

# Minutes

## Council Meeting



22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021

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](http://www.braintree.gov.uk).

Present:

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor Mrs I Parker	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Pell	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes	Councillor I Pritchard	Yes
Councillor D Bebb	Yes	Councillor M Radley	Apologies
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rehman	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Sandum	Apologies
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor P Euesden	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor T Everard	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes
Councillor Mrs D Garrod	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor A Hensman	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood	Yes
Councillor S Hicks	Yes	Councillor N Unsworth	Yes
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Yes	Councillor D Wallace	Yes
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor Mrs L Walters	Yes
Councillor D Mann	Yes	Councillor Miss M Weeks	Yes
Councillor T McArdle	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Wilson (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor A Munday	No	Councillor B Wright	Yes

46 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were approved as a correct record.

47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, "Public Question Time" as he was known to the speaker, Ms R Pearson, and was a member of various Facebook pages which included 'Better Braintree'. Councillor Abbott also declared an interest in Agenda Item 6, "Recommendation from Cabinet – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – Council Budget and Council Tax 2021-22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-22 to 2024-25," as he was a member of the Local Highways Panel as an Elected Member at Essex County Council (ECC). A further interest was also declared in respect of Agenda Item 8, "Section 1 Local Plan - Planning Inspector's final report and process for adoption," due to his involvement with the Local Plan process.

Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, "Public Question Time," as she was known to the speaker, Ms R Pearson, and was a regular user of the 'Better Braintree' Facebook page. Councillor Mrs Beavis was also a member of the Local Highways Panel in her capacity as an Elected Member at ECC.

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 8, "Section 1 Local Plan," as he was currently still a Director of the North Essex Garden Communities which was in the process of being terminated.

Councillor S Hicks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, "Public Question Time" as he was known to the speaker Ms R Pearson and was also a member of various associated Facebook groups.

Councillor Mrs J Pell declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6 as Chairman of the Halstead Community Centre Charitable Company.

Councillor F Ricci declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6 as an appointed trustee of the Braintree Museum Trust.

Councillor Mrs G Spray declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 8, "Section 1 Local Plan," as she had been in attendance at meetings of the North Essex Garden Communities Board (NEGC) as a non-voting member.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as he was a member of various Facebook groups and he was known to the speaker, Ms R Pearson. Councillor Thorogood was also a Licence Holder with the Council.

Councillor N Unsworth declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as he was a member of various Facebook Groups, was known to Ms R Pearson and he was an ordinary member of Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).

Councillor Miss M Weeks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as she was a member of the 'Better Braintree' Facebook page.

Councillor B Wright declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as he was a member of various associated Facebook pages and he was known to the public speaker, Ms R Pearson.

Councillor T Walsh declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4 as he was known to the speaker, Ms R Pearson.

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

#### 48 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There was one statement submitted by Ms Rosie Pearson; the statement included a question that was set out in two parts which were in relation to the Local Plan process and the Council's approach to this going forward.

Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, thanked Ms Pearson for her question and agreed to provide a written response.

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

The Chairman's announcements covered the following:

The Chairman was saddened to report that the Council had lost one of its colleagues, Mr Andy Vodden, who passed away in January following a short illness. Mr Vodden had joined Braintree District Council over 10 years ago as a Duty Officer at the Town Hall following an established career as a pilot. He was a valuable member of the Town Hall team known for his friendly nature, good humour and hard work. In his spare time he also worked for Rayne Parish Council and was passionate about keeping the village well kept.

The Chairman also wished to pay tribute to the various hospital staff, including the doctors, nurses, cleaners and porters for their hard work and dedication throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chairman also expressed her thanks to all Council staff for their hard work and involvement in the Covid-19 response, such as with the vaccination programme and in implementing new health and safety procedures.

The Chairman then invited Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, to make his statement.

In his statement, Councillor Butland mentioned the pedestrianisation work that was underway in Braintree Town Centre. Since the start of the scheme, there had been much progress made in respect of the work, including various areas of over-paving being lifted, new areas of curbing and paving being installed along the lower ends of Bank Street and the High Street, the introduction of new disabled bays in Bank Street, and a new southbound bus and cycle lane along Fairfield Road. However, it was reported that the Council had, with difficulty, decided to temporarily pause the work in the Town Centre, with the intention that the work would recommence as soon as

possible so as to enable the completion of the pedestrianisation scheme. Members were reassured that the work sites across the Town Centre had been made safe and were being closely monitored by a local construction firm. Although the Council was disappointed by the delay in the works, it was fully supportive of the decision to pause construction and would ensure that the impact on residents and local businesses was minimal. It was stressed that the District Council remained committed to the pedestrianisation scheme which would play a vital role in helping to restore the Town Centre area, especially after the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council was not currently in a position to comment further on the works, although an update would be provided to Members, residents and businesses when it became permissible to do so.

50 **RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET – 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 – COUNCIL BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2021-22 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021-22 TO 2024-25**

**INFORMATION:** The Chairman informed Members that this Item related only to the Budget and the recommendations from Cabinet. The Council Tax Resolution, which would normally be set at this meeting, was subject to a separate report in the Agenda for the evening.

The reports relating to this Item had been circulated separately to the Agenda. The Agenda contained the recommendations from Cabinet and an Amendments Pack which had been circulated to all Members in advance of this meeting.

A Procedural Motion had also been submitted for this Item. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, was invited to introduce and move the Motion. The Motion was seconded by Councillor Abbott.

**Procedural Motion**

“Moved in accordance with the Council’s Procedural Rules 7.1 that for the purpose of expediting the business of Agenda Item 6 Council Budget and Council Tax 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 that Procedural Rules 23.6 to 23.9 are suspended to enable all amendments which have been submitted in time and have had proper notification, to be moved and debated together with the substantive budget, following full debate the amendments will be put to individual recorded votes, before a final recorded vote is undertaken for the substantive proposals.”

On being put to vote, the Procedural Motion was declared **CARRIED.**

**Recommendations from the meeting of Cabinet held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 - Council Budget and Council Tax 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25**

**INFORMATION:** Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, was invited to introduce the report and move the recommendations. During the report, Councillor Butland remarked upon the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on both the Council and the District’s residents. On behalf of all Members, Councillor Butland wished to express the Council’s condolences to the families and friends of those that had sadly passed away or been seriously ill. It was relayed that the District had also experienced some of the highest levels of residents who had been furloughed as a result of the pandemic and

were now experiencing financial hardship. A large number of local businesses had also been impacted by the national lockdowns, and children had been adversely effected as well due to the closure of schools. The pandemic had caused a multitude of hardships for businesses and individuals across the country and with it, unprecedented economic uncertainty, although the Government had taken extensive action in order to mitigate these impacts, including expenditure of over £280 billion. It was against this background that the performance of the Council and its financial plans for the future had been established. Councillor Butland wished to extend his sincere gratitude to the Council and all of its employees for their hard work throughout the year and continued dedication towards serving their communities.

Councillor Butland then moved the recommendations within the report, which were seconded by Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance. Councillor Bebb added to Councillor Butland's report and also stated that this would mark his last Budget address to the Council, due to his upcoming retirement. Councillor Bebb expressed his pride at having been associated with the Council.

Further to the report, the Chairman invited Councillor Abbott, as spokesperson for the largest opposition group, to respond to the recommendations contained within the report and move the two amendments, at which point Councillor Abbott conveyed his best wishes to Councillor Bebb in his upcoming retirement.

Councillor Abbott then moved the two amendments in respect of the Budget, which were as follows:-

Amendment 1: "To allocate £400,000 to the Braintree Local Highways Panel as one-off support for 2021/22, to progress local highway improvements and safety schemes and so assist with recovery from Covid and modal shift. To be funded from the New Homes Bonus unallocated fund."

Amendment 2: "To increase the Climate Change budget item by £250,000 from £500,000 to £750,000, to fund enhanced tree planting and potential new Community Woodlands in Braintree District. To be funded from the New Homes Bonus unallocated fund."

The first amendment was seconded by Councillor Mrs Beavis and the second amendment was seconded by Councillor Unsworth.

There followed a general debate on the Budget and the amendments proposed. During the debate, a number of Members extended their praise and thanks to Council staff for their hard work and dedication to their roles throughout the course of the pandemic. Members also expressed their appreciation to Councillor Bebb for his years of service, and wished him well in his retirement. Once the debate had concluded, a recorded vote was taken on each of the amendments and on the substantive budget motion, the results of which were as follows:

### **Amendment 1**

#### **For the Amendment:**

Councillors: Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Hicks, Thorogood, Unsworth, Walsh, Miss Weeks and Wright (8).

**Against the Amendment:**

Councillors: Baugh, Bebb, Bowers, Butland, Coleridge, Courtauld, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Mrs Dervish, Euesden, Everard, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, Horner, Hume, Johnson, Mann, McArdle, McKee, Mrs Parker, Mrs Pell, Pritchard, Rehman, Ricci, Rose, Miss Santomauro, Mrs Scattergood, Mrs Schmitt, Schwier, Mrs Spray, Tattersley, van Dulken, Wallace, Mrs Walters, Mrs Wilson and Wrench (36).

**Abstained:**

Councillor: Mrs Kilmartin (1).

**Absent:**

Councillors: Munday, Radley, Mrs Sandum (3).

The Amendment was declared **LOST**.

**Amendment 2**

**For the Amendment:**

Councillors: Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Hicks, Thorogood, Unsworth, Walsh, Miss Weeks and Wright (8).

**Against the Amendment:**

Councillors: Baugh, Bebb, Bowers, Butland, Coleridge, Courtauld, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Mrs Dervish, Euesden, Everard, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, Horner, Hume, Johnson, Mann, McArdle, McKee, Mrs Parker, Mrs Pell, Pritchard, Rehman, Ricci, Rose, Miss Santomauro, Mrs Scattergood, Mrs Schmitt, Schwier, Mrs Spray, Tattersley, van Dulken, Wallace, Mrs Walters, Mrs Wilson and Wrench (36).

**Abstained:**

Councillor: Mrs Kilmartin (1).

**Absent:**

Councillors: Munday, Radley, Mrs Sandum (3).

The Amendment was declared **LOST**.

**Substantive Budget Motion**

**For the Motion:**

Councillors: Abbott, Baugh, Mrs Beavis, Bebb, Bowers, Butland, Coleridge, Courtauld, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Mrs Dervish, Euesden, Everard, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, Horner, Hume, Johnson, Mann, McArdle, McKee, Mrs Parker, Mrs Pell, Pritchard, Rehman, Ricci, Rose, Miss Santomauro, Mrs Scattergood, Mrs Schmitt, Schwier, Mrs Spray, Tattersley, Unsworth, van Dulken, Wallace, Walsh, Mrs Walters, Miss Weeks, Mrs Wilson, Wrench and Wright (42).

**Against the Motion:**

Councillors: (0).

**Abstained:**

Councillors: Hicks, Kilmartin, Thorogood (3).

**Absent:**

Councillors: Munday, Radley, Mrs Sandum (3).

The Substantive Motion was declared **CARRIED**.

**DECISION:** That Council approved:

1. The budget variations to the current base budget as detailed in Section 4 of the main report;
2. The additional income and cost reductions as detailed in Section 6 of the main report;
3. The allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant of £411,824 for 2021/22 be earmarked for housing purposes;
4. The allocation of Local Council Tax Support Grant, of £189,919, be held in reserve and that authority be delegated to the Cabinet members for Housing and Finance and Performance Management to agree a scheme with the major preceptors on the use of the funds to provide support to vulnerable households;
5. The unavoidable revenue budget demands and new investments added to the Base Budget of £98,000 as detailed in Section 5.2 of the main report;
6. The unavoidable revenue budget demands and new investments required to meet one-off or time-limited expenditure of £465,140 as detailed in Section 5.3 of the main report and to fund as detailed in section 5.5 of the main report;
7. A provision of £1million be set aside in a new earmarked reserve from the unallocated General Fund Balance to meet the potential financial impact of Covid on the Council's finances that is not covered by support from the Government;
8. The Braintree District Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22 as detailed on the Council's website: Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22;
9. The package of support to claimants experiencing difficulties as a result of the Local Council Tax Support scheme as detailed in Section 11.9 of the main report, subject to a review of the effectiveness and value for money of the CAB money advice service with authority delegated to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance Management to agree and implement any changes as a consequence of the review;
10. The Council's discretionary fees and charges and housing rents for 2021/22 as detailed in the schedule on the Council's website;
11. Delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Members to determine the level of charges for Trade Waste collection, Environmental permits, core leisure and planning pre-application advice service and street naming and numbering for 2021/22;

12. That delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Member to agree variations to Trade Waste, Town Hall Centre, Building Control and Car Parking fees and charges for commercial purposes;
13. The sum of £7,368,666 be transferred from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve to offset the estimated deficit on the Business Rates Collection Fund as at 31st March 2021, which is required to be taken into account for the 2021/22 Budget;
14. To continue the Council's Discretionary Business Rate Relief schemes, as detailed in section 9.2 to the main report, for 2021/22;
15. Discretionary Council Tax discounts and exemptions for 2021/22 are:
  - Discount applicable to empty dwellings undergoing major repairs is set at 0% for the twelve month period;
  - Discount applicable to vacant dwellings is set at 0% for the six month period;
  - Discount applicable to second homes is set at 0%;
  - Discretionary Council Tax Empty Homes Premiums charged on dwellings vacant for over two-years but less than five-years continue at 100%; on dwellings vacant for over five-years but less than ten-years continue at 200%; and on dwellings vacant for over ten-years be increased to 300%, with effect from 1st April 2021 and that this is duly published in a local newspaper within 21 days of this decision. In addition the refund arrangement, as detailed in section 13.5 of the main report;
16. The Council's Pay Policy for 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix B to the main report;
17. A transfer to the Revenue Account of £320,165 from the General Fund unallocated General Fund balance in 2021/22;
18. The estimated movements on the earmarked reserves as detailed in Appendix E to the main report;

### **Capital**

19. The General Fund Capital bids for 2021/22 listed in Appendix H to the main report;

### **Capital and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy**

20. The Capital and Investment Strategy including the authorised borrowing limit, operational borrowing boundary, the policy on Minimum Revenue Provision and prudential indicators as detailed in Appendix I to the main report;
21. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement including the schedule of investment counterparties and limits and prudential indicators as detailed in Appendix J to the main report;



## **Council Tax**

22. The proposed estimates (producing a Braintree DC Council Tax Requirement of £9,921,194) as detailed in Appendix C and the Council Tax for 2021/22 of £184.68 for a Band D property, having taking into consideration:

- The consultation feedback, if any, received and reported verbally at the meeting;
- The assessment of risks in the budget assumptions;
- The Equalities Impact Assessments; and
- The Section 151 Officer's report (Corporate Director – Finance) on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of balances (Appendix G to the main report).

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To determine the Budget and Council Tax level proposals for 2021/22 to be submitted to Full Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution.

## 51 **ESTABLISHMENT OF A COUNCIL TAX COMMITTEE**

**INFORMATION:** It was reported that Essex County Council, as a major precepting Authority, was not due to determine its Council Tax precept until 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. As this date would occur after Braintree District Council's (the Council) meeting of Full Council, it was necessary to establish a Council Tax Committee who would be responsible for the determination of the Council Tax Resolution and the level of Council Tax for 2021/22 (inclusive of all precepts), in accordance with the Terms of Reference as set out below:-

- To be required to exercise the Council's functions, powers and duties relating to the formal accepting of Council Tax precepts from precepting authorities and the setting of the overall Council Tax for the year 2021/22, in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Local Government Act 1992;
- To determine the level of Council Tax for the year 2021/22, for the avoidance of doubt the Committee shall have no power to amend the budget of the Council;
- To take such ancillary matters as necessary for the purposes of the above; and shall consist of four Members of Council.

The Council Tax Committee was scheduled to meet on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The Membership would consist of the Leader of the Council and the three Group Leaders: Councillor J Abbott, Councillor Mrs J Pell and Councillor D Mann.

Further to the report, Councillor Abbott suggested that in future, the Council's meetings in respect of the Budget should be timetabled to ensure that they occur following the determination of the Council Tax precept by Essex County Council in order to avoid the necessity of a separate Committee; however, Councillor Abbott acknowledged this could not always be avoided.

**DECISION:** That Council agreed:

1. To establish a Council tax Committee;

2. To delegate the determination of the level of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 to the Council Tax Committee; for the avoidance of doubt, the Committee shall have no power to amend the budget of Braintree District Council;
3. The Council Tax Committee shall be made up of 4 Members with the membership as set out.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To establish a Council Tax Committee to enable the Council to determine the level of Council Tax for the year 2021/22.

52 **SECTION 1 LOCAL PLAN - PLANNING INSPECTOR'S FINAL REPORT AND PROCESS FOR ADOPTION**

**INFORMATION:** Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, was invited to introduce the report to Members.

Members were informed that the Planning Inspector, Mr Roger Clews, had issued his final report on the soundness and legal compliance of Section 1 of the Local Plan for North Essex, having given consideration to the consultation responses in respect of his main modifications and the latest government household projections.

With the incorporation of the Inspector's final set of recommended main modifications (which included the removal of the Colchester Braintree Borders and West of Braintree Garden Communities), the Section 1 Local Plan was found to be sound and legally compliant.

Members were advised that the modified version of the Section 1 Local Plan included main modifications recommended by the Inspector and minor modifications agreed by officers of the three Authorities to reflect those main modifications in the supporting text, and therefore met with the requirements to proceed to formal adoption. A unanimous recommendation was also made by the Local Plan Sub-Committee at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 that Full Council adopted the Shared Strategic Section 1 of the Local Plan.

**DECISION:** That Council agreed:

- a) To note the findings of the Planning Inspector's 'Report on the Examination of the North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan received on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and his final 'Schedule of Recommended Main Modifications;'
- b) To approve the formal adoption of the 'Modified North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan' i.e. the new Section 1 Local Plan incorporating the Inspector's recommended main modifications in accordance with Section 23(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;
- c) To express its huge disappointment that the Examination of Section 2 had been delayed by the Planning Inspectorate and instruct the Portfolio Holder for Planning to write to the Inspectorate urging it to see if there is any way in which the Examination could be brought forward.

**REASON FOR DECISION:**

- a) To report the Local Plan Inspector's final conclusions on the legal compliance and 'soundness' of the Section 1 Local Plan for North Essex following consultation on his recommended 'Main Modifications' and the subsequent receipt of his final report on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020;
- b) To report that, by incorporating the Inspector's recommended Main Modifications, the Section 1 Local Plan meets the tests for legal compliance and soundness - as required for a plan to proceed to formal adoption; and
- c) To seek the Local Plan Sub-Committee's agreement that the modified Section 1 Local Plan be recommended to Full Council for formal adoption.

## 53 **CABINET REPORT TO COUNCIL**

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

Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, had nothing further to add to his report.

Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, was pleased to inform Members that Braintree District Council had made it to the national finals of the Royal Town Planning Institute Awards as finalists in the category of 'Excellence in planning for a successful economy,' in relation to the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park. The final results would be revealed on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Councillor Mrs Spray added that the achievement was a great acknowledgement of the high standard of the scheme and a compliment to the work of everyone involved.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, drew attention to three long serving members of staff at the Council who were due to retire between December 2020 and March 2021; they were: Dave Jarvis, who had worked in the Building Control Service for 38 years; Jon Goldsmith, who had provided 48 years of service at the Council, having worked in both Building Control and Environmental Health; and finally, Dave Chaplin, who had provided 42 years of service at the Council as an Environmental Health Officer. Councillor Mrs Schmitt expressed her gratitude to all three members of staff for their hard work and dedication throughout their years of service. In addition to this, Councillor Mrs Schmitt was delighted to report that as a result of the continuous hard work of the Environmental Health Team on Climate Change, the Council had achieved a new grant of £129,000 from the Office of Lower Emission Vehicles which would allow for the installation of a further four electric charging bays. Three of the bays would be located at the White Horse Lane, Newlands Drive and Mill Lane car parks in Witham, and one would be located at Braintree Train Station.

Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, reflected on the hard work and dedication of all staff across the organisation and in particular, the work of the Revenue and Benefits Team in the distribution of business grants. Councillor Bebb praised the staff involved for their commitment towards ensuring that the grant funds were issued as quickly as possible, for which many businesses were very grateful. Other grants issued were in relation to NHS Test and Trace Support

Payments, and mention was also made of the Local Council Tax Support Hardship Fund, of which 93% of the allocation received from the Government had now been used and issued to recipients.

Members then asked several questions arising from the reports. A webcast of the questions to and responses of Cabinet Members is available on the Council's YouTube channel at <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

The main topics raised were as follows:

- Councillor Abbott hoped the Leader would join him in recognising the excellent work of the NHS and volunteers across Essex in the rollout of the Covid-19 Vaccine, and asked if any information could be given as to whether there would be additional vaccination centres across the District.
- Councillor Abbott supported the report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Place and highlighted the rollout of the trial amenity recycling collection service and information provided in respect of the electric charging points. Councillor Abbott then added his congratulations to the retiring members of staff for their long years of service. A question was also raised in regard to the forthcoming County Council review of waste and recycling centres, should the review result in any reductions in service for the District.
- Councillor Abbott queried how the Council intended to increase capacity in the Planning Department, particularly within the Planning Enforcement Team.
- Councillor Abbott asked what feedback had been received in respect of the Council's new website, and whether any 'search function' difficulties had been reported.
- Councillor Mrs Beavis asked what actions were being taken to encourage students to make use of leisure centres when they were open once again, and to provide confidence that the District's leisure facilities were safe.
- Councillor Mrs Beavis requested further detail in respect of the "maintenance and compliance" of buildings under the Council's contract with Fusion Lifestyle that was mentioned in the report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing.
- Councillor Euesden was pleased that Essex X-Ray had completed their purchase of the site at Horizon 120 and sought confirmation that CareCo had also completed their purchase as planned on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.
- Councillor Everard expressed his appreciation to Councillor Bebb for his many years of service to the Council.
- Councillor Hensman queried whether there would be a replacement officer who would assist him with the Braintree District Access Group, following Dave Jarvis' retirement.
- Councillor Mrs Parker asked whether the work of the Community Transport Team in taking customers to their vaccination appointments was in addition to the normal

day-to-day services provided by the Team, and hoped that their efforts would be recognised by the County Council.

- Councillor Rose commented on the success of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme but expressed concern that the recent uptake of the grants by community groups appeared to be less than in previous years. It was therefore requested that the Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism discussed wider promotion of the scheme with the Community Services Team. Members were also reminded that they could aggregate their grants if needed.
- Councillor Thorogood requested details of the staffing costs to the Council as a result of the North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) project, particularly in regard to the two years of work undertaken after Part 1 of the Local Plan was found to be unsound by the Planning Inspector in 2018.
- Councillor Thorogood raised a question in respect of the Ipswich Incinerator and how savings were made by the Council (e.g. through landfill, sorting or reduced gate fees), and whether the Council was contractually obliged to supply waste for incineration.
- Councillor Thorogood raised a query in respect of comments that were made at a meeting of the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) regarding Braintree District Council's approach towards addressing Climate Change issues.
- Councillor Unsworth requested further details as to the savings made by the Council in relation to the Ipswich Waste Management Facility, what the benefits were of this and the nature of the Council's contractual obligations.
- Councillor Unsworth requested clarification on the latest position regarding Woodhouse Farm.
- Councillor Wright raised a question which regarded the delay of Part 2 of the Local Plan and whether this would impact on any new planning developments proposed for Silver End.
- Councillor Walsh asked whether the District Council intended to submit a comment to the Environment Agency (EA) in regard to their intent to apply to Essex County Council for a large, 20-year flood alleviation scheme that would impact the Coggeshall and Kelvedon area, and that the Cabinet Member for Planning agreed to consider asking the EA to confirm that they would abide by their written commitment of two publically held meetings for Feering, Kelvedon and Coggeshall.
- Councillor Walsh sought confirmation as to when the Planning enquiry into the delay on Section 2 of the Local Plan would be brought forward to from July. Councillor Walsh also queried how assured the Council was that the Local Plan would be adopted within the year.

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

- Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, circulated an e-mail to all Members on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 which set out the requested detail on the NEGC project costs as provided previously.

- Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, would investigate any search function difficulties with the Council's new website but requested further details from Councillor Abbott before this could be undertaken.
- Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism, agreed to speak with the Community Services Team about promoting the Councillor Community Grant Scheme more widely.
- Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism, confirmed he would provide a communication to all Members reminding them of the remits of the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.
- Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, would provide a written response to Councillor Unsworth in respect of his question regarding Woodhouse Farm.
- Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, agreed to look into the public meetings mentioned by Councillor Walsh and to confirm the details.
- Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Thorogood about savings made by the Council in respect of the Ipswich Incinerator.
- In response to a question raised by Councillor Thorogood about comments made by the EALC, Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, requested that further context around the issue to allow a suitable response to be provided.
- Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, indicated that the Council could issue a press release to schools upon the opening of the District's leisure centres.
- Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, confirmed that arrangements going forward in respect of the District's leisure centres, including Government funding, would be reported to Members once the details had emerged.

#### 54 **LIST OF PUBLIC MINUTES PUBLISHED SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

**INFORMATION:** There were no matters raised.

**DECISION:** The list of public Minutes published since the last meeting of Full Council was noted.

During the course of the meeting proceedings, Members collectively agreed to a temporary recess from 9.00pm to 9.05pm.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.10pm.

Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin  
(Chairman)