

# Minutes

## Council Meeting



15<sup>th</sup> March 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	Yes
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	Yes
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 McArdele	Apologies	Councillor Mrs S Wilson (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor A Munday	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Yes

55 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 were approved as a correct record.

56 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as an Elected Member at Essex County Council (ECC) and a member of the Essex Climate Action Commission. In his capacity as Parish Councillor, Councillor Abbott also supported a number of tree-planting projects which had the potential to become part of the Essex Forest Initiative which was also managed by ECC.

Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as the two registered speakers were known to her. Councillor Mrs Beavis was also an Elected Member at ECC.

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as an Elected Member at ECC.

Councillor A Hensman declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6, 'Draft Climate Change Strategy,' as he was a trustee of the Archer Community Centre, a "carbon-neutral" building.

Councillor S Hicks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as the two registered speakers were known to him.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as an Elected Member at ECC.

Councillor P Schwier declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as both of the registered speakers were known to him. One of the registered speakers had also commented on Councillor Schwier's Twitter account page.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as both of the registered speakers were known to him.

Councillor N Unsworth declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as both of the registered speakers were known to him. Councillor Unsworth was also a member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycling Group.

Councillor T Walsh declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as both of the registered speakers were known to him. Councillor Walsh also declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 7, 'Draft Cycling Strategy,' as a member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycling Group.

Councillor Miss M Weeks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as both of the registered speakers were known to her.

Councillor Mrs S Wilson declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time' as the speakers were known to her. Councillor Mrs Wilson was also a member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycling Group.

Councillor B Wright declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, Public Question Time' as both of the speakers were known to him and he was also a member of Rivenhall Parish Council, which was conducting a tree-planting exercise.

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.

## 57 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were two statements made in relation to Agenda Item 6, 'Draft Climate Change Strategy.'

The first statement was by Mr Michael Staines, who questioned the viability of the Draft Strategy in addressing climate change objectives for the District, especially in view of the Rivenhall Incinerator plans.

The second statement was made by Mr Colin Riches, who questioned the overall effectiveness of the draft strategy and agreed that the Council could not combat the climate emergency on its own. Two suggestions were made as to how the Council might become an improved 'local leader' for communities, which revolved around a proposed 'green school' programme and the introduction of a variable speed limit outside of schools.

Following the end of Public Question Time, the Chairman thanked the two speakers for their statements and suggested that Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, responded to the comments made as part of her address under Agenda Item 6, 'Draft Climate Change Strategy.'

## 58 **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 a former Braintree District Councillor, Elwyn Bishop, had passed away peacefully on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 at the age of 90.

Elwyn was elected to the Council in May 1991; he served continuously until April 2015, a total of 24 years, and represented the former Braintree East Ward. He was Vice-Chairman of the Council in 1995/96 and Chairman of the Council in 1996/97. During his time as Councillor, he served on various Committees including the Braintree Area Committee, for which he was the Chairman of in 2002 and 2003, and also the Local Plan Panel and the Regulatory Committee. In addition to this, he also served continuously on the Planning Committee from its inception in 2007 until 2015. Elwyn was also an Essex County Councillor who represented Braintree East between 1993 and 2001, as well as Braintree Town between May 2005 and 2009.

The Chairman expressed her sincere condolences to Elwyn's family and invited Councillor D Mann, Leader of the Labour Group and who knew him well, to say a few words.

Councillor Mann explained that Elwyn's time as a District Councillor marked his second period of public service, having already built up 35 years of experience as a teacher at the time that he was elected in 1991. Among Elwyn's most exemplary traits were his community mindedness, loyalty, integrity, decency, commitment to his role and his supreme organisation. Although he had a mild disposition to some, Elwyn was above all a "fighter," as exemplified by his County seat win in 1993, which had previously been considered an impossible seat for Labour to secure, and also by his great personal courage after he had sustained injuries in a car accident. Councillor Mann was therefore pleased and proud to pay tribute to such a brave colleague and friend.

Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, was then invited to speak on behalf of the Conservative Group. Councillor Butland would remember Elwyn with fondness and as a strong political opponent who was principled but always polite when putting forward his arguments, and who fought hard for his community. Of the 15 Elections that Councillor Butland had participated in, he had only lost one, to Elwyn, in the 2005 County Council Elections. Councillor Butland felt that he could not have lost to a nicer opponent, and wished to express his condolences to Elwyn's wife, Agnes, for her loss.

Councillor J Abbott also expressed his sympathies on the loss of Elwyn, who was always friendly and personable, despite any political differences and had a "great" sense of humour. The way in which he was able to carry on despite the significant health impacts he suffered in later life was also commended. Councillor Abbott would remember his time sitting next to Elwyn on the Planning Committee with fondness.

Councillor Mrs J Pell gave her sympathies to Agnes, who also served on the Council, and to the wider family for their loss. Councillor Mrs Pell had known Elwyn throughout his time as a Councillor, and added that he was one of the "nicest" Chairmen she had worked under. Elwyn he was a "gentleman;" pleasant and polite, who always had regard for his colleagues and would be dearly missed.

The Chairman thanked the Group Leaders for their tributes and expressed her sympathies on behalf of the Council to Elwyn's family. A condolence card had also been sent. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, was then invited to make his statement.

The Leader was pleased to announce that confirmation had been received today from the Department of Transport that the Council had received full funding for both the Central Essex Square and South Braintree Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT). The bid had been submitted jointly with Essex County Council (ECC) to the Rural Mobility Fund and was worth in excess of £2.5m. It was advised that the DDRT Scheme would allow users to access transport via an app which would enable 'real time' arrival updates, and also enable staff to access transport via convenient virtual stops. The DDRT was to be operated using electric minibuses.

The scheme for South Braintree supported the Council's priority to connect people and places, in addition to the Council's promise to develop infrastructure in order to improve journeys across the District. The Scheme would provide a transport option that was both flexible and sustainable to the currently unserved business parks of

Skyline, Horizon 120 and Springwood Drive, thus enabling the growth of these employment sites and supporting them to thrive and improve opportunities for residents. In connecting the communities of Great Notley, Black Notley and Rayne to the business parks, bus and rail stations and onward travel, opportunities for residents would also improve; this would enable communities to use traditional public transport for inward travel to Braintree and to use the DDRT Scheme for the latter half of journeys, thereby avoiding the need for a car and supporting the local economy. Students would also have access to the Sixth Form Centre, allowing them independent travel. Elderly residents would also be supported as the Scheme would allow them access to shopping and medical facilities, thereby reducing the walking distance required and helping with social isolation. The reduction of travel time for residents through the use of sustainable transport methods would also reduce a large amount of traffic from our roads.

The Central Essex Square Scheme would allow there to be links with other key transport hubs outside of the District with the creation of a 24/7 sustainable transport option to the Skyline and Horizon 120 sites; this would have the added benefit of allowing staff with different shift patterns to get to work using sustainable travel, as well as enable visitors to access the site without reliance on a car. Local communities would also be able to make public transport journeys via key transport interchanges, such as the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride, and there would be improved access to Broomfield Hospital, Writtle College and Chelmsford City Centre, thus enabling those without transport to travel independently, reducing social isolation and minimising the amount of cars on roads.

The Leader reiterated the Council's promise that as part of its Corporate Strategy, it would improve the District's connectivity and harness innovation and technology in order to meet future needs. The successful bid would utilise technology in order to reduce the journey time of residents and create the ability to access sustainable transport through digital devices; this represented an exciting development for the Braintree District and had the potential to fundamentally revolutionise the way in which we work.

## 59 **DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY**

**INFORMATION:** Prior to the report, the Chairman advised Members that an open debate was being sought in respect of the Draft Climate Change Strategy, in which all Members were encouraged to participate. Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, was then invited to introduce the report.

Before commencing with her report, Councillor Mrs Schmitt advised Members of two timely pieces of information; firstly, Members were informed that on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Essex County Council's (ECC) Cabinet were due to discuss their response to the Essex Climate Action Commission on the themes of "adapting to an already changing climate," transport and the built environment. Secondly, Councillor Mrs Schmitt was delighted to report that Councillor Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure at ECC, had agreed to extend the rural verge cutting trial involving a single cut of the grass verges for an additional year across the entire Braintree District.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt then set out the report, which detailed the work undertaken by the Climate Change Working Group, the draft Climate Change Strategy (the Draft Strategy) and the proposal for stakeholder engagement, ahead of the final Climate

Change Strategy that was due for presentation at the meeting of Full Council in July 2021. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, seconded the recommendations contained within the report.

Further to the report, Members were invited to participate in an open debate on the Draft Climate Change Strategy. The main points were as follows:-

- Councillor Rose expressed his support for the recommendations contained within the Draft Strategy, which were in line with the Council's declaration of a 'Climate Emergency' in July 2020, and applauded the plan for a six-week stakeholder engagement process with residents, partners and businesses on the Draft Strategy in May 2021. Councillor Rose then reiterated the need for us all to ensure that action is taken in order to prevent global changes to the climate.
- Councillor Abbott welcomed the Draft Strategy and was pleased by the Leader's announcement in respect of the sustainable transport funding, as well as the news that the grass verges trial had been extended. Councillor Abbott felt that the Draft Strategy could be made more ambitious and effective in terms of addressing climate change issues. The following points were subsequently raised:
  - Larger-scale issues such as those posed by the Rivenhall Incinerator had been omitted from the Draft Strategy; if built, the facility would be the largest source of carbon dioxide in Essex.
  - The Draft Strategy did not make any commitments to expand on obvious climate mitigation measures, such as incinerator emissions, renewable energy on developments or substantial increases in tree-planting.
  - On page 3 of the Draft Strategy, no mention was made of the impacts of climate change on habitats and species, and no baseline figure had been provided against which preventing global temperature increases of "...no more than 1.5°C" had been established.
  - The graph on page 5 of the Strategy was found to be "confusing," due to the lack of scale units which would assist users in identifying the specific District emissions being referred to. Furthermore, no clarity had been provided as to the figures quoted in respect of District Wide CO2 emissions and the accompanying Pie Chart (e.g. whether they were per annum).
  - The target of "Carbon Neutrality" for the Council by 2030 was not a "whole District" target, which could cause confusion.
  - On page 18 of the Draft Strategy, the statement that "...a good data measuring process is vital" was correct as such, the Strategy must be reflective of this throughout in terms of its baseline figures and definitions.
  - In respect of the graph on page 5 of the Draft Strategy, the timeline on the X-axis was not linear, nor were the emissions included on the Y-axis, which had also not been labelled.
  - Page 6 of the Draft Strategy listed the measures that had been assisted by the Council in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change; however, these were in relation to private property installations (e.g. energy switch).
  - On page 10 of the Draft Strategy, under "Energy Conservation," no mention was made of light pollution.
  - The Council's Contact Magazine stated that the best way to help the climate and local environment was to "turn off lights" when "...not in use;" it was presumed this was in reference to outdoor lights as well as indoor lights.

- On page 12 of the Draft Strategy, it stated that "...the number of vehicles on the roads needs to reduce," but this seemed to be in conflict with the District Council's and ECC's promotion of the new offline A120 through open countryside which would ultimately increase traffic by 50%.
- In order to be consistent with the Draft Cycling Strategy (see Item 7 on Agenda), it was stressed that the cycling network referred to on page 12 of the Strategy linked in with the villages of Earls Colne and Kelvedon and the railway station. Councillor Abbott stated that the implementation of a comprehensive cycling and walking network would be beneficial.
- Councillor van Dulken welcomed the Council's commitment to tackling the issue of climate change, and expressed a keen interest in the timely investment by the Council in the I-Construct facility along Springwood Drive, Braintree.
- Councillor Euesden supported the Draft Strategy and stressed that a collective approach with other Local Authorities towards tackling the issue of climate change was essential. A key area of focus was product production and the need for the companies involved to return to a "product for life" ethos. Reference was also made to concerns over the supply of lithium used in car battery production.
- Councillor Hensman agreed that the Council needed to be "more ambitious" in its approach towards tackling Climate Change, and stressed that it was possible for buildings to be carbon neutral. The Archer Community Trust was reportedly working with ECC and Community Energy South on the establishment of a community energy group in Braintree in order to assist and educate local residents and business on the measures that could be adopted in order to identify alternative energy resources.
- Councillor Baugh welcomed the Draft Strategy and commended the work of those involved in its production. Reference was made to the priorities listed under "Planning and Development," specifically the aims to reduce carbon impact and improve biodiversity in new developments, which were much welcomed. Mention was also made of the priorities listed under "Natural Environment," specifically the planting of trees and soil carbon enhancement which were basic but very effective methods for absorbing and thus reducing levels of CO2.
- Councillor Schwier referred to the priorities listed under "Planning and Development" in the Draft Strategy and the expense often associated with addressing climate change issues. Comment was made that further work could be done in respect of the orientation of new homes (e.g. placement of windows or bedrooms) in order to encourage renewable thermal or solar energy production. Simple activities by developers such as applying the correct pitching to building roofs would also help to ensure energy could be absorbed effectively, and thus enable occupants to live in more self-sufficient way. A move towards timber-framed buildings would also be more sustainable. It was felt that consideration towards building design going forward should be given by the Government, and that the Council should do its utmost to communicate with both the Government and with developers on the adoption of such measures going forward.
- Councillor Walsh agreed that a collective approach by the Council, its partners and local communities was essential if it was to be effective in addressing climate change issues. Although he was pleased by the Draft Strategy, Councillor Walsh

referred to page 15 in respect of flooding alleviation, which he felt required more detail. It was also suggested that further consideration be given towards community led and natural flood defence mechanisms.

- Councillor Pritchard fully supported the Draft Strategy and commended the efforts of the Council towards addressing climate change issues, especially in light of the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Pritchard was also delighted by the funding contributions that had been earmarked by the Council and ECC towards environmental issues, and it was added that public engagement was essential if the delivery of effective services for residents was to be maintained, in conjunction with measures to combat environmental issues.
- Councillor Unsworth expressed concern over the planned consultation in respect of the Draft Strategy, as it was not felt that the document reflected the latest changes implemented by the Climate Change Working Group (e.g. with regard to minimising CO2 emissions as a result of disposal of waste). Assurance was sought that these changes would be included in the Strategy prior to the consultation, along with those listed by Members during the debate for the evening. Clarification was also sought as to the figures included on page 6 of the Draft Strategy in regard to CO2 emissions and the intended duration of these. A query was also raised in respect of the Rivenhall Incinerator, which was due to be built within the lifetime of the Strategy, and the mitigation measures that were to be put in place in order to combat the impacts of this. It was requested that the Council be more ambitious with regard to the planting of new woodlands, of which would absorb CO2 emissions. Lastly, it was requested that in respect of page 17 of the Strategy, the Council gave consideration to the development of a funding strategy to assist local landowners in the District in setting aside land for flood alleviation, community woodlands and wildlife refuges.
- Councillor Wright expressed his overall support for the Draft Strategy but had concerns over the time taken to produce the document, and the need for urgent action if the carbon neutrality target was to be achieved. Some discrepancies in the document were also noted in respect of the date at which the Council formally declared a “Climate Change Emergency.”
- Councillor Mrs Beavis made reference to page 15 of the Draft Strategy and the priority to “Improve flood alleviation for community areas that flood.” Concern was expressed over the rural areas that were vulnerable to flooding from the River Colne, and it was requested that consideration be given towards reinstating a budget for conservation of the river that would support the work of volunteers, local communities and the Environment Agency in helping to mitigate flooding in the area.
- Councillor Thorogood referred to page 11 of the Draft Strategy under “Planning and Development.” It was requested that a commitment to the provision of renewable energy in new developments, such as solar panels, be included in the Strategy to make this in line with Section 2 of the Local Plan. Mention was also made of Gridserve and its apparent location on a greenfield site, as well as the removal of hedgerow to enable the development of the area. The need for the Rivenhall Incinerator was also questioned.



- Councillor Mrs Sandum welcomed the Draft Strategy and the suggestions made so far. On page 11 of the Strategy, a query was raised over the accuracy of the “Biodiversity Net Gain” figure stated in the report. It was also requested that an additional commitment towards retaining as much biodiversity and habitat as possible on development sites be included in the Strategy.
- Councillor Courtauld welcomed the Draft Strategy but queried a line on page 9 of the document, which read “...a focus on fair and sustainable consumption.” Councillor Courtauld agreed in principle with reducing traffic, but emphasised the importance of car travel to residents in their everyday lives, and added that cars would become more eco-friendly going forward.
- Councillor Everard emphasised the prevalent issue of landfill and the need for a solution to this.
- Councillor Miss Weeks was pleased by the news that the trial on grass verges was to be extended, and asked that this be added to the Draft Strategy as a practice going forward. It was also hoped that the Council would include ECC initiatives, such as the Essex Forest project, within its policy regarding tree planting.
- Councillor Mrs Spray highlighted that the policies within the Local Plan were agreed in 2016-17 and as such, likely required updating in terms of the latest information regarding Climate Change initiatives. It was advised that one of the actions that had emerged from the Climate Change Action Plan was the assembly of a supplementary planning document to cover topics such as renewable energy in new developments.
- Councillor McKee expressed his support for the Draft Strategy and addressed a number of the comments made regarding tree planting and renewable energy. It was stressed that other strategies not necessarily included within the Climate Change Budget were already in place as part of the Strategic Investment Budget; for example, it was reported that a total of 250 trees were to be planted on the Horizon 120 site, and the entirety of the Horizon 120 development would use renewable energy as its guiding principle: gas supply to the site would be limited and the site would be developed with solar panels on roofs and on the sides of buildings, ensuring that such buildings were economic. Furthermore, there would be the addition of electric charging points in car parks and solar batteries.
- Councillor Cunningham expressed his delight at the Leader’s announcement regarding the success of the bid that had been jointly submitted with ECC to the Rural Mobility Fund, and hoped this would allay some of the concerns expressed during the course of the meeting. It was requested that further detail be included within the Draft Strategy on the green economy to help ensure there was sustainable development, as issues such as job creation, security and job opportunities for future generations were of primary concern to many residents.
- Councillor Wrench was pleased by the news that the verge cutting trial was to be extended, and felt that Gridserve would prove to be an invaluable commodity to the District, particularly in respect of the sustainability of car manufacturers. It was also highlighted the Horizon 120 site development would result in a substantial net-biodiversity gain despite the initial loss of some hedgerows, as seen in the

north-east of the site, which was to be designated as land for habitats such as ponds, grasslands, natural hedgerows and trees to attract a wide variety of wildlife.

- Councillor Tattersley highlighted that many of the initiatives included within the developing Draft Strategy were already embedded within the work being undertaken by the Council, such as the replacement of the 'all-weather' pitch at the Halstead Leisure Centre, which would use recycled materials. Furthermore, light pollution would be reduced through the addition to a specific pitch light which would not infringe on the surrounding area.

Councillor Butland was invited to speak as seconder of the report. It was stressed that the viewpoints of Members expressed this evening were only representative of a small proportion of the views of the District's residents as a whole. It was therefore important that a "balance" be achieved in the development of the Draft Strategy in order to ensure that it addressed the differing needs and priorities of residents as much as possible. Overall, Councillor Butland was pleased by the comments made by Members this evening as many accepted that finalising the Strategy would take time. Note was made of the concerns raised by some Members in respect of issues such as light pollution; however, it was unlikely that all views would be accepted by the wider community at the current time, due to contrasting priorities. For example, it was underlined that many residents likely felt safer travelling by car than they did using public transport or other means of travel, especially in light of the impacts of the pandemic. In response to comments made in respect of Gridserve's location, Members were reminded that the site had always been scheduled for use as employment land. Finally, it stressed that issues relating to climate change needed to be addressed as part of a collective approach, and that consideration must be given to the timely impacts as they emerged in order to ensure that the views of the wider District were encapsulated. Councillor Butland felt that the Draft Strategy was a good starting point, and expressed his thanks to the members of the Climate Change Working Group for their hard work in producing the Draft Strategy.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt was then invited to respond to a number of the comments made in respect of the Draft Strategy; during her address, Members were assured that the factual errors identified within the draft document would be amended, as it was only intended to be a draft at the current time. Comments made by the Climate Change Working Group in respect of the Draft Strategy were to be incorporated within the document once the consultation had finished, as had been previously agreed.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt was also grateful for the statements made by the speakers during Public Question Time on the Draft Strategy. It was confirmed that the Council would proceed to a six-week stakeholder engagement process on the Draft Strategy, and comments made by the speakers would be considered alongside the other stakeholder feedback received.

## **DECISION:**

That Council:-

1. Agreed to carry out a 6 week stakeholder engagement on the draft Climate Change Strategy; and

2. Approved the Council's engagement approach and timescales as set out in section 3 of the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the delivery of a Climate Change Strategy that sets out how the Council will become carbon neutral where practical by 2030, to support the District to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and to build resilient communities that can adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## 60 DRAFT CYCLING STRATEGY

**INFORMATION:** Prior to the report, the Chairman advised Members that an open debate was being sought in respect of the Draft Cycling Strategy, in which all Members were encouraged to participate. Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism was then invited to introduce the report.

During his address, Councillor Ricci explained that although Braintree District Council (BDC) was not the Transport Authority, the Draft Cycling Strategy (the Draft Strategy) was a crucial piece of work that would enable the Council to meet its objectives in respect of Climate Change, sustainable transport growth and supporting residents to live healthy and active lifestyles. Members were asked to be mindful that there was not infinite funding available for the Council to undertake all of the schemes proposed; as such, schemes would need to be prioritised and the Council would need to work with Essex County Council (ECC) and its other partners in order to make the best use of wider public funding, as well as identify innovative ways in which future projects could be achieved.

Councillor Ricci wished to thank the members of the Cycling Strategy Working Group for their time and effort during the production of the Draft Strategy. Particular gratitude was expressed to Mr Ben Friar from ECC, Cherie Root and Dominic Collins from BDC and to a number of Councillors, including Councillor J Abbott, Councillor Mrs J Pell, Councillor D Mann and Councillor D Wallace for their support and contributions. Gratitude was also extended to Mr Peter Kohn and Mr Chris McCann, who as members of the public with a passion for cycling, had helped immensely with providing advice on the draft proposals included with the Strategy.

Further to the report, Members were invited to participate in an open debate on the Draft Cycling Strategy. The main points were as follows:-

- Councillor Abbott felt that the Draft Strategy was a positive start and wished to raise the following points:-
  - On page 4 of the Draft Strategy, it was requested that mention be made of the cycle movement opportunities between villages and towns, as well as within them.
  - In respect of page 8, Councillor Abbott welcomed the recognition that there was a lack of cohesion on existing cycling routes.
  - In respect of page 11, the majority allocation of transport funding for the District towards road building, as opposed to cycling and walking networks, was queried.
  - On pages 14 and 15, it was noted that the aims of the Essex Transport Strategy dated back to 2011 and were out of date.
  - On page 17, the statement that Witham Town Centre was located on an area of "highest elevation" was incorrect. It was also requested

- that a map be included in this section to display the current cycling routes.
- On page 22, it was requested that the inter-urban routes made mention of the relationship to villages and railway stations in order to be consistent with the rest of the document.
  - In respect of page 25, it was felt that the aspiration for cycling to be a priority over motorised transport in new developments was not currently being delivered.
- Councillor Mrs Garrod expressed her excitement for the Draft Strategy. Reference was made to comments she had received from residents in her Ward about the perceived 'barriers' to cycling, and she was pleased to see that the Strategy sought to address concerns. The inclusion of "quiet lanes" within the Strategy was also a positive step which it was hoped would reduce the intimidating effects of traffic and improve safety for cyclists and walkers.
  - Councillor Horner was pleased by the inclusion of the "quiet lanes" in the Draft Strategy as part of the joint scheme with ECC.
  - Councillor Hensman spoke in regard to the push for further cycle lanes and footpaths; however, it was suggested that proportionality within the towns be taken in account as well in order to prevent further loss of trade to local and national retailers, and not that all motorists be encouraged away from town centres by giving prominence to cycle lanes and footpaths. Reference was also made to the Government's 'Bikeability' scheme and whether the Council could consider participation in this.
  - Councillor Mrs Beavis referred to the 'Earls Colne to Coggeshall' cycle path project, the meetings for which she had attended in her capacity as an Elected Member at ECC. Councillor Mrs Beavis also echoed the positive comments made previously in respect of Mr P Kohn for his work on the project, and attention was drawn to the involvement of the staff at Marks Hall in the cycle project. It was queried whether the Council would consider liaising with Marks Hall in order to promote the project further.
  - Councillor Wright mentioned Rectory Lane in Rivenhall, an adopted "quiet lane" which being impacted by a number of developments in the area, and asked whether further action could be taken in order to protect such lanes.
  - Councillor Walsh was pleased by the Draft Strategy; however, on page 16, it was felt that the reference to hilled areas as a "disincentive" to cycling gave an inaccurate portrayal of the landscape of the District. It was also requested that the linking of communities be emphasised, as many were isolated due to a lack of transport options.
  - Councillor Mrs Parker commended the Draft Strategy and all those involved with its production. In respect of rural lanes, it was stated that there should be a designated network of roads shared between traffic and cyclists, with clear signage for motorists on safety. On the subject of connecting towns and villages, Members were reminded that cost was a key factor in terms of what the Council could realistically achieve and must be considered. Lastly, it was underlined that cycling was not a suitable option for all residents (e.g. due to

time constraints); it was therefore inferred that investment in long distance cycle paths was not necessarily the most effective use of available funds.

- Councillor Mrs Wilson was pleased to be a member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Cycle Way project group, and by the emphasis on safer cycling routes included within the Draft Strategy. Thanks was expressed to all involved in the Strategy's production, particularly Mr P Kohn.
- Councillor Everard supported the Draft Strategy and was pleased by the reference to both cyclists and runners in local infrastructure plans.
- Councillor Wallace welcomed the Draft Strategy and emphasised the benefits of cycling to both physical and mental health.
- Councillor Mrs Walters welcomed the Draft Strategy and the long term benefits it would bring for residents, especially in terms of health and mental health.
- Councillor Baugh expressed his support for the Draft Strategy, but queried whether the prevention of crime and disorder had been given adequate consideration, especially in regard to remote cycling routes.
- Councillor Rose expressed his support for the Draft Strategy and asked whether the cycling initiative could be linked in with the climate change initiative by linking cycle tracks with development sites. It was suggested that a survey could be undertaken in order to identify where such paths would be best located.

Councillor F Ricci was then invited to respond to the comments made in respect of the Draft Cycling Strategy. Members were also reminded that further comments could be submitted later as part of the consultation process. It was advised that in order to reduce the size of the document in its infancy, certain diagrams and images such as maps had been omitted from the Draft Strategy but would be reinserted following end of the consultation. Furthermore, in response to a comment made by Councillor Mrs Beavis in respect of Marks Hall, it was confirmed that the Council had engaged with the executive management team at the site.

#### **DECISION:**

That Council:-

1. Agreed that the Council would carry out a 6 week stakeholder engagement on the draft Cycling Strategy; and
2. Approved the Council's engagement approach and timescales as set out in the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the delivery of a Cycling Strategy that sets out how the District will support increased participation in cycling across the District and aid delivery of an improved cycle network in both urban and rural areas by 2030.

During the course of the meeting proceedings, Members collectively agreed to a temporary recess from 9.07pm to 9.12pm.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.47pm.

Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin  
(Chairman)