerslake was leading a Peer Review of the Garden Communities project in North Essex. His team had given initial feedback at this stage which emphasised the strength of the cooperation between the local councils and the significant progress already made on a hugely impressive project which had the potential to be nationally significant.

Lord Kerslake had identified a number of helpful issues which would require careful consideration and which confirmed the view that the early delivery of infrastructure and Government support were essential to the project's success.

All the Local Council leaders are united in the view that it is important for the long term future of the residents and businesses of this part of North Essex that we get this right at this early stage. The Review report was expected to be published in the new year.

As a result of this and further discussions with partners at Tendring, Colchester and Essex County Councils, the Council were now considering a number of these issues and reviewing the joint timetable for the local plan including future meeting dates. The Leader would provide Members with an update on this before the Christmas break.

66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor M Banthorpe declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor G Butland declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him and he had passed on the initial contact to Council

officers. Councillor Butland left the meeting when the item was considered and determined.

Councillor D Bebb declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor S Canning declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 13 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-2018 to 2020-2021' as a non-paid Director of Ignite Business Enterprise.

Councillor T Cunningham declared non-pecuniary interests also in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor P Horner declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor H Johnson declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor G Maclure declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 11 'Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee 23rd November 2016 – Scrutiny Review into Broadband Provision in the Braintree District' as he was an employee of British Telecom (BT).

Councillor D Mann declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor R Mitchell declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor B Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to him.

Councillor Mrs W Scattergood declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 10 'The Establishment of Garden Communities Local Delivery Vehicles and Funding Requirements' as she had a family interest in the Braintree and Colchester boarders. Councillor Mrs Scattergood left the meeting when the item was considered and determined.

Councillor Mrs W Scattergood declared non-pecuniary interests also in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to her.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to her.

Councillor C Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 13 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-2018 to 2020-2021' as a non-paid Director of Ignite Business Enterprise and as a member of the Improvement Panel at East of England Local Government Authority (EELGA).

Councillor Mrs G Spray declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 14 and 18 - 'Recommendation from Cabinet 29th November 2016 - Proposed Freehold purchase of 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree' as the owner of the property was known to her.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision when the Item was considered, unless stated otherwise.

67 **QUESTION TIME**

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

68 **MINUTES**

INFORMATION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 17th October 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69 **PRESENTATION ON THE EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL AUTHORITY CHALLENGE 2016**

INFORMATION: Six members of staff from Braintree District Council had attended the East of England Local Authority Challenge. This was a regional event where teams from the East of England came together to take on the role of a senior management team who had responsibility for the strategic management of their Council. The objective was to manage the affairs of a poorly run Council as effectively and successfully as possible in order to improve performance. The team had to take on strategic roles including Dan Mellini who took on the role of Chief Executive, Leonie Bradford-Doig as Finance Director and Alan Massow as Press

and Publicity Officer, with Amanda Turburville, Chris Shipham and Jack Stewart taking lead roles in dealing with partners, customers and producing a business plan that would be sent to residents. It was a fast paced, highly pressured and intensive day that resulted in a presentation made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The team came 7th out of 26 overall which was a massive achievement for the organisation and congratulations were passed on to Dan Mellini who was awarded as best CEO of the day.

The Chairman invited Dan Mellini, Alan Massow and Jack Stewart to the floor to present them with the award.

70 **PRESENTATION FOR THE ESSEX PLAYING FIELDS AWARDS**

INFORMATION: The Chairman was pleased to announce that that Braintree District Council had recently received a total of 21 awards at the Essex Playing Field Awards.

The Chairman expressed his congratulations to the Council and all those involved in achieving the high standards recognised by this award, in particular Rob Jarvis, Andy Shell, Peter Nice, Dave Lawrence, Jason Wells, Geoff Lock, Brian Rayner, Mick Newman and Andy Potter.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, along with officers Nick Day and Andy Potter to present the award. Councillor Mrs Schmitt thanked officers on behalf of the Council for their continuous achievements and hard work in maintaining the green open spaces within the District.

71 **PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

INFORMATION: Two Braintree District Council Apprentices Lauren Wiffen and Michelle Hutchins had received highly commended awards in the regional finals of the National Apprenticeship Service Apprentice of the Year competition. This was a huge achievement as the Council had never reached a regional final before, or received such accolade. This was a national award where participants were pitched against both public and private sectors. Both apprentices had to complete a rigorous application form, produce evidence to demonstrate how they were performing and providing a return on the Council's investment in the programme as well as be interviewed. They were both excellent and were shining examples of young people and apprentices in the organisation.

The Chairman invited Lauren Wiffen to the floor to present her with the award.

72 **APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the appointment of Committees, Sub-Committees and Outside Bodies following two by-elections that had taken place on 20th October 2016.

The political balance of the Council had altered requiring reconsideration of the political proportionality of committee appointments by Council under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

In an amendment to the report by Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council, it was proposed that the membership of the Standards Sub Committee should be amended to include Councillor Schwier to fill the substitute Member vacancy.

DECISION: That the Council:-

1. Notes the political balance requirements;
2. Agrees the proportional balance and the allocation of seats to political groups on committees in accordance with this report; and
3. That the schedule set out in Appendix A to the report as amended below, be adopted regarding the appointments to Committees.

Planning Committee:

Councillors K Bowers, Mrs L Bowers-Flint, T Cunningham, P Horner, H Johnson, S Kirby, D Mann, Lady Newton, J O'Reilly-Cicconi, Mrs I Parker, Mrs W Scattergood, P Schwier and Mrs G Spray

Licensing Committee:

Councillors Mrs J Allen, M Banthorpe, P Barlow, J Baugh, J Elliott, J Goodman, A Hensman, H Johnson, Mrs J Money, Mrs J Pell, R van Dulken, Mrs L Walters and Mrs S Wilson

Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors Mrs M Cunningham, Mrs D Garrod, J Goodman, P Horner, D Hufton-Rees, G Maclure, D Mann, R Ramage, F Ricci, Miss V Santomauro, P Schwier and C Siddall

Appeals Committee:

Councillors J Abbott, Mrs A Kilmartin, D Mann,
Substitutes: Councillors B Rose, P Tattersley, Vacancy

Standards Sub Committee:

Councillors J O'Reilly-Cicconi, Mrs J Pell and Mrs S Wilson
Substitutes: Councillors S Kirby, D Mann and P Schwier

4. To appoint Councillor Mrs D Garrod together with Councillor Mrs W Scattergood (as the existing appointment) to the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Advisory Committee for the remainder of the Civic Year 2016/2017.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with legislation and to enable the Council to discharge its functions through Committees and Sub-Committees.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GARDEN COMMUNITIES LOCAL DELIVERY VEHICLES AND FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Councillor Mrs W Scattergood left the Council Chamber whilst this item was considered and determined.

INFORMATION: Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council were collaborating to identify an agreed strategic approach to the allocation and distribution of large scale housing led, mixed use development, including employment opportunities and infrastructure provision, in the form of Garden Communities.

The development of Garden Communities was yet to be determined, and would be discussed at the Local Plan Sub-Committee where recommendations would be put to Full Council next year. The report set out the mechanisms that would be needed should the Garden Communities developments be agreed and proposals whereby the Councils could take a much more direct approach to ensuring that the proposed Garden Communities are delivered and that they met the high standards expected of them.

A delivery mechanism would be needed to initiate the development and would require specialised skill set and expertise that may not be readily available at present. The recommendations put before Cabinet were to establish an overall North Essex Garden Communities Ltd which would act as a mediator to distribute shares equally between the four Local Authorities and subsequently provide local delivery vehicles for each of the potential three sites should any of them make progress.

There were significant issues in respect of the debt that would be acquired during the lifetime of the development. There would be an upfront debt as a result of installing infrastructure ahead of residential developments. In the case of Braintree there would be a debt requirement of up to £145million if both proposed Garden Communities went ahead. The arrangements that were proposed to be put in place were significant, however they would not be required if the development of the Garden Communities was not agreed.

Due to the large scale of the developments and as part of the project, an Independent Peer Review has been commissioned and has commenced. The review is being led by Lord Kerslake and the results are due in December and would be made public in the New Year. The findings would be carefully considered as the project progressed.

DECISION: That Council;

1. Noted the decision of the Cabinet to set up and subscribe to the North Essex Garden Communities Limited.
2. Noted the Cabinet's endorsement of the formation of the Colchester Braintree Borders Limited and West of Braintree Limited

3. Endorsed the in principle decision of Cabinet to provide an appropriate proportion of necessary funding to the Colchester Braintree Borders Limited (by an appropriate combination of loan or equity) subject to a satisfactory business case setting out the full terms of the arrangement, which will need to accord with the approved Business Plans and masterplans for the project.
4. Endorsed the in principle decision of Cabinet to provide an appropriate proportion of necessary funding to the West of Braintree Limited (by an appropriate combination of loan or equity) subject to a satisfactory business case setting out the full terms of the arrangement, which will need to accord with the approved Business Plans and masterplans for the project and the funding options available at the time any funding is required by the LDV.
5. Noted the external legal advice received that these decisions cannot and do not prejudice the outcome of any future decisions that the Council may make about the Local plan to be made by Council in relation to the allocation of any Garden settlement.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide Members with a comprehensive overview of the proposals which have been developed over the past twelve months jointly with Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council for Garden Communities in North Essex, in particular to provide Members with information and recommendations to enable them to:

- Establish governance arrangements for the project;
- Agree in principle to be a long term funder for the project, in partnership with the other Councils, subject to the terms and requirements set out in this report.

74 **RECOMMENDATION FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23RD NOVEMBER 2016 – SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

INFORMATION: Further to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Scrutiny Review in to Broadband provision in the Braintree District, Members were asked to consider the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations to Cabinet contained therein.

Subject to Council's approval, the Scrutiny Report would be taken to the meeting of Cabinet on the 6th February 2017 for response.

The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review triggered discussions amongst Members regarding the importance of superfast broadband provision in the District in which areas were identified with the potential to investigate further, these included: possible delivery methods, future of telehealth care, the reality of achieving the target of 100% coverage across the District, the role of Central Government in the provision of broadband and what the future holds for broadband speeds.

DECISION: Recommended Decision: To refer the Scrutiny Review Report into Broadband Provision to Cabinet on 6th February 2017 for consideration and response.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committees' report to be referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

75 **RECOMMENDATION FROM GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 28TH SEPTEMBER 2016 – TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2016-17**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2016-17.

The Council had adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services which required that the Council received at least one mid-year report on the treasury management function. The report was to be considered first by the Governance Committee in order to exercise its responsibility for scrutiny over treasury management activities. The report would then be considered by Cabinet before submission to Full Council with the benefit of any proposed changes, or comments of the Governance Committee.

It was recognised that the Council had managed risk well and provided good value for money for the taxpayer.

Councillor Elliott, Chairman of the Governance Committee paid tribute to the Finance team at Braintree District Council for their outstanding efforts in steering the authority towards a good financial position.

DECISION: To note the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2016-17.

REASON FOR DECISION: To meet the adopted requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

76 **RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET 29TH NOVEMBER 2016 - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-2018 TO 2020-2021**

INFORMATION: This was the fourth of seven stages in the budget setting process which would conclude in February 2017.

Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance highlighted the following points;

The efficiency plan that had been put forward in September 2016 had been agreed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Until the actual Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) figures were confirmed following the Autumn Statement, it was anticipated that the revenue support grant from the SFA would fall from £777,000 next year to £272,000 for the following year.

The administrative subsidy for Local Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit schemes made up a total of £658,620 in 2016/17 and it was expected that this would be reduced by 7% per annum from 2017/18.

The surplus anticipated from the Council Tax collected for the year was higher than in previous years and it was proposed to make a portion of this payable to Town

and Parish Councils. The Council's share of the surplus was £194,255 and it was proposed that £34,820 was allocated to Town and Parish Councils in 2017/18.

The Council had balanced its budget for 2017/18; however, it was proposed to make provision of £150,000 for homelessness and the impact of welfare reforms, resulting in a net withdrawal from General Fund balances of £107,571.

The results of the recent Pension Fund Triennial Review, showed that whilst the Council's part of the Fund continued to be in deficit, i.e. liabilities of £134.084m exceed assets of £119.627m; this had reduced such that the funding level was 89.2%, compared to 82.4% as at the last review conducted at 31 March 2013. The ongoing employer contribution rate was set to rise to 16.5% from the current level of 14.4%; however, this has largely been offset by a reduction in the amount of deficit payment due. The pension deficit recovery period had diminished from 20 years in 2010 to 14 years in 2013 and had now dropped to 10.5 years.

The Council had the option to pay the total pension deficit over the next three years of £4,232,683 in one payment on 1st April 2017. This would be paid by borrowing from unallocated balances or earmarked reserves and paid back over the following two years. As a result of this, the Council would make a saving of £217,000 over the three years.

Members were advised that it was not proposed to make any changes to the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

DECISION: That Full Council agreed;

- a) The Braintree District Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2017/18 as detailed on the Council's website:
http://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200302/benefits/367/housing_benefit_and_council_tax_support

; and

- b) That the surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund be allocated between the District and parish/town councils as detailed in Appendix B to this report.

REASON FOR DECISION: Good governance arrangements through the proactive management of the Council's finances over the short and medium term.

77 **RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET 29TH NOVEMBER 2016 - PROPOSED FREEHOLD PURCHASE OF 3/4 CENTURY DRIVE, FREEPORT OFFICE VILLAGE, BRAINTREE**

Councillor G Butland left the Council Chamber whilst this item was considered and determined.

INFORMATION: Members were reminded that this Item was linked to Item 18 in the Private Session of the Agenda, and that if any Member wished to refer to the private information contained within the report for that Item, it would be necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

DECISION: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting if it is necessary to discuss Item 18 of the Agenda and from the Private Report, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 of the Act.

Both agenda items were taken together to enable consideration of all issues. It was not necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

INFORMATION: The Peer Challenge conducted in October 2013 concluded that the Council should be more innovative and had identified opportunities for the Council to generate better returns on investments including proactive use of assets to maximize income.

An opportunity had come forward for the Council to purchase the freehold interest in an office property at 3/4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree, which would generate additional income to the Council. The property was a detached, high quality, two storey, modern office building forming part of the Freeport Office Village, consisting of 14 office buildings comprising of a floor area of just under 5000sq ft with 18 car parking spaces.

Following advice from the Councils independent valuers a freehold purchase price had provisionally been agreed with the owner on a private treaty basis, which would provide the Council with a return of 7.8%. This price took in to account current rental values and made allowance in the capitalisation rate for the short unexpired term of the current lease. The corporate investment tool had been applied and had produced a score of 6.45, with the minimum score for any liable proposition at 6.

DECISION (Public Report): That Council approves the funding to purchase the property.

DECISION (Private Report): That Council approves the funding to purchase the property.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to obtain better rates of return on its investments.

78 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS AND ORAL QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS - PUBLIC SESSION**

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

Consideration was given to the reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members.

Councillor Butland updated Members on a number of meetings that had taken place following the publication of his report. The East of England Assembly of Council Leaders had met to discuss the main impacts on Local Authorities following the result of the UK Referendum and the concerns amongst some authorities who were

in receipt of significant European funding for projects in respect of the long term sustainability of this funding. In terms of the meeting with Members of Parliament both James Cleverly MP and Priti Patel MP had written to the Minister in support of the Millennium slip roads. The Leader had attended also the Essex Leaders and Chief Executive meeting on 8th December 2016, which had discussed the initial report back from the Essex Independent Economic Commission. This was a commission that had been launched in May 2016, headed by Dr Andrew Sentance CBE alongside a panel of 12 high profile economists' business executives and academics who had been looking at the Greater Essex economy. The Essex Economic Commission report had noted that the county was recognised as the eighth largest economy in the UK and the fourth largest of the 13 counties around London. Greater Essex leads the UK in starting up new enterprises, its start-ups per 1 billion of gross value added (GVA) was above most Counties in the region and metropolitan areas. A higher proportion of people in Greater Essex were in work spread across many economic centres, however it was recognised that growth in Greater Essex was too slow with a growth rate of 0.6% between 2004 and 2014 was slower than that of the UK which had averaged at 1.3%. This was the slowest of all the counties in the South East and East Anglia. It was noted also that skills in the area were too low; the share of those reaching at least NVQ level 4 in Greater Essex was 29% in 2015 against the National average of 37%. There were too few offices of the right size and quality for new and growing businesses and there was a concentration of deprived areas in some neighbouring authorities. The Commission would be publishing its final report in January 2017 and would look to concentrate of four potential topics including; how we increase the amount of commercial work space; enhancing skills and education and transport infrastructure.

Councillor D Bebb updated Members on the Council Tax and Business Collection rates and as at the end of November 2016 the collection rates had caught up and were in balance with figures from the previous year.

Councillor D Bebb referred to the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme in relation to charities and advised Members that a review was currently in progress as the criteria used for awards was not clear and transparent which had led to awards being inconsistent between some applicants. All recipients of the discretionary rate relief were informed of the review in March 2016 and had been requested to complete and submit a new application form which would be assessed against the updated scheme and determine the award for 2017/18. The updated scheme would be considered by Cabinet in the first half of 2017.

Councillor Mrs Bowers-Flint, Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, in the absence of Councillor Lady Newton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing added to the report, in respect of infrastructure, that a map detailing nine possible options for the new route for the A120 had been released by the County Council slightly earlier than expected. The options that ran from Braintree to the A12 near Colchester were being unveiled to ensure residents were aware of the important study to improve the vital road link and the public consultation on route options that would take place next year. The nine options had been distilled from numerous alternatives that had been considered and represented the current position on potential routes, however these may be refined before the consultation goes live in mid-January 2017. Ahead of the mid-January consultation, ECC had offered to hold a District Members information event in early January and this would provide the

District Members with an Update on the nine options, the consultation period and future project timetabling.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt brought Members attention to an error in her report in relation to the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) and advised Members that Braintree District Council had agreed to extend its contract with the NEPP for a further 4 years.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt paid tribute to the voluntary groups and Beavers who had participated in planting trees during National Tree Week. The Cabinet Member reported that it an enjoyable day was had by all and was overwhelmed with the turnout.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt made reference to the Council's Tree Strategy which covered all Council owned trees in the District and included details on potential diseases as well as legislation. Members were advised that a copy of the Council's Tree Strategy could be found on the Braintree District Council website.

Councillor Tattersley advised Members that the Essex Sports Awards had taken place on Wednesday 7th December 2016, and reported on the following awards;

- The Sports Person of the Year was awarded to Max Whitlock
- Halsted Walking Football Club came runners up in the Physical Activity Project of the Year
- Kian Cullen of Braintree District Athletics Club came runner up in the Young Volunteer Under 18
- Nigel Andrews Chairman of Braintree Bowman was awarded the Unsung Volunteer Hero Award
- Beckers Green Primary School were awarded as the winners of the School or College of the year.

Councillor Tattersley advised Members that further details had been released in respect of the changes to the Mid-Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and these were available to view on the Members Hub.

Councillor Tattersley updated Members on the Councillor Community Grant Scheme. There had now been 14 grants approved with several more in the pipeline with just over £9,000 being spent overall.

Councillor Tattersley added that the following Citizens Advice Bureau being taken over by new management and Chairmanship the organisation was becoming increasingly successful despite having budget restrictions. Further details on the achievements of the Citizens Advice Bureau were available on the Members Hub.

Councillor Tattersley advised Members also that the Livewell Bulletin had been published and was available for Members collection. The Cabinet Member encouraged Members to view the section on Livewell Child which would become a fundamental project over the coming months.

Members asked several questions arising from the reports. A webcast of the questions to and responses of Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website at: <http://www.braintree.public-i.tv/core/>

The main topics covered were as follows:

- Reopening of Silver End Library.
- Complying with constitutional procedures in respect of a site at Earls Colne having been removed from the Local Plan proposals then resubmitted for inclusion within the preceding 6 months.
- The potential outcomes for charitable/not for profit organisations following the Discretionary Business Rates Relief Scheme review.
- The issue of residents and staff parking cars along Panfield Land as to avoid becoming blocked in the Springwood Industrial Estate during busy periods.
- The District Council's role in assisting the Colne Valley Railway in being awarded with a £1.75million lottery grant.
- Update on the Premdor site, Sible Hedingham, in respect of the proposals for the building situated onsite, formally NatWest bank, following a petition that had been conducted by local residents in favour of preserving the building.
- The future expectations of the delivery of the Local Plan should the target figure of new homes to be delivered in the District be found to be unsustainable following a review.
- Alternative financial arrangements for supported housing schemes, following the anticipated reductions in funding from Essex County Council.
- The District Council's role in protecting ancient woodlands.
- Details of covering the costs in respect of clearing up fly tipping if there was an increase as a result of the County Council's recent decision to enforce restrictions at recycling centres.
- Update on Premdor Medical Centre.
- Issues around future costs and services for adult social care following the social care cap.
- Concerns around the operation of the Witham Leisure Centre.

79 **LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE COUNCIL MEETING OF
17TH OCTOBER 2016**

INFORMATION: No matters were raised.

There were no matters raised in Private Session.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.53pm.

Councillor F Ricci
(Chairman)