

# **Cabinet**

The Cabinet  
will meet at Council Chamber, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, Essex, CM7  
9HB  
on MONDAY, 09 DECEMBER 2013 at 19:15

## **Membership**

Portfolio	
Leader of the Council	Councillor G Butland (Chairman)
People and Participation	Councillor Mrs J Beavis
	Councillor P Tattersley
Performance and Efficiency	Councillor D L Bebb
	Councillor J T McKee
Place	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt
	Councillor R G S Mitchell
Planning and Property	Councillor Lady Newton
	Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi
Prosperity and Growth	Councillor C Siddall (Deputy Leader of the Council)

## **Invitees**

Other invitees:- Group Leaders and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee.

For enquiries on this agenda please contact:

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This agenda is available on

[www.braintree.gov.uk/Braintree/councildemocracy](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/Braintree/councildemocracy)

Nicola Beach  
Chief Executive

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

### **Question Time**

Immediately after Declarations of Interests, there will be a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak about Council business or other matters of local concern. Whilst members of the public can remain to observe the whole of the public part of the meeting, Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest must withdraw whilst the item of business in question is being considered.

Members of the public wishing to speak should contact the Member Services Officer on 01376 552525 or email [chloe.glock@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:chloe.glock@braintree.gov.uk) at least 2 working days prior to the meeting.

### **Health and Safety**

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### **Mobile Phones**

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent or is switched off during the meeting.

### **Webcast and Audio Recording**

Please note that this meeting will be webcast and audio recorded.

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS**

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

- To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to paragraphs 6 to 10 [inclusive] of the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.
- Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest to indicate in accordance with paragraphs 10.1(a)(i)&(ii) and 10.2(a)&(b) of the Code of Conduct. Such Member must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

# AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

3 Public Question Time

4 Minutes of Last Meeting

No	Title and Purpose of Report	Pages
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5	<b>OVERALL CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DIRECTION</b>	
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5a	<b>Leader's Update</b>	
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The Leader of the Council to provide a brief update on key issues and activities.

5b	<b>Peer Challenge</b>	5 - 24
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6	<b>Presentation from Fusion</b>	
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To receive a presentation from Steve Brown, Business Development Manager, and Mark Johnson, Divisional Business Manager, Fusion.

7	<b>Presentation from Ignite</b>	
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To receive a presentation from Liz Storey, Managing Director, Ignite.

8	<b>PLACE</b>	
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8a	<b>Solar Panels Programme</b>	25 - 34
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8b	<b>Local Nature Reserve Designation - Hoppit Mead, Braintree</b>	35 - 40
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9	<b>PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY</b>	
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9a	<b>Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-2015 to 2017-2018</b>	41 - 98
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9b	<b>Second Quarter Performance Management Report 2013 2014</b>	99 - 126
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<b>10</b>	<b>PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION</b>	
<b>10a</b>	<b>Cabinet Response to Review of Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree Voluntary Support Agency</b>	<b>127 - 134</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>PLANNING AND PROPERTY</b>	
<b>11a</b>	<b>Cabinet Response to Task and Finish Group Review of Affordable Housing</b>	<b>135 - 140</b>
<b>11b</b>	<b>Purchase of Eckard House Site, Easton Road, Witham</b>	<b>141 - 148</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>CABINET MEMBERS' UPDATES</b>	
	To receive Cabinet Members' verbal reports on key issues within their portfolio.	
<b>13</b>	<b>REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL/COMMITTEES/GROUPS</b>	
	No further matters.	
<b>14</b>	<b>REPORTS/ DELEGATED DECISIONS/MINUTES TO BE NOTED</b>	
<b>14a</b>	<b>Minutes of Developing Democracy Group 3rd October 2013</b>	<b>149 - 150</b>
<b>14b</b>	<b>Cabinet Member Delegated Decisions</b>	<b>151 - 152</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN</b>	
<b>16</b>	<b>EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS</b>	
	To resolve the exclusion of the Public and Press to consider reports in Private Session for the reasons set out in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.	

## **AGENDA – PRIVATE SESSION**

<b>No</b>	<b>Title and Purpose of Report</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Purchase of Eckard House Site, Easton Road, Witham</b> Report provided separately.	

<b>Peer Challenge</b>	<b>Agenda No: 5b</b>
<p><b>Corporate Priority:</b> Providing value for money; Improving our services through innovation; Building a prosperous District.</p> <p><b>Portfolio Area:</b> Overall Corporate Strategy and Direction</p> <p><b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr Graham Butland</p> <p><b>Report prepared by:</b> Nicola Beach, Chief Executive</p>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>
Peer Challenge Position Statement for the Council 2013	
<b>Options:</b> To agree or not the final report from the Peer Challenge	<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<p><b>1. Background</b></p> <p>1.1 A Peer Challenge of Braintree District Council was undertaken on the 8th to 10th October 2013. The Peer Challenge Programme is managed by the Local Government Association (LGA) and one Peer Challenge is offered free to each local authority.</p> <p>1.2 It is a voluntary programme, but one that can bring external challenge to the Council in terms of its local context, political and managerial leadership and organisational capacity and skills. The Peer Challenge is designed to be a proportionate process which is outcome focused with an action plan developed.</p> <p>1.3 In preparation for the Peer Challenge, a Position Statement was produced and shared with the Peer Challenge Team, staff and Members. A copy is available on the Council's website.</p> <p>1.4 Each Council determines the focus and scope of its review. The Leader and Chief Executive, in consultation with Cabinet Members and Management Board, agreed that the focus of the Peer Challenge for Braintree District Council would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Financial challenge in 2015/16 and beyond – how does the Council continue to deliver its priorities and good local services whilst providing value for money and being financially sustainable?</li> <li>➤ Does the Council now have the right skills, capacity and focus in place to deliver its economic development priorities?</li> </ul>	

1.5 The Peer Challenge team for this review was:

- Jean Hunter, Chief Executive, South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- Cllr Neil Clarke, Leader of Rushcliffe Borough Council;
- Diane Hayward, Policy Manager (Economic and Community Strategy) at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council;
- Marcus Coulson, Programme Manager, LGA

1.6 The team were on site for three days (8th to 10th October) which involved interviews with Member, officers, key partners and stakeholders.

## **2. Peer Challenge Report**

2.1 The Peer Challenge Team presented their initial findings to Cabinet Members and senior managers on the 10<sup>th</sup> October. These findings have then been developed into a more detailed report which the Chief Executive received at the end of November.

2.2 A copy of the Peer Challenge Report is published in Appendix A. The report focuses on strengths and areas for consideration under each theme.

## **3. Action Planning**

3.1 The areas for consideration are the issues that will be addressed in an action plan. These are shown in Appendix B.

3.2 The Leader and Chief Executive, with Cabinet Members and Management Board, will lead on the implementation of the improvement programme. The action plan and progress will be shared with Members, staff, key partners and other stakeholders.

3.3 In addition, the LGA offer as part of the Peer Challenge programme a follow-up action planning session. The Chief Executive will take this forward with the LGA in early in 2014.

### **Decision:**

**To agree the Peer Challenge Report (Appendix A) and support the development of an action plan based on the areas for consideration (Appendix B).**

### **Purpose of Decision:**

For Cabinet to agree the Peer Challenge Report and support the development of an action plan to drive forward improvements where required.

<b>Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	None at this stage. Any improvements being considered with significant financial implications will be reported to Cabinet as required.
<b>Legal:</b>	None
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	None
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	None
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	The Peer Challenge Report and Position Statement have now been published. There will be wider engagement with key partners and stakeholders as required in developing and implementing the action plan.
<b>Risks:</b>	The action planning stage is not taken forward thereby reducing the value of the Peer Challenge.
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## Appendix A – Peer Challenge Report

Nicola Beach  
Chief Executive  
Braintree District Council  
Causeway House  
Braintree, CM7 9HB

13<sup>th</sup> November 2013

Dear Nicola

### **Braintree District Council Corporate Peer Challenge 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to say what a pleasure and privilege it was to be invited into Braintree District Council to deliver the recent corporate peer challenge as part of the LGA offer to support sector led improvement.

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Braintree were:

- **Jean Hunter**, CEO, South Cambridgeshire District Council
- **Councillor Neil Clarke**, Leader, Rushcliffe Borough Council
- **Diane Hayward**, Policy Manager, Economic and Community Strategy, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- **Marcus Coulson**, Programme Manager, LGA.

#### **1. Scope and focus of the peer challenge**

1.1 The Leader and Chief Executive, in consultation with Cabinet members and Council will be:

- **Financial challenge in 2015/16 and beyond** – how does the Council continue to deliver its priorities and good local services whilst providing value for money and being financially sustainable?

- Does the Council now have the right skills, capacity and focus in place to deliver its **economic development priorities**?

1.2 The following five critical questions were used by the Peer Challenge Team to guide their thinking. These are the core components for all corporate peer challenges.

1. Understanding of the local context and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
2. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
3. Political and managerial leadership: Does the council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
4. Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
5. Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

## **2. The peer challenge process**

2.1 It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and the material they read.

2.2 The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 3 days onsite at Braintree District Council, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 50 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 32 meetings and additional research and reading.

2.3 This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer challenge team at the end of the on-site visit, 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> October 2013. In presenting feedback, they have done so

as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

### **3. Summary of feedback: overall observations and messages**

- 3.1 The Local Government Association was asked to complete a Corporate Peer Challenge at Braintree District Council with a team of carefully chosen peers from the sector. The findings are that Braintree District Council is an ambitious, well led and well run Council with clear priorities for action. The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive with their respective teams are a visible presence working to clearly articulated priorities. The relationships between members and officers are good and based upon respect and a clear understanding of the differing roles they play and where the boundaries lie. A can-do culture, with empowered staff and a willingness to work in different ways was clearly evidenced during the course of the peer challenge.
- 3.2 The Council plays an active and influential role in its external partnerships and is highly thought of by the partners interviewed during the peer challenge process. Recent decisions to invest in economic development are starting to pay off. The Council recognises the need to ensure that it is business friendly and that it aligns available resources to support its ambitions and to strengthen its financial position moving forward.
- 3.3 The Council is in a robust financial position, albeit with challenges ahead to secure further efficiencies. Financial arrangements are performance managed and demanding efficiency targets over the recent past have all been met. The Council recognises that it has opportunities and choices ahead that will enable it to use the available resources more effectively to deliver its ambitions and to support economic development.
- 3.4 The challenging task for the peer challenge team was to hold a mirror up and to add value to the Council's already strong position and performance.
- 3.5 The Council needs to reflect on its ambitions and to determine what is realistically achievable and where it most needs to focus future effort to make the most difference. Resources and plans need to be aligned to ensure the ambitions are delivered. Effective relationships and influence should be developed and nurtured with key decision-makers, stakeholders and funders to ensure future success to enable you to punch above your weight.

3.6 Internal resources on economic development need to be focused on delivering the ambitions and on the key projects that will make the required difference. In addition, there are opportunities for all staff and services to play a role in ensuring the future economic prosperity of the District. Finally, opportunities to invest monies more creatively to ensure projects are delivered and to generate greater returns should be actively explored.

#### 4.0 **Summary of feedback: current performance, ability and capacity to deliver future ambitions**

##### 4.1 **Political and Managerial Leadership**

###### **Strengths**

- The Leader and the Chief Executive provide strong, visible and inclusive leadership that is appreciated by members, officers and partners
- The Council leadership brings openness, challenge and ambition
- The Chief Executive is a visible leader with drive and ambition for the Council
- Senior members and officers have a shared understanding of the priorities of the Council and are open to new ways of working
- There is an appetite amongst members and officers to take appropriate risks to solve the challenges of the future through more creative solutions
- The Council has a consistently excellent reputation with partners and stakeholders who are happy to work with BDC
- Challenge is seen to have improved at the top and will roll out more particularly in the efficiency agenda

###### **Areas for consideration**

- Clarify the long term ambition for the District and the Council and cascade this throughout the organisation
- Develop creative solutions to the challenges of the future
- Look at the level of risk you are prepared to take to maximise returns
- Ensure that key council future priorities are developed to the point that projects are 'shovel ready'
- Use the LEP's move to federation to strengthen influence
- Develop and maintain relationships with key decision-makers at all levels
- Pro-actively manage your external reputation at all levels

4.1(a) Throughout the process of the peer challenge from the scoping, the initial meeting and the week we were on-site it was clear to the peer challenge team that Councillor Graham Butland the Leader of the Council and Nicola Beach the Chief Executive provide a strong, visible and inclusive leadership that is

appreciated by members, officers and partners. It was repeated to us that staff and especially partners rated the engagement with them highly and that it facilitates the aims and objectives of the District.

The Council's leadership style is one that is inclusive and open to challenge on a range of issues so that the evident ambition for the District can be discussed in a variety of settings.

The Chief Executive is nine months in post and it was clear during the peer challenge that she is a visible leader with drive and ambition for Braintree District. She has a high profile with staff and partners with a forthright, can-do approach and is approachable to discuss all types of issues.

- 4.1(b) When speaking with senior members and officers we heard a shared understanding of the recent history of the organisation and the District and agreement upon what are the key Council priorities. There is general agreement on the way forward and the related importance of Council priorities and how these are expressed. To achieve these priorities we heard from all involved a willingness to adopt new solutions and ways of working.
- 4.1(c) There is also a good degree of consensus amongst members and officers that the organisation needs to take appropriate risks to solve the challenges of the future through more creative solutions. Whilst there is a need to take reasoned careful financial decisions there is also an opportunity to seek to create income from thoughtful investments and charges. An example shared by the team was around buying commercial property that generates income whilst maintaining capital.
- 4.1(d) The Council has a consistently excellent reputation with partners and stakeholders who are happy to work with Braintree District Council (BDC). Partners of all types compare them very favourably to those they work with in local government and in the private sector locally and nationally. This is a testament to the culture and dynamism of the senior leaders in the organisation.
- 4.1(e) With the recent change in Chief Executive there is a renewed leadership and ambition, with a willingness to challenge and be challenged. This peer challenge is part of that process to consider if BDC is doing the right thing and has the right view for the future. The leadership style is seen to have altered at the top and this will continue to roll out across the Council both internally and externally. More robust internal challenge was seen as helpful and constructive by a number of those interviewed.
- 4.1(f) A question that partners and others thought should be answered is 'How clear are you for what type of place you want Braintree District to be in 10 or 15 years' time?' We suggest that you clarify the long term ambition for the District and cascade this throughout the organisation and with partners. Questions that would influence this are around the potential expansion of Stansted, the completion of the A120, the role of town centres and the shaping of the Local

Plan. Assumptions about economic and housing growth will be a key determinant in influencing the delivery of the Council's ambitions. More clarity on the long term ambitions will enable the Council to focus its limited resources on what will make the most difference and to consider alternative funding models to maximise returns.

- 4.1(g) We recommend that you ensure that key council future priorities are developed to the point that opportunities for access to funding can be realised, as and when, they become available, as is the case for the emerging A120 proposals.
- 4.1(h) Given the ambitious agenda the Council wishes to pursue, we also recommend that you consider how best to influence and develop relationships with key stakeholders, funders, investors and opinion formers - whether that is at a national, regional, sub-regional or local level. You can be proud of your achievements and can do more to promote opportunities for the District and play a more active role beyond the County if you seek to punch above your weight. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will help in this respect.

## **4.2 Understanding of local context and priority setting**

### **Strengths**

- Clearly defined priorities outlined in corporate strategy
- Priorities are recognised by organisation and partners

### **Areas for consideration**

- Develop and articulate a long term view of the District
- Agree on what kind of organisation it will be in 10 years' time
- Clarify your priorities to support these long term aspirations
- Ensure these are understood throughout the organisation
- Be realistic about what is achievable

- 4.2(a) The Corporate Strategy of Braintree District Council has clearly defined priorities which support your ambition. It is a strength that these are recognised and supported by those in the Council and also key partners.
- 4.2(b) We recommend that you take a step back from your activity and consider a longer term vision for what type and shape Braintree District will look and feel like in the long term. This would be in the context of present and future efficiencies and shared services with partners. You could seek to find answers to questions of the levels of housing growth you want to see and what infrastructure is really important and achievable. These would then be seen in your priorities. This process would allow you to focus on the few key things that would get you to where you want to be in terms of what place you want Braintree District to be in 10-years' time. Staff asked for this and

partners suggested there could be more dialogue around a shared approach outside of the economic partnership.

- 4.2(c) Once the long term aspirations are in place your named priorities would then support these aspirations and then you can work to ensure that these are understood throughout the organisation and that all staff understand how their individual and team role supports them.

We also urge you to be realistic about what is achievable. You have some big ambitions for the District and in some cases you do not have the resources or the ability to deliver them yourselves, but you can put your weight and energies behind the ones that really matter to you.

### 4.3 **Economic Development**

#### **Strengths**

- You recognise the need to encourage and support economic growth
- Emerging three economic priorities (Infr. Supp. Regen)
- Senior leadership demonstrate a pro-active business friendly can-do attitude which is welcomed by partners
- BDC understands the need to work in partnership to achieve the ambitions for Braintree District
- All partners we spoke to have high regard for BDC
- High ambition for A120 through Haven Gateway
- Success in achieving external funding e.g. Portas pilot
- Good partnership working to deliver business support – Ignite
- Enthusiasm for commercial development e.g. Skyline
- Broadband improvements to be delivered in next 2 years

#### **Areas for consideration**

- Act quickly to prioritise the actions that underpin the Economic Development Prospectus and turn it into a deliverable, resourced action plan
- Identify resources across the Council and externally to deliver the plan
- The whole council needs to engage effectively with business, this business friendly message needs cascading through all parts of organisation
- Continue with your current plans for business engagement
- Clarify the role of town centres and the Council's approach
- Make the case with Essex County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership to invest in skills programmes for Braintree District

- 4.3(a) You asked the Peer Challenge Team to particularly consider the issue of economic development and how you are addressing it. A clear strength is

that you recognise the need to encourage and support economic growth and have supported this with significant resources and strengthened leadership.

- 4.3(b) Your Economic Development Prospectus has been out to very recent consultation. The feedback the team received is that it is heading in the right direction and that the three emerging economic priorities of infrastructure, business, employment and regeneration are the right ones for Braintree District and partners feel comfortable working with you on these.
- 4.3(c) Partners and stakeholders with whom we spoke felt that the senior leadership, both members and officers take business seriously and demonstrate a pro-active business friendly can-do attitude which is very much welcomed. You are seen as an organisation that understands the need to work in partnership to achieve the ambitions for Braintree District.
- 4.3(d) It is a highly commendable achievement that we would like to emphasise that all partners we spoke to have high regard for Braintree District Council. This is a testament to the hard work, skill and determination of staff and members in the way they approach engagement with stakeholders over time and place.
- 4.3(e) There are a number of examples of the positive impact achieved by the renewed focus on economic development such as: success in achieving external funding such as getting the Portas Pilot work, the good partnership working to deliver business support through the use of the Ignite initiative, the evident enthusiasm for commercial development for which the Skyline development is a good example and the expected broadband improvements to be delivered in next the next two years.
- 4.3(f) We recommend, and are sure you already know, that you seek to act quickly to prioritise the actions that underpin the Economic Development Prospectus and turn it into an action plan that supports the Council's longer term ambitions for the District. For this plan to be delivered you will need to ensure you have the appropriate officer capacity and resources in place in the core economic development team as well as in other departments across the Council.
- 4.3(g) The Team also found that the Council's economic development priorities are not consistently understood or supported across all services. The new plan will be an opportunity to address this and to ensure that everyone understands the role they can play and contributes to its successful delivery.
- 4.3(h) The Council's plans to develop business engagement further were well supported and should now be rolled out. It is important to supplement this with efforts to nurture relationships with key businesses. The approach of different levels and styles of engagement for different sizes and sectors of business should be clear as businesses need to understand the reason for engaging with the Council. The Chief Executive's personal approach to this was recognised and supported during the review.

- 4.3(i) We heard from a number of different sources questioning whether the Council's approach to town centre regeneration was the right approach. There were quite a variety of differing views expressed on whether you have the right vision for this moving forward and how realistic it is. The dialogue around this has already begun and we recommend that you use it to clarify the role of town centres and the Council's approach to them, particularly in terms of the allocation of resources.
- 4.3(j) Skills are an important agenda for you and one that is really important to your future. The difficulty you face is that you cannot control this agenda alone. The challenge is how to ensure that you influence the decision-makers who are funding work on skills and who are appointing the providers to deliver the work on skills. This is an area that needs a lot of influence to get right. So you should make the case with Essex County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership to invest in skills programmes for Braintree District.

#### 4.4 **Capacity**

##### **Strengths**

- Support to the current approach to sharing services where it makes sense
- Staff feel empowered and able to contribute with ideas for improvements
- Management development programme seen as a positive by staff
- BDC is seen as one of the best partners
- Staff appreciate training and development opportunities

##### **Areas for consideration**

- Ensure consistency of communication and engagement across all teams
- Could do more to utilise the skills and abilities of staff beyond what they need for their jobs
- Consider a more strategic approach to re-designing services to achieve efficiencies
- The organisation may need to have a step change in its thinking to achieve more demanding efficiency savings

- 4.4(a) When talking with staff from across the Council there was an understanding of the present financial challenges all local government is presently faced with and how this is influencing decisions. Consequently there is support for the current approach to sharing services where it makes sense and staff feel engaged with the process.

It is a testament to the good morale at Braintree Council that during this time of financial stress staff still feel empowered and able to contribute with ideas for improvements.

The training and development opportunities provided for staff are welcomed and an example is the management development programme, which is seen as a positive investment in them by those staff.

- 4.4(b) We wish make the point here again that Braintree District Council is seen as one of the best partners by those we spoke to. This judgement by those who work with you is made in comparison to their relationships with other organisations.
- 4.4(c) There are areas in the Council where messages don't get through as consistently as they do in other areas. Everything you seek to do in terms of education, priorities and engagement should be fed down throughout the organisation. Ensure there is a consistency of communication and engagement across all teams.
- 4.4(d) There is still the opportunity to do more to utilise the skills and abilities of staff beyond what they need for their jobs and to harness the talent within the organisation to make a more effective contribution to the Council's ambitions.
- 4.4(e) The Council has an excellent record of delivering efficiencies. Staff feel engaged with the process and have played an important role in the delivery to date. With further efficiency challenges to come in the local government sector, the organisation may need to have a step change in its thinking about the future shape of the organisation and a more strategic approach to achieve more demanding efficiency savings.

#### **4.5 Financial planning and viability**

##### **Strengths**

- Sound financial management
- In a stable financial position, good reserves
- Achieved efficiencies
- Confident of achieving short term financial efficiencies
- Staff understand the financial position and future challenges
- Financial performance appears well structured with effective monitoring
- You have moved resources to match priorities – Welfare Reform and economic development

##### **Areas for consideration**

- Identify and agree a focus for the use of the New Homes Bonus money
- Use investment as a catalyst for major infrastructure projects

- There is an opportunity to have a more creative approach to your investment strategy and innovative use of assets
- How best to use existing reserves to generate a better return on the investment of public funds for the taxpayer
- Give more thought to maximising income

4.5(a) A clear strength of Braintree District Council is its recent and continuing sound financial management. This is at a time of great pressure on budgets and leaves the Council in a more robust financial position than many of its peers. The Council therefore has an excellent opportunity to take a step back and consider how best to use its resources, including assets and investments, to help facilitate the delivery of its ambitions. This could also help to maximise income, to ensure a more sustainable revenue stream moving forward and to generate a better return on investment of public funds.

Financial performance is well-structured with effective monitoring procedures, including that from elected members who express confidence in their ability to hold officers to account financially. This has resulted on a positive approach to moving resources to match priorities, for example on economic development and welfare reform.

4.5(b) The Council also has an excellent track record of achieving efficiencies and involving and engaging staff in the process. Recent communications about future challenges are seen by staff as helpful and there is confidence about delivering the financial efficiencies required in the short term.

4.5(c) Because of the financial position that you have diligently got yourselves into you can now choose how best to use these monies. One area is the New Homes Bonus monies and we recommend that you identify and agree a focus for the use of it. The dialogue around this has been on-going for a short while and you need to consider how best to use it to maximise returns.

4.5(d) There is an opportunity to have a more creative approach to your investment strategy and have a more innovative use of assets. Consider how best to use existing reserves to generate a better return on the investment of public funds for the taxpayer and also support your economic objectives. Give more thought to maximising income.

## **5.0 Next steps**

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions made with your political and senior managerial leadership before determining how the Council wishes to take things forward. You may wish to develop an action plan to direct future activity and as part of the peer challenge process there is an offer of continued support from the

LGA, such as a follow up meeting or other bespoke engagement. In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. We will endeavour to signpost you to other sources of information and examples of practice and thinking.

I thought it helpful to provide contact details for Rachel Litherland who, as you know, is our Principal Adviser (East of England). Rachel can be contacted via email at [rachel.litherland@local.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.litherland@local.gov.uk) (or tel. 07795 076834) She is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Hopefully this provides you with a convenient route of access to the Local Government Association, its resources and any further support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

**Marcus Coulson**

Programme Manager

**Local Government Association**

Tel. 07766 252 853

Email [marcus.coulson@local.gov.uk](mailto:marcus.coulson@local.gov.uk)

On behalf of the peer challenge team

## Appendix B

### PEER CHALLENGE – Draft Action Plan

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION	ACTION	TIMELINE
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>		
Clarify the long-term ambition for the District and the Council and cascade this throughout the organisation.		
Develop creative solutions to the challenges of the future.		
Look at the level of risk you are prepared to take to maximise returns.		
Ensure that key Council future priorities are developed to the point that projects are 'shovel ready'.		
Use the LEP's move to federation to strengthen influence.		
Develop and maintain relationships with key decision-makers at all levels.		
Pro-actively manage your external reputation at all levels.		
<b>PRIORITIES</b>		
Develop and articulate a long-term view of the District.		
Agree on what kind of organisation it will be in ten years' time.		
Clarify your priorities to support these long-term aspirations.		
Ensure these are understood throughout the organisation.		
Be realistic about what is achievable.		

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION	ACTION	TIMELINE
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>		
Act quickly to prioritise the actions that underpin the Economic Development Prospectus and turn it into a deliverable, resourced action plan		
Identify resources, across the Council and externally, to deliver the plan.		
The whole Council needs to engage effectively with business, this business-friendly message needs cascading through all parts of the organisation.		
Continue with your current plans for business engagement.		
Clarify the role of town centres and the Council's approach.		
Make the case with Essex County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership to invest in skills programmes for the Braintree District.		
<b>CAPACITY AND RESOURCES</b>		
Ensure consistency of communication and engagement across all teams.		
Could do more to utilise the skills and abilities of staff beyond what they need for their jobs.		
Consider a strategic approach to re-designing services to achieve efficiencies.		
The organisation may need to have a step change in its thinking to achieve more demanding efficiency savings.		
<b>FINANCE</b>		
Identify and agree a focus for the use of the New Homes Bonus money.		
Use investment as a catalyst for major infrastructure projects:		

AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION	ACTION	TIMELINE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an opportunity to have a more creative approach to your investment strategy and innovative use of assets.</li> <li>• How best to use existing reserves to generate a better return on the investment of public funds for the taxpayer.</li> <li>• Give more thought to maximising income.</li> </ul>		



Cabinet  
9 December 2013

<b>To consider the business case for investment in solar panels at Halstead Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming Centre</b>	<b>Agenda No: 8a</b>
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<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	<b>Protecting our Environment &amp; Providing Value for Money</b>
<b>Portfolio Area:</b>	<b>Place Performance &amp; Efficiency</b>
<b>Report presented by:</b>	<b>Councillor Robert Mitchell &amp; Councillor David Bebb</b>
<b>Report prepared by:</b>	<b>Mark Wilson, Sustainability Manager &amp; Trevor Wilson Head of Finance</b>

<b>Background Papers:</b> Appendix 1 Business case Image 1 Example of solar panels on Braintree Swim Centre & Halstead Leisure Centre	<b>Public Report: Yes</b>
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<b>Options:</b> 1. To approve or not the allocation of funding and the source of funding, for the installation and maintenance of solar panels at one or both, sites; 2. To approve or not to commence the process of procurement and installation.	<b>Key Decision: Yes</b>
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### **Executive Summary:**

This report and supporting business case set out the proposal for the Council to invest in the installation of solar panels on Braintree Swimming Centre and Halstead Leisure Centre roof space. The drivers for the projects are: income generation, energy saving (addressing the UK energy shortfall), carbon reduction, progressing the Council's leadership role in the green agenda and limiting the impact of climate change.

This investment opportunity builds on the success of our 24kW solar panel array installed at Causeway House in 2012, which is now generating both income and saving electricity and carbon emissions. In the first year of operation the panels at Causeway House generated over 21,000kWh of green electricity, saving 9.5 tonnes carbon during the wettest year on record. This is enough electricity to run 5 average UK households. The panels produced an external income/electricity saving of £9,709 for the Council in the first year of a 25 year FiT contract (predicted payback of 7 years).

The two sites have been brought forward for the following reasons: The price of solar panels has reduced substantially whilst the Feed in Tariff (FiT) rates for commercial roof mounted schemes have stabilised (11.1p/kWh). Both sites have substantial roof spaces and it would be more cost effective to try and include this work whilst the improvement works were taking place. And lastly our leisure partner Fusion is committed to making environmental improvements.

Desk top studies have confirmed that both leisure sites will offer substantial space for solar photovoltaic arrays, 170kW at Halstead and 142kW at Braintree Swimming Centre. The approximate total cost will be £430,000 (£230,000 for Halstead and £199,000 for Braintree). This would generate an estimated annual return in year one at Halstead of £34,000 and at Braintree £29,000, this income is set to increase annually for the next 20 years. The estimated payback on this investment will be 6 to 7 years. In addition, any “green electricity” produced from the two sites will offset carbon emissions by 164 tonnes per year.

The costs of financing the project, by internal borrowing repayable over a 20 year period, would be approximately £13,350 for Halstead and £11,850 for Braintree which would provide net annual revenue returns of £20,650 and £17,150 respectively.

The income from each site would comprise of 3 parts: Feed-in tariff income, Export tariff income and sale of electricity generated on site to Fusion. A written agreement in principle from Fusion for the purchase of the solar panel electricity has been obtained; they will be charged a tariff set at a small percentage rate below the market rate for electricity. This tariff will be reviewed annually as the market rate for electricity is never static.

Braintree Swimming Centre refurbishment is due for completion April 2014. The solar panel installation is dependent on the structural works taking place first. Installation of the solar panels and associated works will commence once the new roof extension is available with a predicted commissioning date 4 weeks after the extension works are completed. The solar panel installation at Halstead Leisure Centre is not constrained by other refurbishment works which are all internal and therefore once the necessary approvals are secured an anticipated commissioning date will be May 2014.

In addition to the capital cost there are costs associated with maintenance of the solar panels, the Council has a choice to either pay c.£1,000 per site per annum for panel maintenance and servicing, or consider an annual performance guarantee (example costings of £2,680 annually for Braintree Swimming Centre and £3,260 for Halstead Leisure Centre). The guarantee covers maintenance and servicing but additionally warrants that the panels will operate at least 90% of their predicted performance for the 20 years. Until the Council has completed procurement on the project it is advised that we wait and determine the most suitable and cost effective maintenance package.

The proposed development at both sites is defined as a commercial solar panel installation and their design (less than 1m in height above roof, and more than 1m away from roof edge) is within the parameters of permitted development under the Planning Act's General Permitted Development Order. Therefore planning permission is not required, however for record purposes an exchange of letter will be made to the Local Planning Authority.

The Council has written support from both Realm (Freeport management company) and Ramsey Academy (owners of Halstead Leisure Centre land/operators of school) for the proposed project as in the case of both sites the Council will require “landlord licences” should the projects go ahead.

This project will give a very clear message and direction of travel for both the Council and Fusion in respect of their green agenda. Full details concerning this proposal are contained in the Business Case attached at Appendix 1.

**Decision:**

1. To Recommend to Council the approval of capital funding of £430,000 for the installation of solar panels at Halstead Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming Centre.
2. To agree to delegate to the Corporate Director the authority to sign off the type of maintenance contract of solar panels as part of the tender process.

**Purpose of Decision:**

1. To produce green energy and reduce carbon emissions;
2. To invest capital for a revenue return for a period of 20 years.

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

<b>Financial:</b>	<p>The capital cost of the installation of solar panels at the two sites is estimated to be £430,000.</p> <p>Revenue income generated from the two sites is estimated to be £63,000. As a revenue generating project it is proposed that internal borrowing charges are made - this will ensure the preservation of scarce capital resources for other non-income generating projects.</p> <p>The estimated net income after financing costs is £37,800. A decision on maintenance arrangements will be taken as part of the tender process.</p> <p>The estimated annual income represents a return of 8.8% and compares to an estimated rate of interest earned on investment of surplus monies of 0.7%.</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	<p>If approved we will need to establish a licence of alteration with Freeport owners and ECC and amend the existing contract to enable the sale of electricity with Fusion.</p> <p>The proposed solar panel installations at both Freeport and Halstead will be designed to qualify as Permitted Development under the General Permitted Development Order. Planning Permission is therefore not required.</p>
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	<p>No impact on the day-to-day running of Braintree Swimming Centre or Halstead Leisure Centre.</p>
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	<p>No impact on the day-to-day running of Braintree Swimming Centre or Halstead Leisure Centre.</p>
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	<p>This will contribute towards carbon reduction for both the Council and Fusion, it will also contribute to local energy generation, avoidance of fossil fuel use and reducing contribution to climate change.</p>
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	<p>To deliver this project the Council must seek the approval of Realm (on behalf of the owners of Freeport) for installing the panels at Braintree Swimming Centre; approval must</p>

	<p>also be sought from ECC/Ramsey Academy to install the solar panels at Halstead Leisure Centre.</p> <p>The Council must apply to the DNO (Distribution Network Operator) to add electricity to the grid at both sites.</p> <p>Fusion, the Council's leisure partner, will be fully involved at all stages of the installation of the solar panel installation at both sites.</p>
<b>Risks:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with freeholders - mitigate by engaging with all interested partners at all stages, flexibility in amending scheme design;</li> <li>• Refusal by Distribution Network Operator regarding grid capacity - mitigate by reducing size of installation;</li> <li>• Electricity prices fall - unable to mitigate against this, extremely unlikely in short and mid-term electricity market forecasting;</li> <li>• Performance risk of panels - mitigate through panel warranty on their operation, option to take out performance guarantee;</li> <li>• Government reneges on FiT contract - mitigate by legal challenge. Currently there are over 500,000 FiT contracts in place with businesses and homeowners;</li> <li>• Transfer/sale of leisure centres - mitigate by building loss of income into transfer/sale; relocate panels to another site;</li> <li>• Rebuild of leisure centre - temporarily relocate panels to another site, reinstall on new build leisure centre.</li> </ul>
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Mark Wilson
<b>Designation:</b>	Sustainability Manager
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2325
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## Business Case

### (Solar Savings) (21<sup>st</sup> November 2013)

<b>Completed by: Mark Wilson</b>	<b>Document version: v.3</b>
<b>Background</b>	
<p><b><i>A brief description of the project.</i></b></p> <p>This business case is a proposal for the installation of solar panels utilising roof space owned by Braintree District Council. The council has a number of buildings with roofs that offer a southerly elevation, ideal for the installation of solar panels. The proposal builds on the success of the 24kW solar array installed at Causeway House in 2012 which has been generating income and saving electricity and carbon emissions.</p> <p>The Council's leisure centres have substantial roof spaces and the Council's leisure partner Fusion is committed to making environmental improvements. Two sites: Braintree Swimming Centre and Halstead Leisure Centre have been identified for consideration of capital investment for a revenue return.</p> <p><b><i>What are the drivers for the project?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income generation;</li> <li>• Energy saving, addressing UK energy shortfall;</li> <li>• Community leadership role in green agenda;</li> <li>• Carbon reduction;</li> <li>• Limiting impact of climate change.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>What will the project achieve? (benefits, expected outcomes)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both sites offer an estimated annual revenue income generation of £63k, before financing costs. The payback period is 6 to 7 years. The estimated annual revenue generation is £37.8k after meeting the financing charges</li> <li>• Reduces burden on council tax payers, offsets council tax increase;</li> <li>• Both sites combined offer a predicted 164 tonnes carbon saved per year that would otherwise come from the national grid;</li> <li>• Green credibility for BDC and Fusion;</li> <li>• Contribution to local energy generation and UK energy security addressing national energy shortfalls.</li> </ul>	

*Options appraisal – has an options appraisal been carried out, and if so what are the recommendations?*

The Council originally identified 37 potential sites in late 2011 for the installation of solar panels. The Council subsequently established that some of the buildings were not suitable due to structural reasons or orientation. The project was put on hold following the changes to the Government Feed in Tariff and solar panel market. Since then the Council has sold or transferred many properties within its estate. The Council has been left with a handful of buildings comprising leisure centres, industrial units and retained community halls.

The two leisure centre sites Braintree Swimming Centre and Halstead Leisure centre have been brought forward as there is opportunity to combine the improvement works to the leisure centres with the installation of solar panels.

Both leisure sites offer substantial solar arrays, 170kW at Halstead and 142kW at Braintree.

Developing green energy opportunities at these sites tie in with the role of the Council's partner Fusion who is committed to reducing energy consumption and delivering actions to support the green agenda.

*How will this project relate to our corporate objectives?*

The climate change and carbon reduction agenda, and provides a valuable source of income

#### **Timescales**

*What is the suggested overall timescale for the project?*

It is intended that the solar panels at Braintree Swimming Centre will be installed at a time to tie in with the gym development which has a current timescale for completion of April 2014. The solar panels would follow on seamlessly from the redevelopment making a single refurbishment project with a commissioning date of May 2014.

The solar panel installation at Halstead Leisure Centre is not constrained by other refurbishment works which are all internal and therefore assuming the necessary approvals are secured an anticipated commissioning date will be May 2014.

A Project Initiation Document to be produced following Cabinet decision detailing the areas below.

#### *Consultation*

Braintree Swimming Centre: Approval must be sought from the freehold owners at Freeport.

Halstead Leisure Centre: Approval must be sought from Essex County Council as freeholders of the site. Again, this will be in the form of completion of a landlord licence for alterations. The Council has received written support from the Academy for the installation of solar panels on the leisure buildings.

An application will need to be submitted to the DNO (UK Power Network), to ensure that sufficient grid capacity is available. This will be tasked to the solar panel installer to apply for approval. Normally this is simply a formality, especially in urban areas where

the grid infrastructure is designed for high transmission.

*Design*

To be produced following site inspection of electrical system and roof infrastructure.

*Planning Approval*

No planning permission is required. This project is defined as a commercial solar panel installation and within the parameters of permitted development under the Planning Act's General Permitted Development Order.

*Tender*

The tender process will commence following agreement of the funding for the project.

*Build/Completion*

Braintree Swimming Centre – installation to commence immediately following gym refurbishment works.

*When will the benefits of the project be realised*

As soon as the solar panel system goes live. The first claim for FiT and Export tariff will be 3 months from installation and then every 3 months from then on. It is also proposed that Fusion is recharged on this schedule. The FiT income is RPI linked and the FiT contract will apply for 20 years until 2034.

**Resource implications**

Capital funding required for this project:

		£
A	Capital cost	430,000
	<u>Less external contributions:</u>	
B	Government grants	
C	S106 Developer contributions	
D	Other external contributions	
A-B-C-D	<b>BDC capital resource required</b>	<b>430,000</b>

A financial profile of any approved projects will be required at a later date for capital budget monitoring

*State the source of other external capital contributions and whether any conditions apply to the funding?*

N/A

*Is there any one-off **additional** revenue costs associated with this project? (e.g. promotion, staff training etc)*

None.

*Is there any **additional** on-going annual revenue costs associated with this project? (e.g. running costs, servicing and maintenance etc)*

An allowance of £1,000 per site per annum is required for panel maintenance and servicing. This expenditure has been included within the financial costings (appendix 1). Alternatively members may wish to consider an annual performance guarantee which could be purchased at £2,680 for Braintree Swimming Centre and £3,260 for Halstead Leisure Centre. The guarantee covers maintenance and servicing but additionally warrants that the panels will operate at least 90% of their predicted performance. Until the Council has completed procurement on the project it is advised that the Council wait

and determine the most suitable and cost effective maintenance package interested firms will provide.

Every ten years the inverter needs to be replaced at a total cost for both sites of £37k at 2013/14 prices. Provision for this expenditure has been included within the financial costings.

Business rates do not apply to commercial solar panels if the intention is for the electricity is to be used on site.

*Does the project generate any cost savings or additional income?*

Yes it is estimated that the two sites will generate £63k income per annum before capital financing costs (internal borrowing repayable over 20 year period). The net income after internal borrowing costs is £37.8k.

In years 10 and 20 the return is less due to the requirement to replace the inverters. After 20 years the feed in tariff income ends but a further smaller income stream is possible beyond that from sale of electricity.

*Will the project require any support from other internal services either to implement or maintain?*

Yes, this will be delivered by the Sustainability Team as part of business plan activities. The solar panel installation will be carried out in parallel with gym improvement works; the on-site leisure officer will oversee works.

Longer term administrative role for Sustainability team collating and submitting quarterly claims for FiT income, Export tariff income and recharge from Fusion for green electricity generated.

## Risks

- *Barriers to achieving proposed change*

- Issues with freeholders;
- Refusal by Distribution Network Operator regarding grid capacity;
- Electricity prices fall;
- Performance risk of panels;
- Government reneges on FiT contract;
- Transfer/sale of leisure centres;
- Rebuild of leisure centre;

- *Mitigation*

The above barriers or risks can be split into 3 categories: the Council's ability is to take the project forward or long term future of sites; external 3<sup>rd</sup> party permissions or requirements and finally issues with the scheme or electricity market.

The Council has funding options for this project and is keen to explore income generation opportunities. Should there be any change in the Council's position on leisure facilities in the future, the value of any ownership changes would reflect the improvements made to the building. The third parties have been approached and their support has been gained; the FiT scheme has been established since 2010 and the availability of supply in the electricity market means that electricity prices are extremely unlikely to fall in the foreseeable future.

- *Consequences if proposed change is not achieved*  
Loss of income generation and carbon reduction opportunity.

- *Financial and operating performance*  
There are a number of assumptions within the financial costings including the performance of the panels, the sales value of the electricity generated and operating costs. The estimated financial returns could be higher or lower than indicated and be subject to year on year variation. Experience from the solar panel installation at Causeway House has shown that in their first year of operation they exceeded the predicted financial returns.

The solar panel performance figures used for Braintree Swimming Centre and Halstead Leisure Centre are conservative to ensure that we meet the predicted annual returns stated in this report.

### **Consultation**

*Summary of the consultation process with Council Tax payers, residents, TUs, staff, other service areas, other key stakeholders; including views and outcomes)*

- *What form will the consultation take, including who will be consulted, how and when?*  
The proposal will go through the democratic process of seeking Cabinet approval.
- *Summary of views received during consultation and outcomes impacting on proposed project.*  
N/A

### **Communications**

*How and when you will communicate with staff and stakeholders?*

Stakeholders will be advised on commencement and completion of the install phase and then future updates on performance of solar panel system.

### **Recommendations**

*Proposed action to be taken?*

1. To Recommend to Council the approval of the allocation of capital funding of £430,000 for the installation of solar panels at Halstead Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming Centre or agree upon loan funding for the installation at one or both sites;
2. To agree to Delegation to the Corporate Director the authority to sign off the type of maintenance contract of solar panels.

### **Document sign off**

Originator (Project Manager): Mark Wilson	Date:20/11/13
Authorised (Project Sponsor): Lee Crabb	Date:
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Robert Mitchell & Cllr David Bebb	Date:

Image 1.



Aerial views of Braintree Swimming Centre and Halstead Leisure Centre showing potential solar panel installation

<b>Designation of Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve</b>		<b>Agenda No: 8b</b>
<p><b>Corporate Priority:</b>            <b>Protecting our environment</b></p> <p>   <b>Providing Green Space for everyone to enjoy</b></p> <p><b>Portfolio Area:</b>                <b>Place</b></p> <p><b>Report presented by:</b>        <b>Cllr Wendy Schmitt</b></p> <p><b>Report prepared by:</b>        Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor</p>		
<b>Background Papers:</b>		<b>Public Report</b>
<p><b>Options:</b> To approve or not approve the designation of Hoppit Mead (Braintree) as a Local Nature Reserve.</p>		<b>Key Decision: Yes</b>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p><b>The Council's Plan for 2013/14 cites the establishment of Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve.</b></p> <p>The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the designation of Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve following the preparation of a draft management plan and a period of community consultation. The consultation took place in conjunction with a public event in the early summer hosted by council officers and attended by the portfolio holder and ward councillors.</p> <p>Protecting and enhancing the natural heritage of Hoppit Mead, with its strong cultural links to local history and the work of John Ray, can make a major contribution to building sustainable communities, improving local quality of life, health and wellbeing.</p>		
<p><b>Decision:</b> To approve the designation of Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve.</p>		
<p><b>Purpose of Decision:</b></p> <p>To designate the areas of open space identified collectively as Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve as enabled by the 1949 legislation and with guidance and support from Natural England, for the protection of the natural heritage and the benefit and wellbeing of the local community.</p>		

<b>Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	A sum of £57,000 has been made available in the Council's current capital programme for the preparation of the management plan, minor improvement works, interpretation and signage. Changes to the maintenance regime will require less intensive horticultural management which will not impose any additional cost for the Parks and Open Spaces Manager.
<b>Legal:</b>	Under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, a local authority has the power to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. The guidelines for designation are set out by Natural England and will be adhered to.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	Well managed 'living landscapes' are a valuable asset that make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of their local community and are available for all. Hoppit Mead is an area of natural interest and of significant value locally for the enjoyment of nature by the local community.  The designation of the site can also help to safeguard rare and locally valued species and habitats (- the heritage link with John Ray is very strong here), and contribute to the preparation of Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	In designating a local nature reserve the Council is declaring its recognition of the importance of Hoppit Mead for protecting biodiversity and maintain custodianship within the community for future generations.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	The Council has commissioned the Management Plan from Essex Ecological Services (EECOS), the ecological consultancy for the Essex Wildlife Trust and their recommendations are presented in the interests of landscape conservation and providing opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	A community consultation event was held on 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2013 and continued as an online consultation for the whole of that month following a press release publicising the initial consultation event. Consultation has also taken place with The Parks and Open Spaces Manager, Museums Service, ward councillors, Natural England and other community stakeholders.
<b>Risks:</b>	The site will become fractured and degraded if not maintained as a cohesive ecological unit guided by a suitable management ethos.
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Shaun Taylor
<b>Designation:</b>	Landscape Services Team Supervisor
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2315
<b>E-mail:</b>	shaun.taylor@braintree.gov.uk

## **1. Background**

One of the specific priorities in the Council's Annual Plan for 2013/14 for 'Place' is to declare Hoppit Mead as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). In preparation, a draft management plan was commissioned from a specialist ecological consultancy and a public consultation event, to consider the draft document, duly held in the early summer on site. Funds for the preparation of the management document and improvement works to signage and other interpretation are provided by £57,000 in the current capital programme.

## **2. Statutory Declaration**

Under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, a local authority has the power to acquire, declare and manage nature reserves. Any land declared as a Local Nature Reserve must be 'special' in a local context and be managed to preserve or enhance the natural features on which the site depends. The declaration establishes proof of the LNR and informs the public of the LNR's existence.

The Council is required to make a declaration that it owns the land and that it is being managed as a nature reserve. Specimen templates for the public notices are provided by Natural England and will require publication in the local press and posted on the pedestrian access points to Hoppit Mead for a period of at least a week.

## **3. Hoppit Mead**

- 3.1** For the purposes of the management plan, the proposed Local Nature Reserve for Hoppit Mead is taken to comprise all of the Public Open Space either side of the River Brain in Braintree, between London Road to the west and Hoppit Bridge, Notley Road to the east, thereby including the amenity area known as Marshalls Park – see Map 1. The entirety of the site lies within council ownership.
- 3.2** 'Hoppit Mead' lies within a chain of public open spaces that is being developed by Braintree District Council as the "John Ray Park". This suite of open spaces extends from Clap Bridge on Rayne Road in the west, running just to the south of Braintree railway station and extending eastwards towards the A120 near to Freeport Village retail park. The Park embraces localities studied by eminent local naturalist John Ray during the 17th Century and combines places of significant wildlife value whilst also providing diverse opportunities for informal recreation and social history study.
- 3.3** The John Ray Park lies within the valley of the River Brain and this river corridor is covered by two Essex Wildlife Trust "Living Landscape" areas: River Brain Valley and Pods Brook Valley. Living Landscapes embrace important landscape features, such as river valleys and estuaries; characteristic landscapes and land uses, such as clusters of hamlets and villages with ancient greens, drove ways and roadside grasslands and significant clusters of good wildlife habitat such as unusually well wooded areas. An important consideration for these areas is that they are also beneficial to local people and communities and foster a flourishing local economy.

#### **4. Draft Management Plan and Consultation**

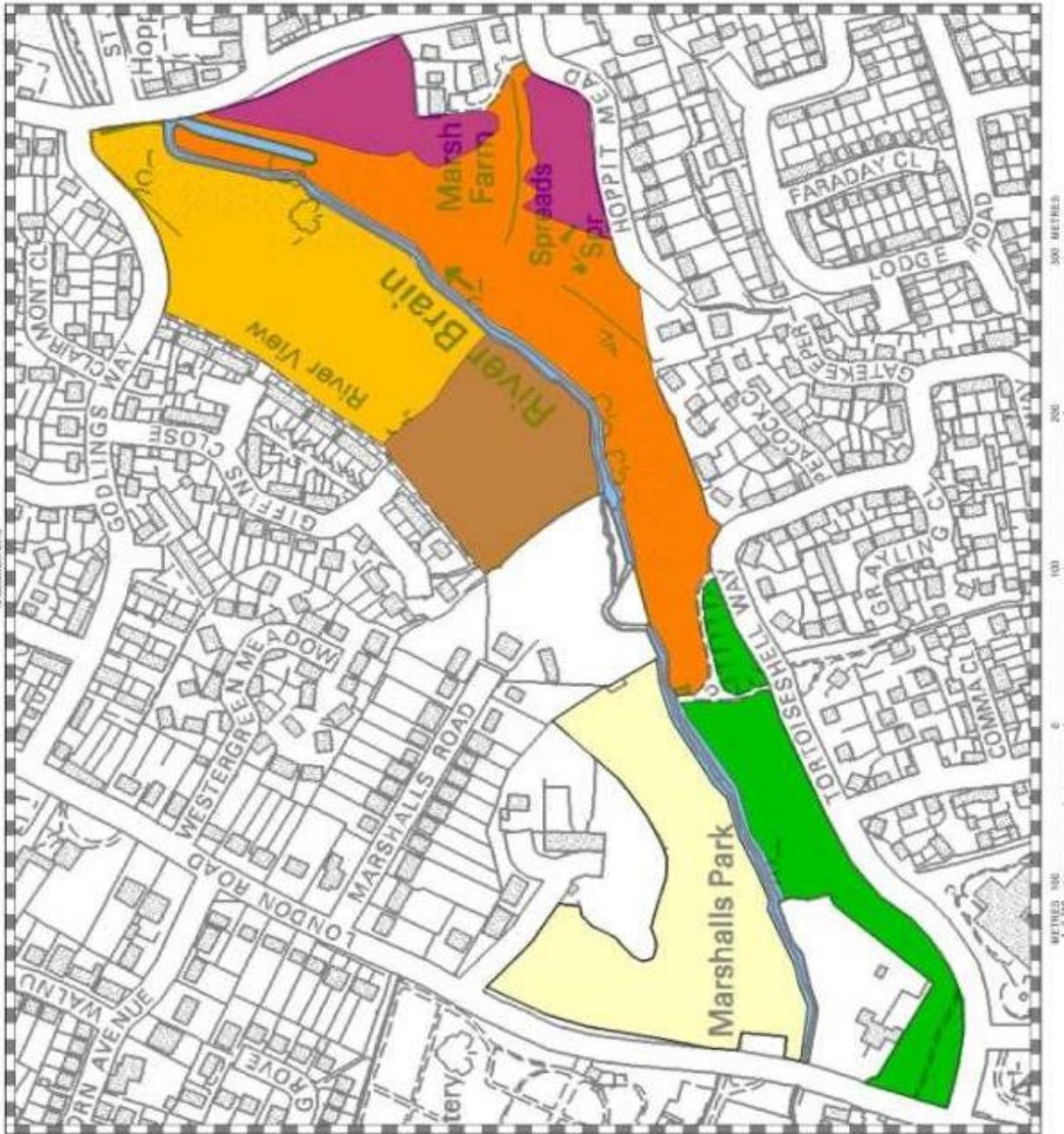
- 4.1** In October 2012, EECOS, the ecological consultancy of the Essex Wildlife Trust, was commissioned to prepare a draft management plan for Hoppit Mead. A draft document was produced in the spring of this year and was put out for consultation during the month of June. As part of the community engagement a public consultation event was held on the open space in front of River View, off Godlings Way, on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013 (10.30 to 14.30).
- 4.2** This occasion provided an opportunity for the public to come and review the proposals for the future management and maintenance of the area and to comment on the extents of the site being designated as a local nature reserve. The event was well-attended and strongly supported throughout the day. The response and feedback were broadly positive, with some significant interest in establishing a Friends Group; the nature of more detailed comments received on the day have now been relayed back to the consultants for inclusion in a final draft which will be submitted to council officers in a suitably revised form shortly.

#### **5. Natural England**

- 5.1** Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. It provides practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. The agency's remit is to ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. It has the responsibility to see that England's rich natural environment can adapt and survive intact for future generations to enjoy.
- 5.2** Amanda Turburville, the Council's Community Landscape Officer has been in regular contact with the regional officer from Natural England. The advice and guidance has been followed and Natural England has been supportive of the Council's preparatory work for the designation of Hoppit Mead, including the preparation of a draft management plan, which although not a mandatory stipulation before designation is viewed as best practice and a requirement by Natural England, if it is to be formally consulted.

### **Figure 1 Hoppit Mead – Boundary Extents and Management Compartments**

12 December 2012



### Map 1 Compartments

-  Marshalls Park
-  Tortoiseshell Way
-  River Brain and Backwater
-  Central Wetlands
-  River View South
-  River View North
-  Marsh Farm North and South



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<b>Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2017/18</b>		<b>Agenda No: 9a</b>
<p><b>Corporate Priority:</b> Deliver excellent customer service and provide value for money</p> <p><b>Portfolio Area:</b> Performance and Efficiency</p> <p><b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr David Bebb</p> <p><b>Report prepared by:</b> Trevor Wilson, Head of Finance</p>		
<p><b>Background Papers:</b> Council Budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and Medium Term Financial Strategy report to Cabinet 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and Full Council 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17 Update report to Cabinet 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013</p>		<b>Public Report</b>
<b>Options:</b>		<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b> <b>Background</b> The process of rolling the Council's four-year financial plan forward commenced with a report to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 providing details of an initial review of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17; agreed by Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013.</p> <p>The review included detail of the Government's announcements on local government funding following the 2013 Spending Round. Overall the review indicated a requirement to make savings of £850,000 and £653,000 in 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively.</p> <p>Cabinet endorsed the action taken by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive of commencing a process, in late August, to identify £1.5million of savings required by 2016/17.</p> <p>Since the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September Cabinet members, Management Board, senior officers and staff have continued the process to identify efficiencies, savings and additional income to address the estimated budget shortfall. The approach has been, as in previous years, to focus on: improving efficiencies in the back office functions and processes; maintaining frontline services and meeting residents' priorities.</p> <p>The assumptions and detail included in the financial profile 2014/15 to 2017/18 have been subject to continuous review and update: based on latest information available, confirmations received, etc.</p>		

## Financial Settlement from Central Government

The Council's funding from the Government will be updated following the notification of the Financial Settlements for 2014/15 and 2015/16 (provisional), this is not expected to be received until the days following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's annual Autumn Statement to Parliament, scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

## Priority Areas Investment

Six of the investments in priority areas agreed in February 2013 received funding for a two-year period. These provide funds in 2014/15 for areas including: economic development and town centres initiatives; housing measures to reduce the impact of the Welfare Reforms; and additional street cleansing in Braintree, Halstead and Witham outside of core hours and at weekends.

New bids supported for investment in 2014/15 and future years include:

- Apprenticeship scheme added into base providing a degree of certainty to this successful scheme which has previously received funding on a two-year basis;
- Street cleansing – adding the barrow beat service to base, from 2015/16, which has also received funding on a two-year basis; and
- Local Development Framework increase to base budget required for on-going work which includes the continuous renewal of the suite of documents which make up the LDF evidence base, work on master-planning the large development sites and the requirement for a review of the Core Strategy.

## Savings and budget changes identified in previous years

The financial profile includes savings and budget changes, for investments and unavoidable demands, across the four-year period which have been identified from previous years' budget setting processes.

These have been reviewed and adjustments are proposed.

	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
Savings planned and budget changes identified	1,621.6	390.2	102.5	0
Less: Proposed adjustments	472.6	95.0	5.0	0
Revised value of savings planned and budget changes previously identified	1,149.0	295.2	97.5	0

Adjustments are necessary due either to the proposal being replaced by a new saving proposal or the saving (or increased income) is not now considered achievable.

## Base Costs and Income Assumptions update

**Pay** – no changes made to current assumptions for pay award and salary incremental progression. It has been necessary to include two provisions for increased employers pension costs (£33,000 p.a.) from 2014/15 as non-contractual overtime and standby payments become pensionable; and increased employers national insurance contributions (£170,000 p.a.) from 2016/17 as the reduced rate currently paid is to be abolished.

**Pension Fund Contributions** – the results of the Triennial Review of the Essex Pension Fund were received on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013. The review determines the pension fund assets and liabilities applicable for each employer in the fund and sets the deficit contribution and employer contribution rate for the three years: 2014/15 to 2016/17.

The funding level of the Pension Fund is assessed to be 83.3% (percentage of liabilities covered by assets) this compares to 76.9% at the last review (March 2010).

The ongoing employer contribution for 2014/15 to 2016/17 is 14.4%, this compares to the current rate of 12.7%.

The deficit payment is calculated at £1.5million for 2014/15, which compares to £1.67million in the current year. This is based on the preferred option of paying the deficit payment in a single instalment in April each year.

The previous Triennial Review was based on the Council's Pension Fund deficit being addressed over a 20-year recovery period. The latest Triennial Review shows that the recovery period has reduced to 14 years.

### **Fees and Charges, Rents and Third Party Contributions**

Proposals for increases in fees and charges of a number of service areas are contained in the savings requiring member decision schedule (Appendix F). Review of other discretionary fees and charges is in progress. Proposals for increases in line with inflation will be linked to the Consumer Price Index as at September, which was 2.7%. A schedule of proposed fees and charges will be presented in the Finance Report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

Proposed increases to housing rents and service charges will, as in previous years, be in accordance with the Government's guidelines for Registered Social Landlords, of 3.7% for 2014/15, i.e. Retails Prices Index at September plus 0.5%.

Contributions received from Essex County Council (approximately £2.4million in the current year) in respect of a number of services are under review by ECC. The largest contribution (£2.04million) is made under the Inter Authority Agreement on Waste Management. For this Council a reduction of £200,000 over a three-year period has been proposed. This has been allowed for in the financial profile.

### **Budget Savings Proposals**

A total of £1.697million savings are proposed over the four-year period, of which proposals with a value of £590,980 have implications on service provision and therefore require member decision (details are contained in Appendix F). Savings which do not have an adverse impact on service provision or are made in accordance with agreed policies have a total value of £1,106,020 and have been agreed by Management Board (details are contained in Appendix G for information).

### **Business Rates**

From 2013/14 the Government allows billing authorities to retain a specified amount 'baseline' of the business rates they collect as part of the Government's funding of local government.

Variation from the baseline amount due to the amount of business rates actually collected in the year is either retained in part if over achieved or has to be met by the authority if under achieved. Estimates have been made of the business rates for both the current year and 2014/15 on the basis of information and guidance available; these are unfortunately neither complete nor clear. It is expected that the position will be resolved when the Financial Settlement notification is received in mid-December. Due to the high-level of uncertainty at this time the assumption in the Financial Profile is that the prescribed baseline amounts will be achieved in both the current year and 2014/15.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency agreed, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013, that the Council should join with nine Essex authorities to submit an application to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to establish a business rates pool for 2014/15. The basis of the pooling arrangement is that the Council will be no worse off in the pool than if it had not joined. Under a sharing arrangement the Council will receive approximately 5% of any additional business rates collected by the ten authorities in the pool. A decision on the application is awaited.

### **Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15**

The Local Council Tax Support scheme replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013. The scheme applies to claimants of working age. The Government determined that claimants of pensionable age are protected from the changes.

Taking into account: the significant changes made in the new scheme; the number of households affected (approximately 5,400); the current level of support awarded compared to budget; and the relative short time that the scheme has been in operation, it is not considered appropriate to make further changes to the scheme for 2014/15. The scheme has to be approved by Full Council each year by 31<sup>st</sup> January. The position will be reviewed for 2015/16.

The scheme details proposed for 2014/15 are substantially the same as for the current year save for one minor addition which clarifies that the £10.00 per week non-dependant charge will be applicable to non-dependants in receipt of universal credit.

The Exceptional Hardship Fund established to provide short-term assistance to households facing exceptional financial hardship, due to the introduction of the Council Tax Support scheme, is funded by the major precepting authorities. It is proposed that the fund continues for 2014/15.

### **Council Taxbase**

The Council's taxbase for 2014/15 is required to be calculated on 30th November each year and this will be agreed, under delegated authority, by the Corporate Director responsible for Finance.

The council taxbase takes into account estimated allowances for discounts and exemptions, including the local council tax support, single persons discount and empty property.

The current agreed discounts are as follows:

- Properties undergoing extensive repair – 0% for twelve months;
- Properties unfurnished – 0% for 6 months;
- Second homes – 0%

It is not proposed to make any changes to these levels for 2014/15.

### **Council Tax – Collection Fund – Surplus/Deficit**

An initial estimate of the Collection Fund balance indicates a net surplus of £102,960 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. The Council's proportion of the council tax surplus, to be returned to council taxpayers in 2014/15 is £13,460. This compares to a surplus of £30,760 returned to council taxpayers in 2013/14.

### **Council Tax Levels**

The Council in February 2013 agreed a 1% reduction in council tax for 2013/14 and confirmed an intention that the level of council tax would not be increased for 2014/15 and 2015/16, this being subject to the Government's annual financial settlement for the Council.

The provisional financial settlement figures received for 2014/15 together with the savings proposed for 2014/15 provide a clear basis for not increasing the council tax level for 2014/15, i.e. from the current Band D rate of £161.19 for the year. No increase in council tax continues to be included in the profile for 2015/16.

### **Financial Profile 2014/15 to 2017/18**

As result of the review and taking account of the proposed savings and adjustments the updated financial profile 2014/15 to 2017/18 shows for:

- 2014/15 an addition to balances of £422,747
- 2015/16 a shortfall of £141,760
- 2016/17 a shortfall of £694,351; and
- 2017/18 a shortfall of £706,175.

This position will be updated following receipt of the Financial Settlement. Plans to address any shortfalls identified from the revision will be presented in the Finance Report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

### **Balances and Reserves**

The estimated transfer to balances for 2014/15 is £422,747, as noted above, will provide an estimated balance of £7.834million as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015

The total amount of money in earmarked reserves as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 was £6.776million. A schedule detailing the planned use of the earmarked reserves over the four-year period of the MTFs will be included in the Finance report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

### **New Homes Bonus**

The estimated amount of New Homes Bonus receivable for year 4 of the scheme is £256,000, which when added to the allocations for years 1 to 3 produces an estimated total sum of £1.817million receivable in 2014/15. Notification of the actual amount is expected from the Department for Communities and Local Government in early/mid December 2013.

With the exception of the two allocations agreed, toward Local Development Framework costs and for an Economic Development Graduate Trainee post (totalling £204,000), the current policy is that the New Homes Bonus resource is earmarked for major infrastructure and housing projects in the district.

The amount of New Homes Bonus receivable from 2015/16 is subject to a decision by the Government on a proposal to top-slice £400million of payments to local authorities for allocation to Local Enterprise Partnerships.

**Decision:**

1. Cabinet recommend to Council to agree:
  - a) The Braintree District Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 as detailed on the Council's website [http://www.braintree.gov.uk/pcts\\_reductionschemepolicy](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/pcts_reductionschemepolicy) and
  - b) The transfer of £250,000 from the unallocated balance to the earmarked reserve for redundancy and early retirement costs.
  
2. Cabinet to agree that:
  - c) The budget for 2014/15, as presented in the updated Financial Profile, contained in Appendix J to the report, and the supporting detail contained in Appendices B to G, constitute the initial budget proposals;
  - d) The annual Pension Deficit payment to Essex Pension Fund be made in April each year, 2014 to 2016;
  
3. Cabinet to note:
  - e) The consultation to be undertaken on the proposed savings is contained in Appendix F to the report;
  - f) The savings approved by Management Board, contained in Appendix G to the report.

**Purpose of Decision:**

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

To Recommend to Council to agree the Local Council Tax Support scheme for the Braintree district from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

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

**Financial:**

The Government's provisional financial settlements for 2014/15 and 2015/16 for the Council result in reductions over the previous year of £1.045million (13.5%) and £1.023million (15.3%). For 2016/17 and 2017/18 reductions of £395,000 (7%) and £367,000 (7%) are predicted.

It is proposed to continue with the current Braintree District Council LCTS scheme for 2014/15. The current scheme was designed to be cost neutral for the major preceptors (Essex CC, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue and Braintree DC). The major preceptors have endorsed the proposal to continue with the current scheme.

	<p>An estimate of Business Rate income and the amount to be retained by the Council for 2013/14 and 2014/15 has been undertaken. However, it is believed that the Government is currently reviewing a number of the elements of the business rates retention scheme which it introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and guidance is awaited. Therefore the assumption in the Financial Profile is that there is no variation from the business rates baseline.</p> <p>The Council has joined with 9 other authorities in Essex to operate a business rates pool. A submission was made to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013. The decision is awaited. The pooling arrangement will enable a higher proportion of business rates to be retained in Essex with a proportion allocated to this Council.</p> <p>The results from the Triennial Review of the Essex Pension have been received. These show that: the funding level is 83.3% (up from 76.9% at the last review); employers ongoing contribution rate is 14.4% of pensionable pay (currently 12.7%); and deficit payment is £1.5million for 2014/15 compared to £1.67million in the current year.</p> <p>Budget savings of £1.697million are proposed but these are offset by a reduction in the savings identified from previous years' budget setting of £572,600.</p> <p>The updated Financial Profile shows a balanced budget for 2014/15 but shortfalls of £141,760 in 2015/16, £694,351 in 2016/17 and £706,175 in 2017/18. The Profile will be updated following receipt of the Financial Settlement in mid-December and will be reported to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.</p>
<b>Legal:</b>	Adoption of LCTS is a statutory requirement. Failure to do so could lead to a default scheme being imposed by the Government.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	<p>An Equality impact assessment on the Local Council Tax Support scheme is included at Appendix I to the report.</p> <p>Equalities impact assessments, where appropriate, will be included in the savings proposals reported to Cabinet in the Finance report on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.</p>
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	Keeping the current Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 will mean claimants of working age will receive support with their council tax up to a limit of 80% of their council tax liability, subject to a limit of a Band D property.

	Assessment of customer impact, where appropriate, will be included in the savings proposals reported to Cabinet in the Finance report on 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2014.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	Impact on the environment and climate change will, where applicable, be included in the savings proposals reported to Cabinet in the Finance report on 3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2014.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	<p>Brief detail of the consultation to be undertaken on each of the saving proposal is included in Appendix F. Consultation on staffing changes (included in Appendix G) will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Change Management process.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee will examine and consider the budget proposals as contained in this report on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The Chairman of the Committee has extended an open invitation to all members to attend this meeting.</p>
<b>Risks:</b>	<p>Failure to adopt a local Council Tax Support scheme in time would lead to the Government imposing a default scheme.</p> <p>The assumptions made prove to be incorrect resulting in savings not being achieved as planned, costs rising by more than the provision allowed for inflation, increased income budgets not being achieved.</p> <p>The provisional financial settlement figures for 2014/15 and 2015/16 from Government, included in the Financial Profile, are reduced following the Autumn Statement to Parliament.</p>
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## **1. Background**

1.1 The process of rolling the Council's four-year financial plan forward commenced with a report to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 on an initial review of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17; agreed by Full Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

1.2 The report to Cabinet included:

- An update on local government funding announcements from central government following the 2013 Spending Round;
- Details of a number of consultation documents issued by the Government on proposed changes to meet the reductions, outlined in the 2013 Spending Review, in local government funding;
- Details of a proposal for a pooling arrangement between Essex authorities to retain a greater proportion of the growth in business rates for Essex in 2014/15;
- Information on the costs of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme, introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. It was noted that at the current time no changes were being proposed to the LCTS scheme for 2014/15;
- Initial reviews of: the progress with the achievement of planned savings and efficiencies; spending against budget to-date in the current year; and the assumptions provided in the financial profile for inflation, pay award and interest rates;
- Notice of the expected timescales for receipt of the outcome of the triennial review of the Essex Pension Fund and implementation of Pensions Auto Enrolment scheme;
- An updated financial profile (copy attached at Appendix A) which indicated a requirement to make savings of £850,000 and £653,000 in 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively;
- The budget timetable for agreeing the budget and council tax for 2014/15 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18;
- The budget process to target the identification of £1.5million of savings proposals to address the estimated budget shortfalls to and including 2016/17; and
- An update of the estimated capital resources available for the capital programme.

1.3 This report provides detail of the progress with the updating of the Financial Profile and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2014/15 to 2017/18 and the proposed investments in priority areas and revenue savings.

## **2. Central Government Funding**

2.1 The Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that the annual Autumn Statement to Parliament will be made on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The statement will provide an update on the government's plans for the economy based on the latest forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility. It is anticipated that the statement on the financial settlement for local government by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will be made in the days following the Autumn Statement announcement.

2.2 The Government's three consultation documents on local government finance were:

- Local Government Finance Settlement 2014-15 and 2015-16 – Technical Consultation – consultation period closed on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.
- New Homes Bonus and the Local Growth Fund – Technical Consultation – consultation period closed on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013.
- Proposals for the use of capital receipts from asset sales to invest in reforming services – Consultation Document – consultation period closed on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

It is anticipated that the decisions and outcomes from these consultations will be incorporated in and published with the Local Government 2014/15 Financial Settlement.

2.3 At this time the estimated figures for the Financial Settlements for 2014/15 to 2017/18 therefore remain unchanged from those presented in the report to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 i.e. reductions year-on-year of 13.5% for 2014/15, 15.3% for 2015/16 and 7% for each of 2016/17 and 2017/18. See table below:

	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
Business Rates Baseline	3,046	3,145	3,234	3,324	3,418
Revenue Support Grant	3,142	3,435	2,411	1,925	1,465
Local Council Tax Support	1,148				
Homelessness Prevention	71				
Council Tax Freeze Grant 11/12	218				
Council Tax Freeze Grant 13/14	88	88			
<b>Total Grant</b>	<b>7,713</b>	<b>6,668</b>	<b>5,645</b>	<b>5,250</b>	<b>4,883</b>
Change over previous year		–£1,045	–£1,023	–£395	–£367
Change over previous year		–13.5%	–15.3%	–7.0%	–7.0%

### 3. Priority Areas Investment

3.1 Six of the investments in priority areas agreed in February 2013 received funding for a two-year period as it was considered important to avoid where possible adding costs on a permanent basis to the base budget.

3.2 Details of these investments which are funded for 2014/15 are provided below (the figures quoted are for the total for the two-year period):

#### Prosperity and Growth

- Economic Development and Town Centres – provision of £200,000 for economic development and town centres initiatives.
- Economic Development – in support of the above the contract of the Town Centre Regeneration Manager is extended by two years, i.e. to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015.

#### Planning and Property

- Housing Needs – provision of £150,000 available to fund measures to reduce the impact of the Welfare Reforms: examples include support for leasing schemes and assistance to tenants to downsize to smaller properties.

- Planning Development Control – an additional Planning Officer (£68,000) on a fixed two-year contract to provide extra capacity to assist in dealing with the increase in major planning applications.

#### Place

- Street Cleansing – A provision of £130,000 for the continuation of the barrow beats service in Braintree, Halstead and Witham until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. The service provides street cleansing activities outside of core hours and at weekends.

#### People and Participation

- Mi Community – Administration of the Mi-Community Fund (£36,000) to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

### 3.3 Proposed bids for revenue funding to finance investment in priority areas are:

#### Planning and Property

- Sustainable Development – additional budget required for the provision of specialist heritage advice following the end of the current contract with Essex County Council on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014;
- Sustainable Development – Local Development Framework increase to base budget required for on-going work which includes the continuous renewal of the suite of documents which make up the LDF evidence base, work on master-planning the large development sites and the requirement for a review of the Core Strategy;

#### Place

- Street Cleansing – A budget provision of £66,000 for the continuation of the barrow beats service in Braintree, Halstead and Witham after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. A high profile and valued service by members of the public;

#### Performance and Efficiency

- Apprenticeship scheme – to provide a base budget for the continuation of the successful current scheme, at a cost of £50,000 per annum;

#### Corporate Strategy and Direction

- Legal Services – Legal Officer post currently funded from an earmarked reserve to be made permanent, identified through the current legal services review.

### 3.4 A schedule of the bids is provided at Appendix B.

## 4. Review of Budget Savings identified in previous years

4.1 The Financial Profile includes savings planned for 2014/15 onwards which were agreed in February 2013. These savings have been reviewed with the outcome that for a small number an adjustment is necessary due either to the proposal being replaced by a new saving proposal or the saving (or increased income) is not now considered achievable.

4.2 A summary of the value of the planned savings and the proposed adjustments required is provided in the table below:

	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
Savings planned for 2014/15 onwards	1,188,912	245,820	72,580	0
Proposed Adjustment	375,030	90,000	0	0
Revised Value of Savings	813,882	155,820	72,580	0

4.3 A schedule detailing the updated savings, identified in previous years, including the proposed adjustments is provided at Appendix C.

## 5. Review of Priority Investments and Unavoidable budget changes identified in previous years

5.1 The Financial Profile includes the consequences for 2014/15 onwards of the planned priority investments and unavoidable budget changes which were identified in previous years. These have been reviewed and adjustments are proposed. A summary identifying the revised value per year is provided in the table below:

	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
Priority Investments and Unavoidable budget changes for 2014/15 onwards	432,700	144,360	29,910	0
Proposed Adjustment	97,540	5,000	5,000	0
Revised Value of Priority Investments and Unavoidable budget changes	335,160	139,360	24,910	0

5.2 A schedule detailing the planned priority investments and unavoidable budget changes, identified in previous years, including the proposed adjustments is provided at Appendix D.

5.3 The unavoidable changes included an anticipated reduction of £43,740 in the housing benefit and council tax support administration subsidy for 2014/15. Notification from the Department for Communities and Local Government received on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2013 confirms that the Council's allocation for 2014/15 is £816,070: a reduction of £111,280 or 12% compared to the total allocation for 2013/14 of £927,350.

## 6. Financial Performance at half-year and predicted Outturn for 2013/14

6.1 Service managers have reviewed their budgets against the monies expended and received during the first half of the current financial year and have used this information to predict the outturn for the year. The predicted outturn takes account of the delivery of the planned savings and efficiencies, totalling £1.695million, included in the 2013/14 budget.

6.2 The outcome of the review is a predicted underspend for the year of £59,800: this is after allowing for the achievement of the efficiency factor, of £337,980.

6.3 Details of the predicted outturn for 2013/14 are contained in the Quarterly Performance report, included as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

6.4 An area where a variance against budget in 2013/14 requires adjustment for 2014/15 is grounds maintenance income. This is lower than budgeted despite the successful retention of the contract with Fusion. An adjustment of £80,000 is required in 2014/15 (this is shown in Appendix D).

## **7. Finance Profile 2014/15 to 2017/18 – Assumptions Update**

### **7.1 Pay**

- 7.1.1 The financial profile includes provisions for annual pay award of 1% for 2014/15 and 2015/16 and 2% per annum for 2016/17 onwards. This is in accord with the Chancellor's Spending Round 2013 speech on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013 that public sector pay rises will be limited to an average of up to one per cent for 2015-16. Allowances are provided for annual incremental progression for staff who are not at the top of their grade (payment is subject to achievement of satisfactory performance).
- 7.1.2 Two provisions have been made for impending changes to employer staffing costs during this MTF period:
- Under the changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 a number of non-contractual payments to staff, including overtime and standby payments, will become pensionable. This will add an estimated £33,000 to staffing costs; and
  - The Employers National Insurance reduced rate currently paid by the Council is being abolished for the financial year 2016/17. This will add an estimated £170,000 to staffing costs.

### **7.2 Member's Allowances**

- 7.2.1 Provision has been included for annual increases in line with the pay award for staff.

### **7.3 Pension Fund Contributions**

- 7.3.1 The result of the Triennial Review of the Essex Pension Fund was received on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013. The review determines the pension fund assets and liabilities applicable for each employer in the fund and sets the deficit contribution and employer contribution rate for the three years: 2014/15 to 2016/17.
- 7.3.2 The outcome of the review shows that whilst this Council's part of the Fund continues to be in deficit (liabilities exceed assets) the deficit has reduced such that the funding level is 83.3%, compared to 76.9% as at the last review (31<sup>st</sup> March 2010).
- 7.3.3 The ongoing employer contribution rate is set to rise to 14.4% from the current level of 12.7%. This is due to a number of reasons including the age profile of staff in the pension scheme and changes to the Pension Scheme effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.
- 7.3.4 Although the deficit on the Council's part of the Fund has reduced the Funding Strategy of the Essex Pension Fund endeavours to maintain consistency of overall contributions paid into the fund between triennial reviews. The impact of this strategy is that the period over which the deficit is to be addressed changes. The triennial review in 2010 determined a recovery period of 20 years. The current review has determined the recovery period has reduced to 14 years.

7.3.5 The estimated contribution payments to the Pension Fund over the three year period 2014/15 to 2016/17 are shown in the table below:

	2010 Valuation	2013 Valuation		
	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £
Ongoing Rate (estimate)	1,210,632	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit Payment	1,668,287	1,501,345	1,569,464	1,640,673
Total Payment to Fund	2,878,919	2,872,168	2,940,287	3,011,496
Deficit Period	20 years	14 years		

7.3.6 The figures in the table above are based on a preferred option payment plan, from five options offered by the Essex Pension Fund, of: deficit payments for 2015/16 and 2016/17 are increased by 4.5% and the deficit payments are paid on 1st April each year. A schedule giving details of each of the five payment plan options is provided at Appendix E.

7.3.7 The financial profile 2013/14 to 2016/17 included provisions for increases in pension costs of £75,000 for 2014/15 and £78,500 for 2015/16 and 2016/17. The updated provisions for the results of the triennial review are provided in the table below:

	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
Original pensions increase provision	75,000	78,500	78,500	N/A
Impact of Triennial review	(94,870)	(9,040)	(4,140)	N/A
Add provision for 2017/18				118,080
<b>Updated pension provision</b>	<b>(19,870)</b>	<b>69,460</b>	<b>74,360</b>	<b>118,080</b>
Pension scheme changes 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2014 – additional employer contributions	33,000			
National Insurance contribution change			170,000	
<b>Pension Fund and NI contribution adjustments</b>	<b>13,130</b>	<b>69,460</b>	<b>244,360</b>	<b>118,080</b>

## 7.4 Fees and Charges, Rents and Third Party Contributions

### 7.4.1 Fees and Charges

The Council's discretionary fees and charges are currently being reviewed in accordance with the Charging Policy. The general principle of the Charging Policy is that service users should make a direct contribution to the cost of providing services at their point of use.

The proposal is for discretionary fees and charges to be increased by a rate of 2.7%, i.e. in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2013, rounded as appropriate for cash handling purposes.

A provision for fees and charges increases, of £50,000, included in the current financial profile for 2014/15 has been removed, to ensure no double counting, as a number of the savings proposals below are for increases in discretionary fees and charges.

A schedule detailing the proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2014/15 will be presented in the Finance report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

#### 7.4.2 Rents

It is proposed that housing rents and service charges, applicable to the small stock of properties retained, be increased in line with the increase prescribed by the Government for Registered Social Landlords of 3.7% (3.2% RPI for September 2013 + 0.5%). Details of the proposed rents and service charges will be included in the schedule of proposed discretionary fees and charges for 2014/15 to be presented in the Finance report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

Increase in rental income from the Council's commercial and industrial properties is determined by rent reviews as provided within the lease terms. An assessment of likely variation in rents on those property leases subject to review in 2014/15 has been undertaken. The estimated increase of £39,900 in 2014/15 is included within the management savings in Appendix G.

#### 7.4.3 Third Party Contributions

A significant amount of income is received from Essex County Council under a number of agreements and across a number of service areas.

The Inter Authority Agreement on waste management is the largest at £2.04million (2013/14 budget). Other agreements are for Community Transport (£105,000p.a.) and for a council tax sharing arrangement (£206,000p.a.).

The agreements are for defined periods:

- Inter Authority Agreement is for a period of 25 years
- Community Transport – the current 3-year agreement terminates on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014;
- Council Tax sharing agreement terminates on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 but is subject to a break clause under which Essex CC can give four months' notice on or before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013 or 2014.

Essex CC is currently discussing the financing of the Inter Authority Agreement with district/borough/city councils. A reduction in the contribution to this Council of £200,000 has been discussed and this has been accounted for in the proposed Integrated Waste Service saving included within in Appendix F.

A decision is awaited from Essex CC on a future agreement and funding of the Community Transport service which would be applicable from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. At this time it is assumed that the funding for 2014/15 onwards will be cash-limited at the 2013/14 level.

It is assumed that Essex CC will not invoke the break clause on the council tax sharing arrangement by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

## **8. Budget Saving Proposals**

- 8.1 The Chief Executive's open letter to staff and members, of 20th August 2013, outlined the challenge to make savings of approximately £1.5million by 2016/17. As a consequence the Cabinet Portfolio holders, Management Board and senior managers commenced a review of their service areas to identify savings, efficiencies and opportunities to increase income.
- 8.2 Details of the proposed savings/additional income are identified in two categories: those requiring member decision and those agreed by management.
- 8.3 The value of the proposed savings requiring member decision is £590,980: of which £209,630 is planned for 2014/15, £328,850 is planned for 2015/16 and £52,500 is planned for 2016/17. Details of the saving proposals are provided at Appendix F.
- 8.4 The value of the savings agreed by management is £1,106,020: of which £746,530 is planned for 2014/15, £267,490 is planned for 2015/16, £72,170 is planned for 2016/17 and £19,830 is planned for 2017/18. A schedule of the agreed management savings is provided at Appendix G.
- 8.5 The Council has a responsibility for ensuring that an equalities impact assessment is undertaken on the proposals, where appropriate, and that these are taken into account in the decision making process. Equalities impact assessments, where appropriate, will be included in the savings proposals reported to Cabinet in the Finance report on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.
- 8.6 Savings proposals which involve a reduction in staffing will be implemented in accordance with the Council's Management of Change process. The deletion of a post from the staffing establishment will not always result in a redundancy situation as those members placed at risk of redundancy will be subject to the Council's employment stability scheme and this may lead to redeployment.
- 8.7 If, however, a redundancy results from the process then the cost of this will be met from the earmarked reserve for redundancy/retirement costs. The balance of the reserve is estimated to be £102,000 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. It is proposed that this reserve be increased with a transfer of £250,000 from the unallocated balance.

## **9. Business Rates Retention Scheme**

- 9.1 The Business Rates Retention scheme was introduced for 2013/14. Under the scheme the Government calculated a baseline amount of business rates which it would allow local authorities to retain as part of the Government's funding for local government.
- 9.2 The baseline was calculated using the average of business rates collected in 2010/11 and 2011/12 together with a number of adjustments. The Council's baseline figure for 2013/14 was £3,046,139.

9.3 This was assessed to be achievable based on estimates of:

- Losses on collection;
- Mandatory and discretionary reliefs; and
- Rateable values changed as a result of appeals to the Valuation Office Agency.

9.4 The amount of business rates actually collected in the year will vary from the baseline: a higher amount collected will increase the amount that the Council is able to retain whilst a lower amount collected will require the Council to meet the shortfall up to a maximum of £228,471, any shortfall more than this will be met by the Government (under the safety net arrangements).

9.5 The Government has provided that the baseline amount will be updated annually by the change in the small business multiplier. In previous years, this has followed changes in the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The Council's baseline for 2014/15 will be £3,143,760 (based on September 2013 RPI of 3.2%).

9.6 In order to provide a revised estimate for 2013/14 and an estimate for 2014/15 of the amount of business rates to be retained by the Council, an assessment of business rates for the first half-year of 2013/14 has been undertaken on the basis of the best information available at this time.

9.7 A schedule providing details of the revised estimate for 2013/14 and an estimate for 2014/15 is provided at Appendix H.

9.8 For 2013/14, this shows that if a provision is made for the estimated level of successful appeals being in 2013/14 then the amount of business rates retained will be £2,712,219. As this is £333,920 less than the baseline amount the Government will be required to make a safety net payment of £105,449 with the Council meeting its maximum level of shortfall of £228,471. However, when the Government announced the extension of the additional 50% rate relief to small businesses for 2013/14 it indicated that councils would be compensated for this by a separate grant outside of the business rates retention scheme. It is estimated that this grant will be £551,207. Taking these two elements together the Council will receive net additional income of £322,736 for 2013/14. This amount is currently unbudgeted.

9.9 For 2014/15 onwards, the schedule shows that on the basis of no appeals to be accounted for and the Government does not give further extensions of the additional relief to small businesses then the Council will retain additional rates of £504,250 in 2014/15, increasing by additional sums of £66,380 in 2015/16, £16,269 in 2016/17 and £17,577 in 2017/18.

9.10 Perversely the figures for 2014/15 onwards could however be higher if the Government extends the additional 50% relief to small businesses.

9.11 It is believed that the Government is currently assessing the implications/ validity of instances where a safety net payment is made to a council in addition to the separate grant payable to compensate for the Small Business Rate Relief increase.

9.12 With a high level of uncertainty on the accounting arrangements and possible grant payments this additional income is not included in the Financial Profile. It is hoped that these issues will be resolved after the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and receipt of the Financial Settlement from the Government expected by early/mid December.

## **10. Business Rates Taxbase**

10.1 The estimate of the Council's Business Rates Taxbase for 2014/15 is £42,588,280 as shown in Appendix H. This is the net collectable amount which is after mandatory and discretionary reliefs, allowances for losses on collection and rating appeals. This is also based on the assumption that small business rates relief will be set at 50%. The final determination of the Business Rates Taxbase for 2014/15 will be agreed by the Corporate Director (Finance) under delegated authority and following notification of the Small Business Rate Relief scheme, which is expected in the Autumn Statement.

## **11. Business Rates – Essex Region pooling arrangement**

11.1 Cabinet, on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013, agreed in principle for the Council to join an Essex Region Pool for business rates for 2014/15. On the basis that the Council would be no worse off in the pool than if it had not joined.

11.2 The Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency agreed that the Council should join with nine Essex authorities to submit an application to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to establish a business rates pool for 2014/15. The decision on the application is awaited.

11.3 The decision to join was based on the assessment that estimated business rates income for 2014/15 will exceed the baseline amount, as outlined at paragraph 9.9 above, and that on the proposed sharing arrangement the Council could receive an additional amount of business rates of approximately £100,000. The additional amount will be receivable in 2015 after the required year-end returns have been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

11.4 The ten authorities which have agreed to submit an application for an Essex Region Pool for 2014/15 are:

Braintree DC	Epping Forest DC	Harlow DC
Castle Point DC	Essex CC	Rochford DC
Chelmsford CC	Essex Fire & Rescue	Tendring DC
Colchester BC		

## **12. Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

12.1 The new Local Council Tax Support scheme replaced the Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013. The new scheme applies to claimants of working age. The Government determined that claimants of pensionable age are protected from the changes.

12.2 The current scheme, approved by Members on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012 retained elements of the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme but included the following key changes:

- The calculation of support is based on 80% of the Council Tax liability rather than the full amount as under council tax benefit;
- A limit on the council tax banding, on which support will be calculated, is set at Band D;
- Child Benefit for the first child only is excluded from the assessment of a claimant's income;
- No Second Adult Rebate element;
- The deduction for non-dependants in the household is set at £10.00 per week;
- The period of backdating a claim (with good cause) is three months;
- Minor change to treatment of changes of circumstances with the removal of the requirement to calculate and award "underlying entitlement" when overpayments occur; and
- To incentivise work: the amount of earnings excluded from a claimant's overall income is £40.00 per week (previously ranged from £5.00 to £25.00 per week depending on the claimant's circumstances) with an additional earnings allowance, for those claimants in receipt of working tax credit (where working a minimum of 30 hours), of £5.00 per week.

12.3 The scheme also provides for:

- The exclusion of the full amount of War Widows pension from the assessment of the claimant's income; and
- the limit on savings held by the claimant at £16,000. Savings above this limit precludes the claimant from support under the scheme.

12.4 The council tax support calculated is accounted for as a discount rather than a benefit. The Council's taxbase is reduced by an estimate of the amount of support that will be awarded in the year. For 2013/14 this was estimated to be £8.433million. As at 30th September 2013, the value of support awarded for the year was £8.163million. The variation between the actual and estimated amounts awarded will be reflected in the balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund at the year end. The balance on the Collection Fund will however also be affected by variations between actual and estimated amounts of other discounts and exemptions, for example empty properties and second homes.

12.5 The Council Tax Support scheme is funded by the Government providing a cash-limited grant to each of the major precepting authorities. The amount of the grant payable to the Council was identifiable for 2013/14 however this grant will be subsumed within the Revenue Support Grant figure for 2014/15 (as shown in table at section 2.3 above).

12.6 The current number of working age claimants receiving council tax support is approximately 5,400, of which a large proportion will be paying an amount (minimum of 20%) of council tax, which in previous years they may have received benefit to cover their full council tax liability.

12.7 Taking into account the significant changes made in the new scheme, the number of households affected, the current level of support awarded and that the scheme has not been in operation for a full year it is not considered

appropriate to determine further changes to the scheme for 2014/15. The position will, however, be reviewed for 2015/16 when the scheme will then have been operational for 18 months.

12.8 Accordingly, at the Cabinet meeting on 30th September 2013 it was noted that no changes to the scheme for 2014/15 would be proposed and consequently agreed that there was no requirement to undertake consultation.

12.9 The Council is required to agree the details of its Local Council Tax Support Scheme annually by 31st January. The scheme forms part of the Council's policy on reductions to the amount of council tax payable as required under Section 13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Details of the scheme for 2014/15 can be found on the Council's website at [http://www.braintree.gov.uk/pcts\\_reductionschemepolicy](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/pcts_reductionschemepolicy). The scheme details are substantially the same as for the current year save for one minor addition which clarifies that the £10.00 per week non-dependant charge will be applicable to non-dependants in receipt of universal credit.

12.10 The Equalities Impact Assessment undertaken for the introduction of the scheme has been reviewed and updated as appropriate: a copy is attached at Appendix I.

12.11 The Exceptional Hardship Fund established to provide short-term assistance to households facing exceptional financial difficulties, due to the introduction of the new Council Tax Support scheme, is funded by the major precepting authorities. To-date 34 requests have been approved at a cost of £7,746. Requests for assistance from the Fund are made to the Council by the Citizens Advice Bureau as a result of an assessment of the claimant's finances. The Council has a service level agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau for this money advice service until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. It is proposed that the Exceptional Hardship Fund be retained for 2014/15: the value of the Fund will be approximately £16,000: set at 0.2% of the estimated value of council tax support for 2014/15, the same approach as used for 2013/14.

### **13. Council Taxbase**

13.1 The Council's taxbase for 2014/15 is required to be calculated on 30th November 2013 and will be agreed, under delegated authority, by the Corporate Director responsible for Finance.

13.2 The council taxbase takes into account estimated allowances for discounts and exemptions, including the local council tax support, single persons discount and empty property.

13.3 For 2013/14 the Council agreed to exercise the new discretionary powers to set the discounts for empty properties and second homes.

13.4 The current agreed discounts are as follows:  
Properties undergoing extensive repair – 0% for twelve months;  
Properties unfurnished – 0% for 6 months;  
Second homes – 0%

It is not proposed to make any changes to these levels for 2014/15.

13.5 The Council decided against the introduction of a premium, of up to 50%, to be applied to long-term empty properties (defined as over two years). It is not proposed to introduce a premium rate for 2014/15.

13.6 Details of the council taxbase agreed by the Corporate Director will be circulated at the Cabinet meeting.

#### **14. Council Tax – Collection Fund – Surplus/Deficit**

14.1 Prior to each year an estimate is made of the amount of council tax expected to be collected. Variation from the estimate results in either a surplus or deficit which must be either returned to or requested from council taxpayers in the following year.

14.2 An initial estimate of the Collection Fund balance is for a net surplus of £102,960 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. The Council's proportion of the council tax surplus, to be returned to council taxpayers in 2014/15 is £13,460. This compares to a surplus of £30,760 returned to council taxpayers in 2013/14.

14.3 A final assessment of the Collection Fund balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 will be undertaken in January, with any change necessary being included in the Finance report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

#### **15. Council Tax Levels**

15.1 The Council in February 2013 agreed a 1% reduction in council tax for 2013/14 and confirmed an intention that the level of council tax would not be increased for 2014/15 and 2015/16, this being subject to the Government's annual financial settlement for the Council.

15.2 The provisional financial settlement figures received for 2014/15 and the savings proposed for 2014/15 provide a clear basis for not increasing the council tax level for 2014/15, i.e. from the current Band D rate of £161.19 for the year.

#### **16. Council Tax Referendums**

16.1 The Localism Act 2011 gives local communities the power to decide whether to accept an excessive council tax increase. The Secretary of State determines the level of increase above which a proposed increase in council tax must be subject to a referendum. The Government announced in the Spending Round 2013 that it plans to set the threshold at 2% for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

16.2 Local precepting authorities, i.e. town and parish councils, are currently not subject to the requirement for a referendum for a proposed increase in council tax precept above the level set by the Secretary of State.

#### **17. Localism Fund**

17.1 The Localism Fund was established from 1st April 2013 and is for the payment of an unconditional grant to each town and parish council in the district. A

budget of £397,190 was agreed for 2013/14. On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2013 the Cabinet agreed that the amount paid in future years will increase or reduce in line with the funding received by this Council from the annual Central Government financial settlement.

17.2 On the basis of the provisional Financial Settlement information received for 2014/15 and 2015/16, the town and parish councils have been informed, by email on 2nd October 2013, of the likely levels of reduction to be applied to their Localism Fund payments for 2014/15 to 2017/18, i.e. reductions of 13.5%, 15.3%, 7% and 7% respectively.

## 18. Financial Profile 2014/15 to 2017/18

18.1 An updated Financial Profile for 2014/15 to 2017/18 taking account of the proposed savings and revised assumptions is provided at Appendix J.

18.2 The updated financial profile 2014/15 to 2017/18 shows for:

2014/15 – addition to balances of £422,747  
2015/16 – shortfall of £141,760  
2016/17 – shortfall of £694,351; and  
2017/18 – shortfall of £706,175.

18.3 This position will be updated following receipt of the Financial Settlement. Plans to address any shortfalls identified from the revision will be presented in the Finance Report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

## 19. Balances and Reserves

19.1 The Unallocated General Fund balance as at 31st March 2013 was £7.704 million.

Agreed movements on the balances for 2013/14 are:

	<b>£'000</b>
<b>General Fund</b>	
Planned use from balances in setting 13/14 budget	(353)
Anticipated surplus in 2013/14	60
	<hr/>
Balance as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2014	7,411

The estimated transfer to balances for 2014/15 is £422,747, as shown in Appendix J, which provides an estimated balance of £7.834million as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

19.2 Earmarked reserves are established to either meet specific requirements/ purposes in the future or to make provision for issues that are likely to occur but the timing is not predictable. The total amount of money in earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2013 was £6.776million. A schedule detailing the planned use of the earmarked reserves over the four-year period of the MTFS will be included in the Finance report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

## 20. New Homes Bonus

20.1 The estimated amount of New Homes Bonus receivable for year 4 of the scheme is £256,000. Notification of the actual amount is expected from the Department for Communities and Local Government in early/mid December 2013. The estimated amount for Year 4 and receivable in 2014/15 is shown net of costs payable to Capacity Grid. This company was engaged to undertake an exercise to determine whether the long-term empty properties, recorded on the Council Tax system, had been brought back into use. The properties identified which had been brought back into use through this exercise increased the amount of New Homes Bonus the Council receives.

20.2 The amount of New Homes Bonus receivable for years 1 to 4 over the period to 2017/18 is detailed in the table below. Allocations, totalling £204,000, have been agreed from the New Homes Bonus. These have provided funding toward the costs of the Local Development Framework (£158,000) and for an Economic Development graduate trainee post (2 years at £23,000p.a.).

<b>New Homes Bonus</b>								
	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>Totals</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>						
Year 1 (2011/12)	509	509	509	509	509	509		<b>3,054</b>
Year 2 (2012/13)		473	473	473	473	473	473	<b>2,838</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>5,892</b>
Year 3 (2013/14)			606	606	606	606	606	<b>3,030</b>
Year 4 (2014/15) Estimate				229	256	256	256	<b>997</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>982</b>	<b>1,588</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,335</b>	<b>9,919</b>
Allocations agreed	- 79	- 79	- 23	- 23				- <b>204</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>1,565</b>	<b>1,794</b>	<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,844</b>	<b>1,335</b>	<b>9,715</b>

20.3 With the exception of the two allocations agreed the current policy is that the New Homes Bonus resource is to be set aside to meet infrastructure and housing projects in the district.

20.4 An announcement from the Government on its proposal to top slice £400million from New Homes Bonus to provide funding to the Local Enterprise Partnerships, with effect from 2015/16, is expected in early/mid December 2013. Details of the proposal were contained in the MTFS update report to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

## 21. Capital Resources

21.1 An update of the capital resources and capital programme for 2013/14 to 2017/18 is summarised as follows:

	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
Balance of Resources – Brought Forward	17,833	4,935	2,003	3,860	4,396
Resources in year	3,141	2,276	2,615	1,303	1,187
Total Resources	20,974	7,211	4,618	5,163	5,583
Approved Capital Programme	16,039	5,208	758	767	776
Balance of Resources for Carry Forward to next year	4,935	2,003	3,860	4,396	4,807

21.2 The total balance of capital resources available to fund capital projects in the years 2014/15 to 2017/18 is £4,807,000.

21.3 The anticipated resources consist of:

- Share of Right to Buy sales income with Greenfields Community Housing;
- Capital receipts from the sale of assets;
- Share of the VAT Sharing arrangement with Greenfields Community Housing;
- Capital grant for Disabled Facilities Grants;
- Growth Area Fund; and
- Section 106 contributions.

21.4 In addition to the anticipated resources, quoted in the statement above, the Council is able to borrow monies to finance capital projects. The Council has two loans totalling £6million, taken out in March 2002, which are currently not required to finance capital projects but are instead being invested due to high penalty premia if repaid early. If borrowing is to be used then it is important that the capital project is income generating in order to cover the loan repayments.

21.5 New Homes Bonus is also excluded from the anticipated resources on the basis that this source of funding has been earmarked for major infrastructure and housing projects in the district.

21.6 Details of the Capital Programme for 2014/15 will be presented in the Finance Report to Cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

**General Fund Revenue Profile 2013/14 to 2017/18**

**APPENDIX A**

Produced: 28th August 2013

	<u>2013/14</u>	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2017/18</u>
	£	£	£	£	£
Base Budget brought forward from previous year	16,527,180	15,983,462	14,574,230	13,586,370	13,360,839
<b><u>Inflation:</u></b>					
Pay and Pension Fund Deficit	297,790	300,280	274,960	405,560	TBD
Other Expenditure Inflation	90,390	88,800	100,640	90,860	TBD
Income Inflation	(27,200)	(50,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)	TBD
<b><u>New Demands:</u></b>					
Investment and Provisions Bids 2013/14 and 2014/15	662,360	(528,090)	(104,360)	(29,910)	
Unavoidable Budget changes assessed for 2013/14	440,640	43,740			
Adjustment for Investment Bids and Unavoidable Budget Changes in 2011/12 & 2012/13	(281,650)	51,650	(40,000)	0	
<b><u>Reductions:</u></b>					
New Savings Proposals for 2013/14 onwards	(591,940)	(176,280)	(66,280)		
Updated Savings Proposals determined for 2012/13 onwards	(1,103,500)	(1,043,240)	(179,540)	(72,580)	
New Homes Bonus Set-aside Grant / Sparsely populated areas Grant 2013/14	(30,608)	30,608			
Anticipated Changes	0	(126,700)	(73,700)	83,700	78,700
<b>Additional Savings Required</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(849,580)</b>	<b>(653,161)</b>	<b>(240,005)</b>
<b>Updated Base Budget</b>	<b>15,983,462</b>	<b>14,574,230</b>	<b>13,586,370</b>	<b>13,360,839</b>	<b>13,199,534</b>
(Use of) / Addition to Balances	255,841	100,847			
Contribution from Balances for one-off growth items / Investment Bids 2013/14 and 2014/15	(608,360)	(116,270)	(29,910)	0	
Contribution from Earmarked reserves	(54,000)	(18,000)			
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>15,576,943</b>	<b>14,540,807</b>	<b>13,556,460</b>	<b>13,360,839</b>	<b>13,199,534</b>
Government Grant - Revenue Support Grant	(3,141,667)	(3,434,908)	(2,411,228)	(1,925,000)	(1,465,000)
Retained Business Rates	(3,046,139)	(3,145,449)	(3,233,704)	(3,325,000)	(3,418,000)
Government Grant - Local Council Tax Support scheme	(1,147,908)				
Government Grant - Council Tax Freeze Grants	(306,374)	(88,253)			
Government Grant - Homelessness Prevention Grant	(71,067)	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund Balance	(30,760)				
<b>BDC Requirement from Council Taxpayers</b>	<b>7,833,028</b>	<b>7,872,197</b>	<b>7,911,528</b>	<b>8,110,839</b>	<b>8,316,534</b>
Tax base (+0.5%p.a growth in properties 2013/14 onwards and collection rate reduced from 99.5% down to 98.5% wef 2013/14)	48,595	48,838	49,082	49,327	49,574
Council Tax (Band D)	£ 161.19	£ 161.19	£ 161.19	£ 164.43	£ 167.76
Council Tax per week	£ 3.10	£ 3.10	£ 3.10	£ 3.16	£ 3.23
<b>Percentage Increase</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
Increase per week	-£ 0.03	£ -	£ -	£ 0.06	£ 0.07

**New Bids 2014/15 onwards**

**APPENDIX B**

Service	Original Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	Comments
Operations	To continue the current street cleansing activities that operate outside of core hours & weekends with the dedicated street cleansing barrow beat operatives that operate in Braintree, Halstead and Witham Town Centres		66,000			Funding was agreed for 2 additional years (2013/14 and 2014/15) in February 2013.
Sustainable Development	Specialist heritage expertise to be provided through agreement with external service provided or in-house appointment	30,000				Additional budget required to provide service due to end of current contract.
Sustainable Development	Local Development Framework budget be set at £100,000 per annum and that any surplus from previous years is able to be carried forward to ensure that the costs of the LDF and examinations can be met.	26,410	50,000			Funding will allow further consultation and Framework to be heard by Planning Inspector. Planning evidence base and reviews to be kept up to date.
Governance	Legal Officer post to be made permanent. Subject to the outcome of the current review of Legal Services.	38,310				Post funded from earmarked reserve until 31/03/14.
Human Resources	Apprentice Scheme - added to base which will allow us to recruit 8 x Level 2 Apprentices and develop 3 of our Level 2 apprentices onto a Level 3.	50,000		0		This is subject to Services paying 50% of the wage subsidy required
		144,720	116,000	0	0	

**Updated Savings Proposals previously identified**

**APPENDIX C**

Portfolio	Service	Original Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Comments (Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)
Performance & Efficiency	Finance - Exchequer Services	Closure of cash collection facility on 30th June 2011.	-2,000			<i>Anticipated savings through use of swipe cards: enabling customers to pay cash at post offices or shops with Paypoint facility.</i>
Performance & Efficiency	Human Resources - Staff Lease car scheme	Change terms of lease car scheme	-16,000	-16,000	-4,500	<i>Change reducing the anticipated savings reflects a reassessment of the number of staff with entitlement to a leased car.</i>
Performance & Efficiency	ICT Services	Budget reductions following the procurement exercise for ICT services; undertaken jointly with Castle Point, Colchester and Rochford councils.	-20,470	4,460	-68,080	<i>Change reflects additional savings which were withheld initially until the conclusion of the due diligence exercise with Capita.</i>
People & Participation	Museum	Reduce the costs of the Museum to Nil by 31st March 2014	-105,000	-105,000		<i>Change reflects discussions with the Museum Trust to achieve the objective of the Council's funding support will now cease on 31st March 2015.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	105,000	105,000		The council continues to work with the Museum Trust on future proposals for the museum and Warner Archive. Full business case will be reported to Cabinet in 2014/15.
People & Participation	Leisure	Renewal of Leisure Management contract and reduced running costs as a result of the replacement of Bramston Sports centre.	-817,000	-63,000		<i>Change reflects the savings which accrue from the new leisure management contract with Fusion effective from 1st September 2012. The cost of improving the gymnasium facilities and associated increased income are also included.</i>
Performance & Efficiency	Service Reviews	Achieve efficiency savings through a programme of service reviews.	-70,270			<i>Savings on the Community Halls budget of £90,610 referred to above are to be offset against the efficiency savings target in 2013/14. The balance of £90,260 remain to be found during 2013/14.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	160,530			Provision replaced by budget saving proposals

**Updated Savings Proposals previously identified**

**APPENDIX C**

Portfolio	Service	Original Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Comments (Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)
Place	Operations - Depot and Facilities	Operational savings to be achieved by disposing of Millennium Tower and relocating the offices and Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).	-12,500			<i>The change reflects a revision to the savings expected from the relocation of the MRF from Lakes Road to Cordons Farm as this now includes the County Council's proposal to build a waste transfer station at the site.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	12,500			Previous profile assumption replaced by new savings proposal
Place	Operations	Accommodation rationalisation at Lakes Road.	-60,000			<i>Anticipated savings based on moving to shared office and vehicle workshop accommodation with Riverside Truck Rentals, to be built at Lakes Road. Capital bid made for 2013/14 for the purchase of the land at Lakes Road.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	60,000	-40,000		
Place	Operations	Refuse and Recycling route reductions	-75,000	-25,000		<i>Proposal to reduce the garden waste service by a vehicle and crew (six routes down to five). This is because food waste is no longer collected co-mingled with green waste.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	75,000	25,000		Previous profile assumption replaced by new savings proposal for Integrated waste service
Performance & Efficiency	Corporate	Council tax sharing agreement with major preceptors, net of the current Second Homes sharing agreement with ECC ceasing on 31st March 2013.	-41,280	-41,280		<i>Council agreed to set the council tax discount on empty properties and second homes at nil from 1st April 2013. Essex CC, Essex Police and Essex Fire &amp; Rescue have agreed to share a proportion of the additional council tax they receive because of these changes with this Council under a three-year agreement.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	-38,000			

**Updated Savings Proposals previously identified**

**APPENDIX C**

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Original Description</b>	<b>2014/15 £</b>	<b>2015/16 £</b>	<b>2016/17 £</b>	<b>Comments</b> <i>(Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)</i>
Performance & Efficiency	Corporate	New Homes Bonus set-aside grant and Sparsely populated areas Grant for 2013/14 only	30,608			
<b>Total of Savings/ Increased income previously profiled</b>			<b>-1,188,912</b>	<b>-245,820</b>	<b>-72,580</b>	
<b>Total adjustments to Savings/ Increased income previously profiled</b>			<b>375,030</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>0</b>	

Priority Investment and Unavoidable Budget Changes from previous years

APPENDIX D

Portfolio	Service	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Comments (Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)
Prosperity & Growth	Economic Development and Town Centres	Provision to fund economic growth initiatives, to be undertaken in 2013/14 and 2014/15, across the district. Initiatives to include: feasibility study into improving Braintree and Witham markets; marketing and advertising to increase footfall in towns;	-200,000			<i>Propose funding from General Balance Outputs: Completion of Witham &amp; Halstead Strategies/Feasibility reports to implement public realm schemes in Braintree, Witham and Halstead/ Delivery of events / Shop local scheme/ Employment of retail apprentices in the three towns/ campaigns and marketing</i>
Prosperity & Growth	Economic Development	Town Centre Regeneration Manager currently employed on a fixed term contract until 31st October 2013. Proposal to extend the contract for further 2 years until 31st October 2015.	29,910	-21,360	-29,910	<i>Propose funding from General Balance: programme management of Backing Our Towns initiatives/regeneration</i>
Planning & Property	Local Development Framework	Provision for the continuation of work on the preparation and examination of the Local Development framework documents. (Requirement in addition to base budget of £21,000 per annum). The provision is for 2013/14 and 2014/15.	-100,000			<i>Propose funding from General Balance: Delivery of the Site Allocations and Development Policies for adoption by Council</i>
Planning & Property	Planning Policy	The Council intends to prepare a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule, with supporting evidence, for examination by a Planning Inspector. This will enable the Council to levy a standard charge per floorspace of relevant development, subject to the viability of that development to pay the charge. Subject to detailed report for decision on introducing CIL.	-60,000			<i>Propose funding from General Balance</i>
Place	Street Cleansing	Barrow beats - To continue the current street cleansing activities outside of core hours and weekends with the dedicated street cleansing barrow beat operatives that operate in Braintree, Halstead and Witham Town centres.		-65,000		<i>Propose funding from General Balance</i>
Planning & Property	Housing Needs	Provision to fund measures to reduce the impact of welfare reforms during 2013/14 and 2014/15. Measures to include: support for Colne Housing leasing scheme; financial assistance to tenants to downsize to 2-bed or smaller properties	-150,000			<i>Propose funding from General Balance</i>

Priority Investment and Unavoidable Budget Changes from previous years

APPENDIX D

Portfolio	Service	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Comments (Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)
Place	Marketing and Communications	The two litter campaigns which achieved the best results in 2011/12 and are proposed for next year are the car litter and dog fouling campaigns.	-12,000			<i>Propose funding from General Balance</i>
People & Participation	Mi Community	Administration costs of Mi Community are funded from reserve in 2012/13, however a budget is required until 31/3/15 as the project funding is allocated.		-18,000		<i>Propose funding from Earmarked Reserve</i>
Corporate Strategy and Direction	Legal Services	Legal Officer post currently funded from earmarked reserve until 31st March 2013, contract to be extended to 31st March 2014.	-36,000			<i>Propose funding from Earmarked Reserve. A review of legal services function is to be conducted during 2013.</i>
<b>Total of Priority Area Investment 2013-14</b>			<b>-528,090</b>	<b>-104,360</b>	<b>-29,910</b>	
Prosperity & Growth	Economic Development	Subject to BDS merging with BEAU then a reducing grant to be paid for the next 3 years only	-10,000			<i>Grant to Ignite reduces from £20,000 in 2012/13 to £10,000 in 2013/14. Grant in 2013/14 will be final payment.</i>
<b>Total of Investment Bids 2011-12</b>			<b>-10,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
Performance & Efficiency	Housing Benefits	Reduction in Administration Subsidy	43,740			Notification of reduced allocations received from DWP.
		<b>Profile Change</b>	67,540			
Place	Operations	Grounds Maintenance - reduced income				Reduction despite successfully retaining contract with Fusion.
		<b>Profile Change</b>	80,000			
<b>Total of Unavoidable Budget Changes 2013-14</b>			<b>191,280</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	
Planning & Property	Development Control	Reduction to income budget for Development Control fees for 2012/13 with a phased recovery over a three-year period through increased charges.	-40,000	-40,000		<i>Income budget reduced by £120,000 in 2012/13. Government decided that planning fees would continue to be set nationally and not set locally as initially proposed. A 15% increase in planning fees</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	40,000			<i>Additional fee income for 2014/15 not expected.</i>
Place	Operations	Service Level Agreement with Greenfields CH regarding the use of Cordons Farm has been renegotiated resulting in agreed reductions in income for 2012/13 and 2013/14.	101,650			<i>Discussions with Greenfields CH are being held to determine future requirements. Profile currently assumes the SLA ceases at 31st March 2014.</i>
		<b>Profile Change</b>	-90,000	5,000	5,000	<i>New Service Level Agreement negotiated until 2017/18</i>

Priority Investment and Unavoidable Budget Changes from previous years

APPENDIX D

Portfolio	Service	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	Comments (Text from the original proposal is shown in italics)
<b>Total of Unavoidable Budget Changes 2012-13</b>			11,650	-35,000	5,000	
<b>Total Priority Area Investment, Bids and Unavoidable Budget Changes from previous</b>			<b>-432,700</b>	<b>-144,360</b>	<b>-29,910</b>	
<b>Total Adjustments to Priority Area Investment, Bids and Unavoidable Budget Changes</b>			<b>97,540</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>5,000</b>	

## Braintree District Council - Pension Fund Contributions 2014/15 to 2016/17 - Options

APPENDIX E

Braintree District Council C incl future DC Leis A&L

17/10/2013 18:49

Valuation	2010 £'000	2013 £'000
Assets	82,832	99,250
Liabilities	107,721	119,209
Deficit	-24,888	-19,959
<b>Funding level</b>	<b>76.9%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>

	2010 Valuation	2013/14 £ Expected
Ongoing rate	12.7%	1,210,632
Deficit	1,668,287	1,668,287
Deficit duration in years	20	
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>2,878,919</b>

<b>Pensionable Pay as at: 31-Mar-13</b>
<b>9,532,535</b>

OPTION A (14 yrs)				
Ongoing rate: FULL INCREASE (no stepping)				
Deficit Duration: 14 YEARS				
Deficit increase year on year: 4.5%				
Deficit Payment Profile: 12 MONTHLY PAYMENTS				
14 Year Deficit	2013 Valuation	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £
<b>Updated Ongoing rate</b>				
Ongoing rate (estimated £ contribution)	14.4%	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit		1,544,271	1,614,337	1,687,582
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>2,915,094</b>	<b>2,985,160</b>	<b>3,058,405</b>
Increase compared to 2013/14		36,175	106,241	179,486
Year on Year increase		36,175	70,066	73,245

## Braintree District Council - Pension Fund Contributions 2014/15 to 2016/17 - Options

## APPENDIX E

<b>OPTION B (14 yrs)</b>				
<b>Ongoing rate: FULL INCREASE (no stepping)</b>				
<b>Deficit Duration: 14 YEARS</b>				
<b>Deficit increase year on year: 4.5%</b>				
<b>Deficit Payment Profile: ONE ANNUAL PAYMENT IN APRIL EACH YEAR</b>				
<b>14 Year Deficit</b>	<b>2013 Valuation</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Updated Ongoing rate</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Ongoing rate (estimated £ contribution)	14.4%	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit		1,501,345	1,569,464	1,640,673
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>2,872,168</b>	<b>2,940,287</b>	<b>3,011,496</b>
Increase compared to 2013/14		-6,751	61,368	132,577
Year on Year increase		-6,751	68,119	71,209

<b>OPTION C (14 yrs)</b>				
<b>Ongoing rate: FULL INCREASE (no stepping)</b>				
<b>Deficit Duration: 14 YEARS</b>				
<b>Deficit increase year on year: 0% (FLAT RATE FOR 3 YEARS)</b>				
<b>Deficit Payment Profile: 12 MONTHLY PAYMENTS</b>				
<b>14 Year Deficit</b>	<b>2013 Valuation</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Updated Ongoing rate</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Ongoing rate (estimated £ contribution)	14.4%	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit		1,615,396	1,615,396	1,615,396
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>2,986,219</b>	<b>2,986,219</b>	<b>2,986,219</b>
Increase compared to 2013/14		107,301	107,301	107,301
Year on Year increase		107,301	0	0

**Braintree District Council - Pension Fund Contributions 2014/15 to 2016/17 - Options**

**APPENDIX E**

<b>OPTION D (14 yrs)</b>				
<b>Ongoing rate: FULL INCREASE (no stepping)</b>				
<b>Deficit Duration: 14 YEARS</b>				
<b>Deficit increase year on year: 0% (FLAT RATE FOR 3 YEARS)</b>				
<b>Deficit Payment Profile: ONE ANNUAL PAYMENT IN APRIL EACH YEAR</b>				
<b>14 Year Deficit</b>	<b>2013 Valuation</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Updated Ongoing rate</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Ongoing rate (estimated £ contribution)	14.4%	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit		1,570,494	1,570,494	1,570,494
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>2,941,317</b>	<b>2,941,317</b>	<b>2,941,317</b>
Increase compared to 2013/14		62,398	62,398	62,398
Year on Year increase		62,398	0	0

<b>OPTION E (14 yrs)</b>				
<b>Ongoing rate: FULL INCREASE (no stepping)</b>				
<b>Deficit Duration: 14 YEARS</b>				
<b>Deficit increase year on year: NOT APPLICABLE</b>				
<b>Deficit Payment Profile: ONE TRIENNIAL PAYMENT IN APRIL 2014</b>				
<b>14 Year Deficit</b>	<b>2013 Valuation</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Updated Ongoing rate</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Ongoing rate (estimated £ contribution)	14.4%	1,370,823	1,370,823	1,370,823
Deficit		4,450,489	0	0
<b>Total Contribution</b>		<b>5,821,312</b>	<b>1,370,823</b>	<b>1,370,823</b>
Increase compared to 2013/14		2,942,393	-1,508,096	-1,508,096
Year on Year increase		2,942,393	-4,450,489	0

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX F**

Portfolio	Business Plan	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	Comments/Consultation
<b>SAVINGS REQUIRING MEMBER DECISION</b>							
Leader	Governance	Basic Member Allowances - Boundary Commission recommendation of a reduction in number of members from 60 to 50 with effect from next election in May 2015		-45,000			Consultation conducted by the Boundary Commission
People	Community Services	Passengers make a greater contribution to the reimbursement to volunteer drivers out-of-pocket expenses through an increase in fares to the social car scheme	-3,010				Consultation with users will be undertaken after the Cabinet meeting on 9th December 2013.
People	Community Services	Increase fares to hirers of Community Transport minibuses. Fares have not been increased for 5 years and customer feedback indicates that a price increase would be acceptable	-15,870				Consultation with users will be undertaken after the Cabinet meeting on 9th December 2013.
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	CCTV - To review the efficiency and effectiveness of CCTV in the town centres	-18,000	-6,000			Early discussions to be held with Essex Police, Halstead Town Council and other stakeholders.
Place	Operations	Allotments - increase plot charges	-4,500				Increase in the charge to reflect the improvements made to sites and additional costs of utilities e.g. higher water bills. These proposals bring the charges in line with neighbouring authority charges.
Place	Operations	Great Notley Country Park - renegotiate the annual contribution to ECC (50% over a two-year period)		-15,000	-15,000		It is proposed to review the current budget in conjunction with ECC to identify ways of reducing costs and/or maximising income to lower future operating costs. Discussions will take place during 2014-15 for implementation the year after.
Place	Operations	Waste Collections - Combine the domestic refuse, recycling and commercial waste collections across the District to maximise resources and increase opportunities to collect more commercial waste recycling to generate additional income	3,000	-218,000	-11,000		Detailed report to be considered by Cabinet on 3 February 2014. This proposal involves introducing new routes and revised collection days across the District in early 2015. As this will affect the majority of customers across the Braintree District, the timetable allows sufficient time for extensive engagement and communication.
Place	Operations	Increase recycling - promotion of recycling in areas where participation is low.	-17,100	-32,700	-26,500		

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX F**

Portfolio	Business Plan	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £	Comments/Consultation
<b>SAVINGS REQUIRING MEMBER DECISION</b>							
Place	Operations	Car Parks - Increase parking tariffs	-80,000				Detailed report to be considered by Cabinet on 3 February 2014. A consultation process will be undertaken as part of introducing the new car park order. In addition some targeted consultation will be conducted in advance of this.
Place	Environment	Installation of solar panels at Halstead Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming Centre. Income generation.	-34,650	-3,150			Detailed report to be considered by Cabinet on 9th December 2013
Planning & Property	Asset Management	Increase in fees to produce S106 legal agreements and to monitor S.106 delivery.	-7,000				Consultation will take place with Stakeholders including Developers, Housing Associations and Planning Consultants.
Planning & Property	Sustainable Development	Street naming and numbering service - increase fees to cover the service cost	-2,500				Consultation will take place with Stakeholders including Developers, Housing Associations and Planning Consultants.
Planning & Property	Sustainable Development	Development Management - increase charges for the provision of advice to prospective applicants on planning proposals	-20,000				Consultation will take place with Stakeholders including Developers, Housing Associations and Planning Consultants.
Planning & Property	Sustainable Development	Land Charges - Increase in the fee for a land or property search		-5,000			Consultation will take place with Stakeholders including local Solicitors.
Planning & Property	Sustainable Development	Planning Policy - 25% reduction in contribution to Dedham Valley AONB and Stour Valley Project		-4,000			Consultation will take place with the Dedham Valley AONB and Stour Valley Project and the Member Local Authorities.
Prosperity	Operations	Review of Markets service - Management and operation	-10,000				The management and operation of the markets is being considered as part of a wider review of the service.
<b>SAVINGS REQUIRING MEMBER DECISION - TOTAL</b>			<b>-209,630</b>	<b>-328,850</b>	<b>-52,500</b>	<b>0</b>	

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX G**

Portfolio	Business Plan	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
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**MANAGEMENT APPROVED SAVINGS**

Leader	Governance	Elections - reduce annual addition to earmarked reserve for future district elections, from £37,000 to £32,000p.a.	-5,000			
Leader	Governance	Member Services - minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.		-2,940		
Leader	Marketing & Communications	Graphic Design & Printing Services - external income budget increased in line with current level achieved and savings on consumables budget.	-25,000			
People	Community Services	Minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.	-11,780			
People	Cultural Services	Town Hall Centre - increase income through additional marketing	-3,000	-3,790		
People	Leisure	Minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.	-22,660			
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	Data Network, Voice Network and Network Systems Development - budget reductions following contract reviews and investment in networks.	-20,000			
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	Investment in new technology has reduced maintenance costs for ICT Contract variations; development of corporate application systems; and Web Access Module.	-30,340			

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX G**

Portfolio	Business Plan	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
<b>MANAGEMENT APPROVED SAVINGS</b>						
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	Causeway House - business rates reduction following successful appeal and rent communal rest area (formerly ICONs) to third party.	-40,560	-13,760		
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	Customer Services - changes to service level agreement budgets for services provided at libraries by ECC and customer services for ECC; and the deletion of temporary customer services post.	-19,890	-12,000		
Performance & Efficiency	Business Solutions	Business Improvement - maintenance of new website. Budget reduced following re-negotiation of existing contracts.	-10,000			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Audit, Cashiers, Insurance and Housing Benefit Fraud - deletion of mailroom assistant post, Fraud Assistant post filled on part-time basis, various budget reductions and 5% saving on insurance premia costs by extending contract.	-62,330			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Revenues - Separate budget for discretionary business rate relief not required as reliefs are accounted for under the Business Rates Retention scheme.	-143,820			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Revenues - post regraded and legal fees budget reduced.	-16,300			

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX G**

Portfolio	Business Plan	Description	2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18 £
<b>MANAGEMENT APPROVED SAVINGS</b>						
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Localism Fund - reduction in accord with anticipated Government Grant reduction (13.5% for 2014/15, a further 15.3% for 2015/16 and a further 7% in 2016/17 and 2017/18). Policy was agreed by Cabinet on 8th April 2013.	-53,620	-52,560	-20,370	-18,950
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Mortgage administration - Agreement with third party for administration of mortgages terminated wef 1 April 2014.	-4,500			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	External audit fees - further reduction following the demise of the Audit Commission	-17,250			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Procurement - increased rebate income and reduced system cost following renegotiation	-12,130			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	Systems Control - reduced two posts filled on part-time basis	-13,400			
Performance & Efficiency	Finance	ECC contribution toward Hardship Fund administration costs.	-5,000	5,000		
Performance & Efficiency	Human Resources	Post regraded following staffing review and restructure	-18,580	750		
Place	Environment	Environmental Services - various staff structure changes due to retirements or staff requests that will improve the efficiency of the service.	-32,000		-30,000	
Place	Environment	Sustainability - various measures that either increase income or reduce costs.	-13,560			

**New Savings Proposals 2014-15**

**APPENDIX G**

<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Business Plan</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2014/15 £</b>	<b>2015/16 £</b>	<b>2016/17 £</b>	<b>2017/18 £</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT APPROVED SAVINGS</b>						
Place	Environment	Environmental Health - minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.	-2,430			
Place	Operations	Change in the maintenance of roundabouts.	-10,000			
Place	Sustainable Development	Landscape services - retirement of Landscape Architect and minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.	-17,800	-7,000		
Planning & Property	Asset Management	Commercial portfolio - estimated additional income from rent reviews.	-39,990	-11,450	-6,800	-880
Planning & Property	Housing Services	Minor reductions/ realignments of budgets.	-27,940	-4,740		
Planning & Property	Sustainable Development	Planning Policy, Development Control and Local Land Charges - minor reductions/ realignments of budgets and income budget increased to reflect current level achieved.	-27,650	-10,000		
Corporate	All Services	Savings related to Staffing and Management Restructure	-40,000	-155,000	-15,000	
<b>MANAGEMENT APPROVED SAVINGS - TOTAL</b>			<b>-746,530</b>	<b>-267,490</b>	<b>-72,170</b>	<b>-19,830</b>

## APPENDIX H

<u>BUSINESS RATE YIELDS 2013/14</u>	NNDR1	30/09/2013 Adj	Forecast			
			2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
No. of properties	4,339	4,447				
Rateable Value	103,300,739	102,813,179				
<b>Gross Yield</b>	<b>47,724,941</b>	<b>47,254,752</b>	<b>48,206,322</b>	<b>49,556,099</b>	<b>50,943,670</b>	<b>52,370,093</b>
<b>Mandatory Reliefs</b>						
Add Yield to fund SBRR	764,820	758,472	782,743	804,660	827,190	850,351
Cost of SBRR	-2,579,777	-2,756,033	-1,422,113	-1,461,932	-1,502,866	-1,544,947
Cost of relief to Charities/CASC/Rurals	-2,365,862	-2,680,514	-2,766,291	-2,843,747	-2,923,372	-3,005,226
Cost of relief partly occupied	-225,784	-13,591	-14,026	-14,418	-14,822	-15,237
Cost of relief for empty premises (incl. loss allowance)	-1,071,228	-1,614,345	-1,666,004	-1,712,652	-1,760,606	-1,809,903
<b>Total Mandatory Reliefs</b>	<b>-5,477,832</b>	<b>-6,306,011</b>	<b>-5,085,691</b>	<b>-5,228,090</b>	<b>-5,374,477</b>	<b>-5,524,962</b>
<b>Discretionary Reliefs</b>						
Cost of relief to Charities/Non Profit/CASC/Rurals	-231,677	-238,330	-245,957	-252,844	-259,923	-267,201
Cost of relief Localism Act Discounts	0	0	-100,000	0	0	0
<b>Total Discretionary Reliefs</b>	<b>-231,677</b>	<b>-238,330</b>	<b>-345,957</b>	<b>-252,844</b>	<b>-259,923</b>	<b>-267,201</b>
<b>Gross Rate Yield after reliefs</b>	<b>42,015,432</b>	<b>40,710,411</b>	<b>42,774,675</b>	<b>44,075,166</b>	<b>45,309,270</b>	<b>46,577,930</b>
Amounts written off	0	-123,610				
Estimated losses on collection (prov)	-638,630	-515,020	-659,066	-677,520	-696,491	-715,992
<b>Losses on collection</b>	<b>-638,630</b>	<b>-638,630</b>				
Allowance for cost of collection	-186,394	-186,394	-186,394	-186,394	-186,394	-186,394
Estimate of adjustment due to appeals (prov)	-2,520,000	-2,049,811		0	0	0
<b>Net Rate Yield (before transition)</b>	<b>38,670,408</b>	<b>37,835,575</b>	<b>42,588,280</b>	<b>43,888,771</b>	<b>45,122,876</b>	<b>46,391,535</b>
Amount retained by BDC before tariff (@40%)	15,468,163	15,134,230	17,035,312	17,555,509	18,049,150	18,556,614
Tariff	-12,422,011	-12,422,011	-12,819,515	-13,178,462	-13,547,459	-13,926,788
<b>Retained Income before levy or safety net</b>	<b>3,046,152</b>	<b>2,712,219</b>	<b>4,215,797</b>	<b>4,377,047</b>	<b>4,501,692</b>	<b>4,629,827</b>
Levy or safety Net	-13	105,447	-566,097	-572,712	-589,792	-607,350
<b>Income to BDC</b>	<b>3,046,139</b>	<b>2,817,667</b>	<b>3,649,699</b>	<b>3,804,335</b>	<b>3,911,900</b>	<b>4,022,477</b>
<b>GF Profile</b>	3,046,139	3,046,139	3,145,449	3,233,704	3,325,000	3,418,000
<b>Variance to Profile</b>		<b>-228,472</b>	<b>504,250</b>	<b>570,631</b>	<b>586,900</b>	<b>604,477</b>
<b>Change required to Profile</b>			<b>504,250</b>	<b>66,380</b>	<b>16,269</b>	<b>17,577</b>
S31 Grant for Small Business Rates Relief (Est. LGF Model)		551,207				

## APPENDIX J

### General Fund Revenue Profile 2014/15 to 2017/18

Updated: 19th November 2013

	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2017/18</u>
	£	£	£	£
Base Budget brought forward from previous year	15,983,462	14,265,790	13,586,370	13,360,839
<b><u>Inflation:</u></b>				
Pay award and incremental progression	225,280	196,460	327,060	327,060
Other Expenditure Inflation	83,100	100,640	90,860	90,860
Income Inflation	0	(50,000)	(50,000)	(50,000)
Pension Fund and National Insurance contribution adjustments	13,130	69,460	244,360	118,080
<b><u>New Demands:</u></b>				
Priority Area Investment, Bids and Unavoidable Budget Changes previously profiled	(432,700)	(144,360)	(29,910)	0
Adjustments to Priority Area Investment, Bids and Unavoidable Budget Changes previously profiled	97,540	5,000	5,000	0
New Bids 2014/15 (from Management review)	144,720	116,000	0	0
<b><u>Reductions:</u></b>				
Savings Proposals previously profiled	(1,188,912)	(245,820)	(72,580)	0
Adjustments to Savings Proposals previously profiled	375,030	90,000	0	0
New Savings Proposals for 2014/15 onwards (Member decision required)	(209,630)	(328,850)	(52,500)	0
New Savings Proposals for 2014/15 onwards (Management savings)	(746,530)	(267,490)	(72,170)	(19,830)
<b>Council Tax Freeze Grant 2014/15 and 2015/16</b>	(78,700)	(78,700)	78,700	78,700
<b>Additional Savings Required</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(141,760)</b>	<b>(694,351)</b>	<b>(706,175)</b>
<b>Updated Base Budget</b>	<b>14,265,790</b>	<b>13,586,370</b>	<b>13,360,839</b>	<b>13,199,534</b>
(Use of) / Addition to Balances	422,747	0		

APPENDIX J

**General Fund Revenue Profile 2014/15 to 2017/18**

Updated: 19th November 2013

	<u>2014/15</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2016/17</u>	<u>2017/18</u>
	£	£	£	£
Contribution from Balances for one-off growth items / Investment Bids 2013/14 and 2014/15	(116,270)	(29,910)	0	
Contribution from Earmarked reserves	(18,000)			
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>14,554,267</b>	<b>13,556,460</b>	<b>13,360,839</b>	<b>13,199,534</b>
Government Grant - Revenue Support Grant	(3,434,908)	(2,411,228)	(1,925,000)	(1,465,000)
Retained Business Rates	(3,145,449)	(3,233,704)	(3,325,000)	(3,418,000)
Government Grant - Council Tax Freeze Grants (secured)	(88,253)			
Collection Fund Balance	(13,460)			
<b>BDC Requirement from Council Taxpayers</b>	<b>7,872,197</b>	<b>7,911,528</b>	<b>8,110,839</b>	<b>8,316,534</b>
Tax base (+0.5%p.a growth in properties 2013/14 onwards and collection rate reduced from 99.5% down to 98.5% wef 2013/14)	48,838	49,082	49,327	49,574
Council Tax (Band D)	£ 161.19	£ 161.19	£ 164.43	£ 167.76
Council Tax per week	£ 3.10	£ 3.10	£ 3.16	£ 3.23
<b>Percentage Increase</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
Increase per week	£ -	£ -	£ 0.06	£ 0.07

## **Braintree District Council**

### **Equality Impact Assessment - An Analysis of the Effects on Equality**

#### **Section 1:**

Name of policy, service or strategy to be assessed:

- Localised Council Tax Support Policy 2014-15

1. What is the main purpose of the policy, service or strategy?

To address the requirements placed upon Braintree District Council to deliver the current scheme from April 2014.

As well as having to design a local scheme that is right for Braintree, we also had to work to a budget that continues to be reduced annually. Pension Age claimants are protected.

Claimants of pensionable age continue to receive the same level of support as they did under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. The support for those claimants of working age reduced compared against the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme to address the budget reduction. However, the Authority intends to retain the scheme implemented for 2013/14, for the financial year 2014/15.

The scheme is :

- Everyone of Working Age, in receipt of Local Council Tax Support, will pay a minimum of 20% of their annual Council Tax charge
- Everyone of Working Age, living in Band E,F,G will have their Local Council Tax Support limited to the amount payable for a Band D property
- Child Benefit for the first child only, will be disregarded as income when assessing entitlement to Local Council Tax Support.
- There will be a standard weekly deduction from Local Council Tax Support, made for each non dependant living in the property regardless of their weekly income. This weekly deduction will be £10.00.
- Second Adult Rebate is no longer paid to Working Age customers, where they are living with the Council Tax payer and are on a low income. The Council Tax payer will need to meet the full Council Tax charge due on the property.
- The earnings disregard is £40 per week, for Working Age customers in receipt of Local Council Tax Support and in remunerative work.
- Local Council Tax Support is considered where the customer has up to £16,000 in savings.
- Backdating is restricted to 3 months.
- No underlying entitlement will be considered, where an overpayment occurs.

2. What main areas or activities does it cover?

- Payment of Council Tax
- Discounting of Council Tax

3. Who are the main audience, users or customers who will be affected?

- Those liable for Council Tax within the district.
- Adults on a low income with low savings
- Any authority that can levy a charge to contribute to Council Tax

4. What outcomes do you want to achieve from the policy, service or strategy?

- A fair and equitable scheme
- To maintain support for particularly vulnerable people within the constraints imposed by Government policy.

5. Are other service areas or partner agencies involved in delivery? If so, please give details below:

- All major precepting authorities in Essex.
- Revenues Service
- Strategic Housing
- Customer Services
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department for Communities and Local Government

6. How does the policy, service or strategy help to further or facilitate to our 'general duty'<sup>1</sup> to:

(a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

(b) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic'<sup>2</sup> and those who do not?<sup>3</sup>

(c) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not?<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> These 3 points summarise the 'general duty' as it applies to public sector organisations in the Equality Act 2010

<sup>2</sup> The Equality Act's 'protected characteristics' include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnerships, but not for all aspects of the duty.

<sup>3</sup> This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it, and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

<sup>4</sup> This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to (a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

## APPENDIX I

Please complete the following in order to identify how the policy, practice or strategy furthers the aim of the `general duty`:

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to `eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation`?	How does it help to `advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not`?	How does it help to `foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not`?
Age	Older people (60+)	None identified	This group is protected in the policy, which follows specific Government Regulations. This helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."	None identified
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)	None identified	<p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance and family premium as part of the calculation, which is consistent with the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Working parents receive a higher disregard of their earnings to reflect their childcare costs.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>	None identified

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
Disability	Physical	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>Without these actions designed to protect this group the policy could potentially be discriminatory.</p>	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>	None identified

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
	Sensory	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>Without these actions designed to protect this group the policy could potentially be discriminatory.</p>	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>	None identified

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
	Learning	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>Without these actions designed to protect this group the policy could potentially be discriminatory.</p>	<p>Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>	None identified
	Mental health issues	We may be able to grant exemption from Council Tax liability under SMI (Severely Mentally Impaired) legislation	None identified	None identified
Ethnicity <sup>5</sup>	White	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Black	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Chinese	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Mixed Ethnic Origin	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Gypsies/ Travellers	None identified	None identified	None identified

<sup>5</sup> National Census 2011 categories are: Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian (Asian or Asian British), African, Caribbean, Other Black (Black or Black British), White and Black African, White and Asian, White and Black Caribbean (Mixed), British, Irish, Other White (White), Chinese, Other (Other Ethnic Group).

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
	<i>Other – please state</i>			
Language	English not first language	We will provide access to Language Line to assist our customers where English is not their first language	None identified	None identified
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks	None identified	<p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance and family premium as part of the calculation, which is consistent with the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Working parents receive a higher disregard of their earnings reflecting their childcare costs.</p> <p>The above helps to "advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not."</p>	None identified
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none) <sup>6</sup>	None identified	None identified	None identified
Sex	Men	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Women	None identified	None identified	None identified
	Transsexual / gender reassignment	None identified	None identified	None identified

<sup>6</sup> For example, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or no religious belief.

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		How does it help to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'?	How does it help to 'advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?	How does it help to 'foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not'?
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual	None identified	None identified	None identified
Marriage and Civil Partnership <sup>7</sup>	People who are single, married or in a civil partnership	None identified	not applicable	not applicable

7. Are there any concerns that the policy, service or strategy could have a differential impact in terms of equality?

- Yes

Please use the table below to indicate how the policy, service or strategy could have a positive or negative effect on any of the following equality groups (known under the Equality Act as 'protected characteristics'). Include reference to any consultation, data or information that you have used in making this assessment about positive or negative effects.

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<sup>7</sup> Our legal duty in respect of 'marriage or civil partnership' extends only to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination.

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could disadvantage the group
Age	Older people (60+)	X	This group is specifically protected under Government Regulations.		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Younger people (17-25) and children (0-16)		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified	X	17 year olds may be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more as a result of this policy.  People over 18 of working age will be required to pay more.
Disability	Physical		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified	X	People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more.
	Sensory		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified	X	People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more
	Learning		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified	X	People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more
	Mental health issues		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified	X	People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more
Ethnicity	White		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Black		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Chinese		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Mixed Ethnic Origin		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Gypsies/ Travellers		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Other – <i>please state</i>				

## APPENDIX I

'Protected characteristic' group		Positive Impact	Explain how it could benefit the group	Negative Impact	Explain how it could disadvantage the group
Language	English not first language		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
Pregnancy and Maternity	Women who are pregnant or have given birth in last 26 weeks		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
Religion or Belief	People with a religious belief (or none)		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
Sex	Men		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Women		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
	Transsexual / gender reassignment		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay and bisexual		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified
Marriage and Civil Partnership	People who are single, married or in a civil partnership		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified		No impact specific to characteristic has been identified

8. Could the policy, service or strategy unlawfully discriminate<sup>8</sup> against any 'protected characteristic', either directly or indirectly?  
Nothing has been identified to indicate unlawful discrimination.

<sup>8</sup> The Council has a general duty to 'eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation'. Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a comparable situation because of their 'protected characteristic' whether on grounds of age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, ethnicity; religion or belief; sex (gender), sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnership. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral provision or practice would nevertheless disadvantage people on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic' unless the practice can be objectively justified by a legitimate aim.

9. If you have identified any negative impacts above, have you been able to minimise or remove them, and if so, how?

**17 year olds may be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more as a result of this policy.**

Parents will continue to receive additional allowances, which is consistent with the Council's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

**People over 18 of working age will be required to pay more.**

The Council will continue to provide directly, or signpost to, information and advice on income maximisation.

**People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more.**

Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby providing additional support to those with specific long term conditions.

Additional comments:

- The policy has been specifically designed with safeguards for vulnerable people, particularly with regard to child poverty and disability. For example, parents will continue to receive additional allowances such as the earnings disregard in respect of childcare costs.
- The Council will consider additional ways in which to help and support people to pay their Council Tax. Assistance will be provided to those who have difficulty in completing the appropriate application forms and documentation in larger print will be made available for customers upon request.
- The Council will provide for an Exceptional Hardship Fund for those extreme cases where exceptional hardship is being experienced by a customer in receipt of Local Council Tax Support, and unable to meet the full cost of their Council Tax liability.

However this fund will be cash limited and all cases will be considered on a case by case basis. Prior to consideration of assistance from the Exceptional Hardship Fund, the Council will explore all possible alternative measures to assist with the shortfall, including financial referrals to other agencies, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

**Summary and findings of Equality Impact Assessment –**

10. Please indicate the relevant box to confirm your findings, and what the next step is:

Findings	Action required
No likely negative impacts have been identified and this has been justified with reference to consultation, data or information. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
Likely negative impacts have been identified but have been minimised or removed. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and finish.
Likely negative impacts were identified but have not been minimised or removed. <input type="checkbox"/>	Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.
<b>There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement.</b>	<b>Sign off screening and complete a full impact assessment – Section 2.</b>

11. Name and job title of person completing this form:

Juli Rigby

12. Date of completion:

31<sup>st</sup> October 2013

13. Date for update or review:

1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

<b>Second Quarter Performance Management Report 2013/14</b>		<b>Agenda No: 9b</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> Providing value for money and delivering excellent customer service		
<b>Portfolio Area:</b> Performance and Efficiency		
<b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr David Bebb		
<b>Report prepared by:</b> Tracey Headford –Performance Improvement Officer		
<b>Background Papers:</b> Second Quarter Performance Management Report 2013/14		<b>Public Report</b>
<b>Options:</b> To endorse the report		<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<p>The purpose of the report is to summarise the performance of the Council at the end of the second quarter (July to September 2013) in relation to the publication of 'Our plans for the District 2013/14' which sets out our key activities and measures used to check our performance for the forthcoming year and along with the Corporate Strategy 2012-16 sets out the priorities we are working towards.</p> <p><b><i>In summary at the end of the second quarter: Projects</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 35 projects in total of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 5 projects are completed</li> <li>○ 30 projects are on track</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><i>In summary at the end of the second quarter: Performance Indicators</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 14 performance indicators reported on of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 10 performance indicators have achieved target</li> <li>○ 3 performance indicator has missed target by less than 5%</li> <li>○ No performance indicators have missed target by more than 5%</li> <li>○ 1 performance indicator is for information purposes only and does not have any target set</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Progress in the second quarter has been good with five projects now complete and the remaining projects all on track and progressing well.</p> <p>Performance has improved since the first quarter, although not all performance indicators have met target, the amber performance indicators have only missed their targets by less than 1%. These indicators will be closely monitored and performance is expected to improve over the year.</p>		

## **Financial performance**

### **Key points:**

- The Council is forecasting an overall underspend for the year of £60,000 (<1%) against the budget of £15.841 million. This is an improvement of £257,000 over the position reported at the first quarter mainly due to earlier achievement of savings and an overall improvement in expected external income.
- The budget variance includes a projected under-achievement of income of £56,000 (£198,000 at Q1). Higher income is expected from Land Charges whilst the Town Hall Centre is now predicted to be on track towards achieving the budget for income. A shortfall against budget is still being predicted for Development Control and Building Control, however, in both cases the position has improved from that reported at Q1.
- Whilst salary budgets are predicted to be underspent by £152,000 (up by £49,000 from Q1), this represents a shortfall of £235,000 against the corporate efficiency target of £387,000. Projections are based on staffing changes known at the time of the review and may change further depending on staff changes effective in the second half of the year.
- Services are currently forecast to underspend against their non-staffing expenditure budgets by £352,000. The main reasons include a one-off back-dated refund of business rates of £107,000 for Causeway House; a net budget saving on the cost of discretionary business rate relief (£48,000); underspends of £45,000 across Community Services as spending priorities for this service area are reassessed; and lower external transport costs for Waste Management (£52,000) due to changes in service arrangements for green waste.

For a detailed explanation of the financial performance, please refer to page 15 onwards of the full report.

### **Decision:**

To note and endorse the report

### **Purpose of Decision:**

To inform the Cabinet of the performance of the Council

### **Corporate Implications**

<b>Financial:</b>	See page 16 of the report
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<b>Legal:</b>	N/A
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<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	N/A
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<b>Customer Impact:</b>	N/A
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<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	N/A
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<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	N/A
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<b>Risks:</b>	N/A
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<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Tracey Headford
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<b>Designation:</b>	Performance Improvement Officer
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# SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1ST JULY 2013 TO  
30TH SEPTEMBER 2013



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## Section 1: Introduction and Summary

### Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the performance of the Council at the end of the second quarter (July to September) in relation to the publication of 'Our plans for the District 2013/14'. This sets out the key activities and measures used to check our performance for the year and along with the Corporate Strategy 2012-16 sets out the priorities we are working towards. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and health and safety.

This report does not contain details of the numerous activities ongoing in each service area that also contribute to delivering what is important and will make a difference to all in the District. Full details of all projects and local and national indicators used to measure the outcomes are available upon request.

### Summary of the Corporate Projects current position for the end of the second quarter

The following table provides updates for the end of the second quarter in relation to the key activities in 'Our plans for the District 2013/14'

Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Place	1	7	0	0	0
People	2	8	0	0	0
Prosperity	2	10	0	0	0
Performance	0	5	0	0	0
Partnership <i>(to be reported on at the end of the year)</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

#### KEY:

-  Project completed
-  Project on target
-  Project scope/target date requires attention
-  Project requires amendment
-  Project aborted/closed

### **Summary of the Performance Indicators position for the end of the second quarter**

The following table shows the performance for the end of the second quarter in relation to the quarterly and annually reported Performance Indicators that have targets set as defined in 'Our plans for the District 2013/14'.

<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	<b>Status of indicators</b>			
				Data Only
Place	2	1	-	-
People	-	1	-	1
Prosperity	2	-	-	-
Performance	6	1	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

#### **KEY:**

-  Performance Indicator has achieved target
-  Performance Indicator is up to 5% below target
-  Performance Indicator is 5% or more off target

### **Summary Position**

Progress in the second quarter has been good with five projects now complete and the remaining projects all on track and progressing well.

Performance has improved since the first quarter, although not all performance indicators have met target, the amber performance indicators have only missed their targets by less than 1%. These indicators will be closely monitored and performance is expected to improve over the year.



## Our Priorities

- Keep our district clean and tidy
- Protecting our environment
- Provide green space for everyone to enjoy

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<b>Continue a seven day cleaning programme in the town centres, including the use of barrow beats to litter pick, street washing and mechanical sweeping</b>		
Work is on-going in all town centres to maintain a high standard of cleanliness and keep levels of litter to a minimum	March 2014	
<b>Enforce non-compliant premises which fail to keep their frontage clean</b>		
Following the success of the station campaign which saw a 45% reduction in dropped cigarette butts, the Council is now working with local businesses to tackle the problem of cigarette butts and other smoking related litter in the town centres. Campaign successfully delivered.	July 2013	
<b>Continue to encourage the 'See-it, Report-it' initiative to take action against litter bugs</b>		
In the second quarter there have been 746 see it report it calls. There are a number of campaigns to encourage residents to see it report it and the 'pain in the butt' campaign went live in July to tackle the problem of cigarette butts and other smoking related litter in the town centres	March 2014	
<b>Work with Essex Energy partnership and contractors to develop a Green Deal Scheme, supporting homeowners to reduce the energy they use</b>		
Cabinet approved joining the Kent County Council framework and contract with the ECO service provider which will enable the Council to work with an ECO partner to promote and provide energy saving measures for residents this winter. Work continues with the Essex Energy Partnership to create an Essex Framework.	March 2015	
<b>Support our customers to increase recycling levels in the District to 60%, getting the best value out of our services</b>		
Doorsteppers are targeting areas where recycling rates and participation in recycling are low. They have been to Braintree, Black Notley, Kelvedon and Feering and will be going out to Witham in October.	March 2014	
<b>Double the number of trade waste customers who receive a plastic, cardboard and paper recycling service</b>		
To date, 80 customers have signed up to the new service. Officers have been marketing the service to all existing and potential customers to increase the number of customers taking part in the scheme.	March 2014	
<b>Plant more mature trees in our parks and open spaces to improve their appearance and attractiveness, provide shading around play areas and help to conserve and protect the environment within our District</b>		
Weavers Park, Bramble Road Play Area and Bradford Meadows are the sites identified for planting more mature trees to approve their appearance and attractiveness. This is currently out to tender and the planting will take place once the contact has been awarded.	March 2014	

<b>Complete works and establish Hoppit Mead as a local nature reserve</b>		
Cabinet need to agree the formal adoption of the site as a local nature reserve. This will take place in December and the end date of the project has been extended accordingly.	<b>December 2013</b>	

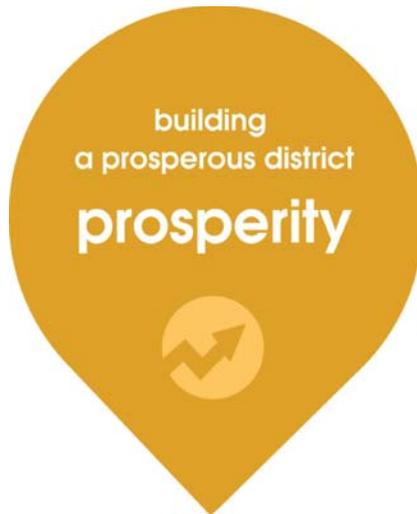


### Our Priorities

- Support vulnerable people in our community
- Promote safe and healthy living
- Encourage flourishing communities

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<b>Design and build of Witham Leisure Centre</b>		
Construction of the Witham Leisure centre continues and is currently on track	<b>August 2014</b>	
<b>Working in partnership with Fusion Lifestyle provide investment to improve the facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre, Braintree Leisure Centre and Braintree Swimming Centre</b>		
Works are currently underway at Halstead Leisure Centre and are due to be completed after Christmas.	<b>January 2014</b>	
Works have now been completed at Braintree Leisure Centre with a new gym, studios and changing rooms providing up to date facilities which is attracting new customers and increasing participation.	<b>August 2013</b>	
The Planning permission for Braintree Swimming Centre has now been approved and a detailed project plan is being drawn up to deliver the improvements by Spring next year.	<b>March 2014</b>	
<b>Establish a Health and Wellbeing Panel working with others to identify priorities and take action to improve the health outcomes for all residents</b>		
A Health and Wellbeing Panel has being established. The first meeting took place in July with organisations around the table who are able to tackle the public health priorities for the district.	<b>December 2013</b>	
<b>Progress the Witham Neighbourhood Budget Pilot by working with partner agencies and the Witham community to raise young people's level of attainment and aspiration through new initiatives and improved ways of working</b>		
The Witham Neighbourhood Budget was renamed as "Our Witham" in line with the government's rebranding of Community Budgets (Our Place!), with a prospectus developed to outline the aims of the partnership to members of the public and stakeholders. The Our Witham Steering Group agreed four key projects to be developed focusing on health, employment and environment. The Our Witham Community Hub opened in the Newlands Shopping Centre to coincide with the Witham Puppet Festival and was visit by approximately 500 residents on the 21st September.	<b>March 2015</b>	

<b>Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Essex County Council and other partners to pilot new ways to tackle domestic abuse across the District.</b>		
The pilot to tackle domestic abuse went live in August. At the end of the second quarter, the pilot has engaged with a total of 31 victims in the Braintree district. Victims have been referred to a range of services and support has been provided for housing moves.	March 2014	▶
<b>Build stronger communities through the implementation of the localism programme</b>		
There have been 3 nominations to the list of assets of community value during the second quarter. 47% of councillors have taken part in the member development scheme looking at their experiences, skills, behaviours and development requirements. 67 staff members also took part in a survey on how they volunteer in the local community.	March 2015	▶
<b>Refurbish the play areas at Templars in Witham and Panners Bridge in Gt Notley</b>		
Works have started to refurbish the two play areas and are due to be completed in October 2013.	February 2014	▶
<b>Create a sustainable partnership with Braintree District Museum Trust Ltd to preserve, interpret and promote the unique archive and Museum collections and the Districts heritage for the public benefit</b>		
Discussions continue between the Council and Museum Trust on the future developments and to develop the Trust's business plan.	March 2014	▶



## Our Priorities

- Boost employment skills and support business
- Promote and improving our town centres
- Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<b>Reduce congestion and improve access to Braintree town centre through improvements to the South Street/Fairfield Road junction</b>		
The demolition contractors were appointed in August and an asbestos survey has been completed. Once the buildings have been demolished, detailed designs will be prepared.	May 2014	▶
<b>Support the Town Teams to improve our town centres in Braintree, Halstead and Witham</b>		
Strategies for Witham and Halstead are being developed with external consultants and preparations are underway for a market review which will take place later in the year. A traffic impact assessment has been completed in Braintree looking at the infrastructure around the town centre which will underpin the strategy for the Braintree town centre and future projects to ensure the current infrastructure is adequate to support proposed developments. Preparations have also taken place in September for a one off health and wellbeing pop up market in Braintree in October	March 2014	▶

Backing our Town strategies for Witham and Halstead are being developed with external consultants and preparations are underway for a market review which will take place later in the year.	March 2014	
<b>Start on the expansion of the IGNITE Enterprise Centre at Springwood Drive, Braintree to provide twelve new start up units</b>		
Planning Permission has been secured. Tenders will be let in October/November for a start on site in February/March 2014.	March 2014	
<b>Encourage new businesses into the district and support our local businesses by reviewing our business rate discount scheme</b>		
Cabinet have approved the use of a discretionary business rate discount scheme for a twelve month period which will be made available to businesses on a case by case basis against certain criteria.	March 2014	
<b>Work with IGNITE to create 50 new businesses and deliver new jobs into the District</b>		
IGNITE continue to provide advice and assistance to potential new businesses. A business showcase successfully took place in July with key note speeches from high profile business people, seminars, networking opportunities and a chance for local businesses to exhibit and promote their business at low cost.	March 2014	
<b>Generate opportunities for young people in the District not in education, employment or training through the creation and development of apprentice and pre-apprenticeship schemes</b>		
Green Team - The first NEET training programme (Green Team) for 10 young people has proven to be very successful in Braintree and a further Green Team will be launched in the Witham area in October giving participants the chance to learn as they work on landscaping projects.	January 2014	
Retail Apprentices - Employment of two retail apprentices is now underway and leaflets advising employers about the scheme have been distributed to retail businesses in the town. Interest in the scheme has been minimal and the majority of businesses that have showed interest are not eligible for funding under the terms of the scheme. It has therefore been agreed to extend the terms of the scheme to include Customer Service and Hospitality qualifications and extend it to larger businesses in the town. Seetec continue to meet with businesses that have expressed an interest in the scheme.	March 2014	
<b>Work in partnership with Housing Associations to begin construction on 58 new homes and work with homeowners to bring empty homes back into use across the District</b>		
To date, 61 affordable homes have been provided	July 2014	
At the end of the second quarter, a total of 48 empty homes have been returned to use and four properties are currently being considered by Colne Housing under the empty homes rescue scheme	March 2014	
<b>Develop a long term strategy to support economic growth and prosperity across the District</b>		
The consultation for the Economic Development Prospectus has now closed and the final version is to be approved by the Cabinet Member for prosperity under delegated authority from Cabinet. The Prospectus will form the basis of a delivery plan and investment prospectus across the district.	October 2013	
<b>Adopt District Site Allocations to enable future development which will meet district needs and support growth</b>		
The site allocations and development management plan has been agreed by full Council in September following a number of minor amendments. This is now being prepared for the next round of public consultation due to take place in November.	April 2014	



## Our Priorities

- Provide value for money
- Deliver excellent customer service
- Improving our services through innovation

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<b>Continue to review how we deliver and commission services, focussing our resources on what is important to us</b>		
Business efficiency reviews are on-going in a number of departments to ensure services are fit for purpose and provide value for money.	March 2015	
<b>Use a range of new technology to improve the way we deliver services and make our services easier to access for our customers</b>		
Work is continuing to ensure more transactional services are available to our customers via mobile devices and we continue to ensure content on the Councils website is focused around the customer. Our web-based mapping system (Localview Fusion) has been upgraded and is being used in more places across the website to enable customer's better access to map based information. E.g. Car Parks.	March 2015	
<b>Achieve the Customer Service Excellence Standard for all front line services</b>		
Services continue to work through the criteria required and provide evidence to support their application. Environmental will have their full assessment in October with Finance and Sustainable Development pre-assessments taking place in November.	March 2014	
<b>Maintain high levels of customer satisfaction, seeking feedback from our customers to identify where we can improve</b>		
Continuing to scope out a project to review the customer service standards	March 2014	
The website feedback module went live in July and is currently being monitored. Not a huge amount of feedback has been received but action is taken whenever possible and a number of simple changes have been made in response to feedback	November 2013	

## Section 3: Managing the Business

### Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2013/14						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
<b>Place</b>							
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a	5%			8%		Recorded 3 times a year – July, November and March
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	58.42%	59.19%			60%		Although performance has improved, the hotter weather in the summer saw a reduction in garden waste. This indicator will continue to be closely monitored.
Percentage of fly tips cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100%	100%			100%		A total of 189 fly-tips have been cleared within 24 hours of being reported
Public Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	Annually reported indicator				n/a	n/a	
<b>People</b>							
Number of visitors to our leisure facilities from under-represented groups	156,303	146,550			Establish Baseline	n/a	No target set as currently establishing baseline figures with Fusion.
Number of passenger journeys on the Community Transport Scheme	15,497	14,599			14,649		Age Concern are no longer hiring the community services bus and Carousel have reduced the number of buses they hire. Fewer people are using the rural shopper buses despite continuous promotion from ECC, BDC and the Village Agents. This performance indicator is being closely monitored.
Percentage of Mi Community projects successfully completed	Annually reported indicator				n/a	n/a	
<b>Prosperity</b>							
Number of empty homes in the district returned to use	30	18			14		
Number of affordable homes delivered	55	6			6		
Number of young people assisted into education, employment or training through council and partnership schemes	Annually reported indicator				n/a	n/a	
Percentage of empty shops in the district	Annually reported indicator				n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups in the district	Annually reported Indicator				n/a	n/a	

Performance Indicator	2013/14						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
<b>Performance</b>							
Percentage of enquiries resolved at first point of contact within the Customer Service Centre	87%	86%			85%		Represents 16754 out of 19460 calls resolved at first point of contact
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	19.19 days	17.01 days			18 days		
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	7.23 days	6.42 days			6 days		
Percentage of minor planning applications processed within 8 weeks	69.47%	78.16%			72%		
Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within target	88.9%	93.3%			90%		Represents 97 out of 104 stage 1 complaints dealt with in 7 working days.
Overall customer satisfaction with the way Braintree District Council runs things	Annually reported Indicator				89%	n/a	
Percentage of residents who agree that Braintree District Council provides value for money	Annually reported Indicator				67%	n/a	
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.60%	59.36%			59.37%		Target has only been missed by 0.01%
Collection rate for business rates	32.60%	60.81%			60.76%		

## Customer Services & Views

The following is a selection of our customer service performance measures:

Customer Service: Indicators of Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target
	Average telephone response time in the Customer Service Centre	9 seconds	11 seconds		
Number of transactions carried out via the Council website	27,178	25,334			21,250
Percentage of avoidable contacts (collected in Q3 and Q4)	n/a	n/a			Data only

## **Complaints**

The quarterly complaints analysis for the first quarter of 2013/14 is detailed below. This is compared with 2012/13 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

<b>Complaint Category</b>	<b>Q1 2013/14</b>	<b>Q2 2013/14</b>	<b>Q3 2013/14</b>	<b>Q4 2013/14</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Justified	45 (89)	44 (84)	(115)	(60)	(348)
Not Justified	58 (106)	60 (100)	(100)	(86)	(392)
Partially Justified	11 (13)	7 (27)	(10)	(7)	(57)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>114 (208)</b>	<b>111 (211)</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>(153)</b>	<b>(797)</b>

## ***Comments***

The number of complaints received in the second quarter of 2013/14 is once again lower than the number of complaints received in the same period in 2012/13.

The majority of complaints are still regarding missed waste collections, however, numbers are reducing which is a trend being seen across all service areas within the Authority.

In the second quarter of 2013/14, of the 111 complaints received:

- 104 are stage one complaints
- 6 are stage two complaints
- 1 is a stage three complaints

## **A summary of Local Government Ombudsman cases:**

In the second quarter of 2013/14 the LGO have received four complaints and there are three matters from the previous period which are still awaiting decisions. Of the four matters received:

- 1 complaint is currently under investigation
- 1 complaint has been fully investigated and the LGO are satisfied with the actions of the Authority
- 2 complaints the LGO have refused to investigate. One is outside the jurisdiction and for the other complaint, the LGO do not consider the injustice suffered by the complainant is sufficient to warrant the public expense of an investigation by the Ombudsman

## Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 12/13	Q2 12/13	Q3 12/13	Q4 12/13	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	470	473			+ 3	-
Total number of posts	479	483			+ 4	-
Number of temporary staff	47	46			-1	-
Total staff FTE	429.49	430.47			-0.98	-
Level of employee turnover	3.4%	2.5%			-0.9%	-
Number of vacant posts	20	17			-3	-
Number of leavers	16	15			-1	-
Number of starters	20	12			-8	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.35 days	1.39 days			+0.04 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	70%	80%			+10%	-
Number of learning days	844.50	887.50			+43	-
Average learning days per employee	1.97	1.88			-0.09	≥3.5 days
Number of apprentices	11	11			0	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
	586	567	541	503	485	466

## Health & Safety

The following is a selection of our health and safety performance measures. The data is for information purposes only.

Health and safety is a crucial responsibility of everyone within the organisation. This information is used to improve the management of health and safety and making the workplace safer for staff and our customers.

Health & Safety: Indicators of Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	(2011/12 figure in brackets)				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	14 (21)	14 (17)	(8)	(12)	"Hit by a moving object" was the main cause of accidents to employees this quarter. Two members of staff were hit by the large glass fronted door of a noticeboard in Braintree High Street during high winds whilst posting information on the board
<i>a. Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	9 (17)	10 (13)	(7)	(9)	
<i>b. Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	2 (2)	2 (1)	(0)	(3)	
<i>c. Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	3 (2)	2 (3)	(1)	(0)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	23 (39)	8 (7)	(4)	(6)	
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	2 (1)	1 (3)	(0)	(0)	
Number of near miss incidents	2 (1)	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	0 (3)	1 (2)	(2)	(1)	
Number of claims settled	0 (0)	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	

## Financial Performance

This part of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the financial year 2013/14. It examines the forecast spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget for the year. Also included is a summary position for treasury management at the end of September; projected movements on General Fund balances and earmarked reserves; and a summary of spending to date on capital investment projects.

### Second Quarter Financial Position Statement for 2013/14

#### Key Points:

- The Council is forecasting an overall underspend for the year of £60,000 (<1%) against the budget of £15.841 million. This is an improvement of £257,000 over the position reported at the first quarter (Q1) mainly due to earlier achievement of savings required to address future budget pressures, and an overall improvement in expected external income.
- The budget variance comprises a projected under achievement of income of £56,000 (£198,000 at Q1), offset by a net underspend against staff and other expenditure budgets of £116,000 (£1,000 at Q1).
- Based on known staffing changes to date and their financial impact on the year, a shortfall against the efficiency target is currently projected of £235,000 (this is included in the above overall underspend). This is an improvement on Q1 by £49,000 and may change further depending on staffing changes effective in the second half of the year.

### Financial Forecast of Revenue Spending by Services

Business Plan Service	Budget £'000	Forecast Spend £'000	Adverse (positive) variance against budget				RAG Status
			Staffing £'000	Other Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000	Total £'000	
Asset Management	(1,410)	(1,448)	(2)	7	(43)	(38)	-3%
Business Solutions	1,961	1,839	(5)	(117)	-	(122)	-6%
Community Services	523	449	(16)	(46)	(12)	(74)	-14%
Corporate Management Plan	1,231	1,212	(6)	(13)	-	(19)	-2%
Cultural Services	257	276	6	10	3	19	7%
Environment	981	987	(24)	(22)	52	6	1%
Finance	1,572	1,422	(75)	(72)	(3)	(150)	-10%
Governance	1,345	1,308	(6)	(6)	(25)	(37)	-3%
Housing Services	871	815	(12)	(34)	(10)	(56)	-6%
Human Resources	290	278	(14)	2	-	(12)	-4%
Leisure Services	904	904	-	-	-	-	-
Operations	4,026	4,081	8	(62)	109	55	1%
Sustainable Development	1,358	1,372	(6)	(4)	24	14	1%
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>13,909</b>	<b>13,495</b>	<b>(152)</b>	<b>(357)</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>(414)</b>	<b>-3%</b>
Corporate Financing	2,319	2,286	-	6	(39)	(33)	-1%
Efficiency target	(387)	-	387	-	-	387	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,841</b>	<b>15,781</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>(351)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>(60)</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

RAG Status: G = favourable or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = > 5%

## Commentary

### Staffing

Across service business plans there are projected salary underspends of £152,000. The corporate efficiency target was set at £387,000 for the year which includes £296,820 that would normally be met through staff turnover and a further £90,260 targeted at savings generated from service reviews. At this quarter's review there is a projected shortfall against meeting the target from salaries for the year of £235,000, based on known staffing changes to date.

Business Plan – Salary Budgets	Budget	Forecast	Adverse/	RAG
	£'000	Spend for the year £'000	(positive) variance £'000	Status
Asset Management	262	260	(2)	-1%
Business Solutions	827	822	(5)	-1%
Community Services	450	434	(16)	-4%
Corporate Management Plan	1,112	1,106	(6)	-1%
Cultural Services	248	254	6	2%
Environment	1,565	1,541	(24)	-2%
Finance	2,313	2,238	(75)	-3%
Governance	601	595	(6)	-1%
Housing Services	639	627	(12)	-2%
Human Resources	254	240	(14)	-6%
Leisure Services	55	55	-	-
Operations	4,441	4,449	8	1%
Sustainable Development	1,531	1,525	(6)	-1%
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>14,298</b>	<b>14,146</b>	<b>(152)</b>	<b>-1%</b>
Efficiency target	(387)		387	
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>13,911</b>	<b>14,146</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>

RAG Status: G = favourable or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance, R = > 5%

The main issues are:

- Savings on staff costs have occurred due to delaying filling vacant posts, appointments being made at lower salary grade points, and some reductions in working hours. In addition, some changes have been made in anticipation of the need to achieve future budget savings.
- The shortfall against efficiency target has reduced by £49,000 from that reported at the Q1.
- Within Operations reduced staffing costs in horticultural services from vacancies are offset by higher costs incurred in waste management from employing agency staff to cover for long-term sickness. In street cleansing services work has been re-allocated to direct staff instead of using sub-contractors (the reduced spend on sub-contractors is shown as a positive variance of £10,000 against the budget for Other Service Expenditure).
- The forecast shortfall against the efficiency target was £147,000 at the same quarter last year, with a final year end outturn under achievement of £139,000 being reported.

### Other Service Expenditure

Services are currently forecast to underspend against their non-staffing expenditure budgets by £352,000 – an increase in underspend from that reported at Q1 by £65,000. The main issues are:

- **Waste Management** – The main reason for the projected underspend is due to savings on external transport costs (£52,000) which is the result of green waste being delivered direct from collection routes to the material recycling facility. There is also a budgeted surplus on the food waste service of £36,000 which offsets costs incurred in previous years – this surplus is lower than originally anticipated due to the cessation of tipping away payments by Essex County Council.
- **Discretionary Business Rate Relief** – In previous years a proportion of the cost of granting discretionary business rate relief was borne by the Council rather than the national business rate pool and charged to relevant services. This cost has now been absorbed into the business rate retention scheme and is therefore reflected in the overall financing arrangements for the Council's budget. Consequently, budgets totalling £144,000 held under services are no longer required. However, a new scheme of relief for business ratepayers has been approved for which £100,000 is to be set-

aside for its first year of operation. This amount has therefore been deducted from the budget savings leaving a net positive variance in the current year of £44,000.

- **Community Services** – across this service area there is a projected underspend of £45,000, which includes budgets where on-going savings have been recognised and budgets provided for previous community-based initiatives. The service is currently undergoing a review, reappraising its strategic and service priorities which will determine the future need and allocation of resources.
- **Council Offices** – An appeal against the 2010 Rating List has resulted in a reduction in rateable value from 520,000 to 435,000 for Causeway House. The reduction is backdated to April 2010, generating a one-off refund in the year of £107,000 with annual an on-going saving of £27,000 (subject to future revaluations and inflation).
- **Planning Policy** – A budget provision of £100,000 (£40,000 funded from earmarked reserve) was agreed for preparation work for the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy enabling the Council to make a charge on proposed developments. Service management has indicated that the spend on this project will now be incurred in the next financial year and therefore the funding is to be carried over. As carry forward requested no variance is shown in this statement.
- **Corporate Overheads** – Recent years has seen a significant reduction in the level of fees set by the Audit Commission. For 2013/14 a further reduction of £17,000 is expected against the amount provided in the budget to align with the scale fees confirmed by the Council's external auditor. A saving of £8,500 (£17,000 in a full year) is expected from renewal of insurance premia, and bank charges are expected to be £6,000 lower per annum than previously was assumed after changing arrangements for collecting income previously received in cash.
- **Housing service** – the Council operates a rent in advance scheme funded by a core budget allocation topped up with recycled loan repayments to help those potentially at risk of homelessness. As the service is demand-led it is difficult to be precise about the drawdown on financial resources, however, it is predicted that there could be a £15,000 underspend. The budget also made provision for a total sum of £150,000 to be spent in 2013/14 and 2014/15 to support residents from the impact of the welfare reforms. Current indications are that funds will not be required this year, however, the service manager has requested these be retained for possible future need and therefore no projected variance is shown.

## External Income

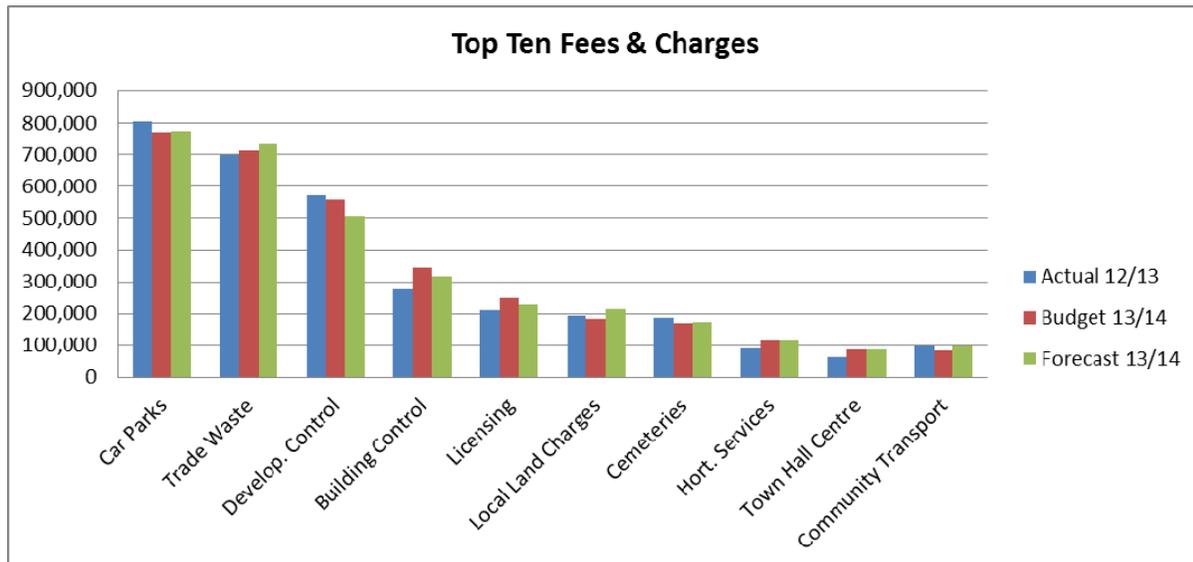
A significant proportion of the Council's budget is reliant on external income. Grants and subsidies from government are a major element, with a total of £52.339 million budgeted for 2013/14. The main elements of government support relate to: housing benefit of £41.959 million, which largely matches the actual cost of benefits paid, Revenue Support Grant (£3.433 million) and Business Rates retained (£3.046 million). The amount of Business Rates retained will vary depending on the business rates collected, the amount of discounts and exemptions granted and the outcome of appeals, against rateable value, made by the Valuation Office. The remaining grants are fairly stable and are unlikely to fluctuate from budget. However, non-government grant income comes from a variety of sources that are subject to external demands and influences, meaning these income sources are more likely to experience variations against budget. It is currently forecast that services will underachieve against their income budgets by £56,000, as shown in the table below:

External Income excluding Government Grants	Budget  £'000	Adverse (positive) variance against budget						RAG Status	
		Fees & Charges	Land & Property income	ECC Joint Financing & contributions	Sale of Recycling Materials	Other Income	Total		
		£'000	£'000	£000	£'000	£'000	£000		
Asset Management	(2,092)	(18)	(23)	-	-	(2)	(43)	2%	
Business Solutions	(11)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Community Services	(231)	(13)	-	-	-	1	(12)	5%	
Corporate Management Plan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Cultural Services	(95)	-	-	-	-	3	3	-3%	
Environment	(803)	46	-	-	-	6	52	-6%	
Finance	(1,284)	0	-	-	-	(3)	(3)	1%	
Governance	(4)	(17)	-	-	-	(8)	(25)	625%	
Housing Services	(93)	(1)	(10)	-	-	1	(10)	11%	
Human Resources	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Leisure Services	(267)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Operations	(5,202)	(28)	(3)	133	(11)	18	109	-2%	
Sustainable Development	(916)	22	0	0	0	2	24	-3%	
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>(10,998)</b>	<b>(9)</b>	<b>(36)</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>-1%</b>	
Corporate Financing	(250)	-	-	-	-	(39)	(39)	16%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>(11,248)</b>	<b>(9)</b>	<b>(36)</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>(21)</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>&lt;-1%</b>	

RAG Status: G = favourable or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = > 5% (or >£50k at Business Plan level)

## Fees & Charges

The budget for income from fees & charges is £3.840 million, and is projected to be over achieved by £9,000. The following chart shows the top-ten income streams by budgeted amount:

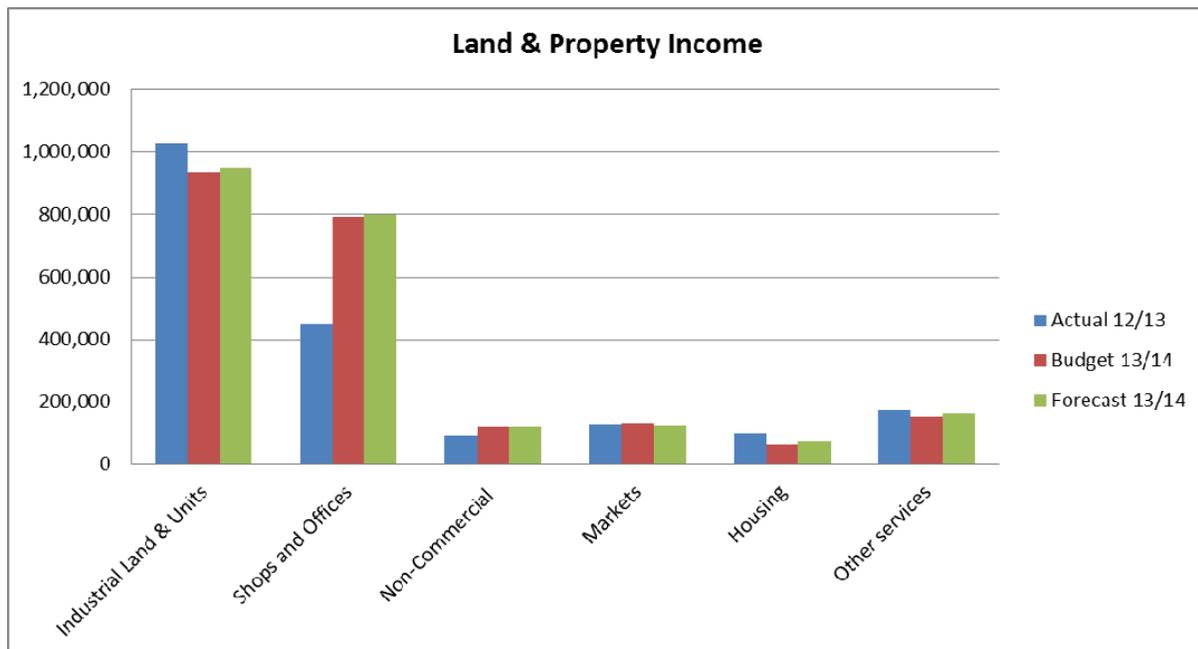


### Forecast highlights:

- Additional income of £64,000 is predicted from trade waste, local land charges and community transport.
- Development control shows a central case forecast shortfall of £52,000 for the year, within a range of -£33,000 and -£76,000. The downturn is attributable to changes to planning regulations which means that there is currently no requirement for planning decisions on certain categories of development.
- Building Control continues to experience improvement in income compared to last year. The predicted total for the year is now £317,000, which although lower than budget by £28,000, is an increase from the previous year outturn by £42,000.
- Town Hall Centre income is now predicted to be in line with budget following commitments obtained to long-term lettings. This is an improvement on the last quarter of £24,000.
- Licensing income is predicted to be under budget by £18,000, which is after allowing for increased income under new laws covering licensing of Scrap Metal Dealers.

## Land & Property Income

The budget for income from land & property is £2.198 million – comprising the investment property portfolio, markets, housing properties, and other let properties. The forecast for the year is an overall over achievement of £36,000.

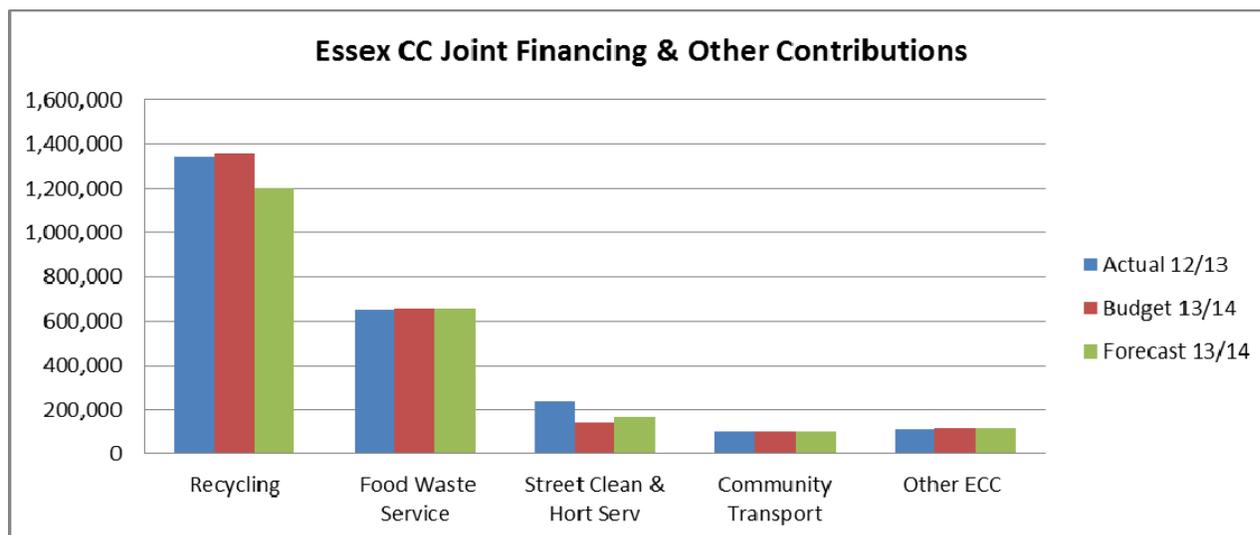


### Forecast highlights:

- Previous year actuals for Industrial Land & Units includes one-off income arising from backdated rent reviews.
- The planned increase in income from Shops and Offices relates mainly to the letting of Mayland House (the annual income budget for this property is £488,000).
- Overall income from the commercial property portfolio is predicted to be £23,000 more than budget.
- Market rents are predicted to be under budget by £6,000.
- An overachievement of income on housing dwellings is predicted of £8,000.
- Other service rents are predicted to be higher than budget by £11,000.

## ECC Joint Financing & Contributions

The Council receives a significant amount of income from service arrangements with Essex County Council (ECC). The total budget for the year is £2.378 million. The current forecast for the year is an under-achievement of £133,000.



### Forecast highlights:

- Income under recycling activities is projected to be under budget by £149,000, of which £104,000 relates to an agreed refund of previous year tipping away payments paid by ECC in error. The remaining shortfall is due to lower material tonnages which attract recycling credits.
- Additional unbudgeted net income of £26,000 is expected from rural highway verge cutting.

### Sale of Recycling Materials

The budget for income from the sale of recycling materials is £617,000 and is projected to be over achieved by £11,000. The main reasons for this variance is an increase in the price per tonne received for glass – up from £23.20 to an average of £32 contributing an estimated extra amount of income of £27,000; however, this is partially offset by a reduction in the estimated tonnage sold for mixed dry materials resulting in £15,000 less anticipated income.

### Other Service income

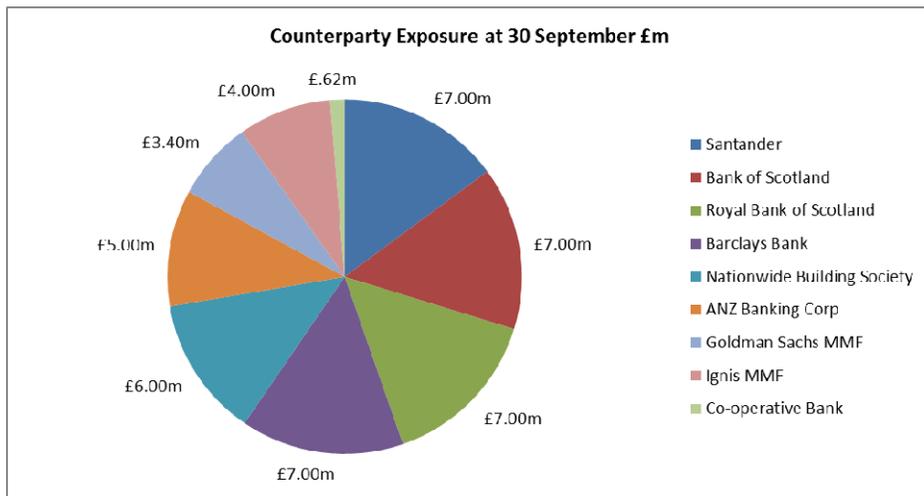
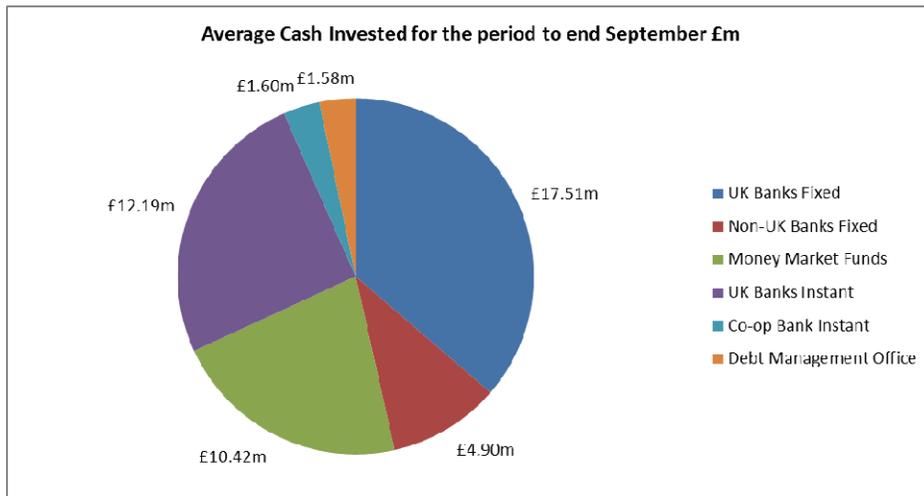
Total budgeted other service income is £2.215 million, with a current forecast of a net overall over achievement of £21,000. The main income streams within this category, includes: £661,000 of benefit and local tax recoveries and penalties, £426,000 relating to the Procurement Hub, £245,000 from the major precepting authorities under an agreement to share the benefit of changes in council tax discounts; and a further £121,000 from service level agreements with Greenfields Community Housing.

## Treasury Management

The average cash balance invested in the period to the end of September amounted to £48 million, ranging between £33.65 million and £54.35 million. Interest secured to date amounts to £185,000, equating to a return of 0.64% compared to that assumed in the budget of 0.70%. For comparison purposes the average 3-month London Interbank Bid Rate (LIBID) averaged 0.44% for the year to date, reflecting the prolonged period of low interest rates. Total interest projected for the year is £252,000 compared to a budget of £220,000, an increase of £32,000. This results from a combination of higher estimated cash balances partially offset by the lower investment returns being achieved.

At the end of September the Council had £47.02 million invested.

Investment counterparties for the period and exposure at end of September is shown in the following charts:



## General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

- As a contingency against unforeseen events that may require funding above that originally provided for in the approved budget

- To meet short-term or non-recurrent one-off costs that are not provided in the base budget and/ or are incurred to achieve future savings and efficiencies.

Based on the forecast set out above, the movement on the General Fund balance is projected as follows:

	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Balance at 1 April 2013</b>	<b>7,704</b>
Less:	
Approved budgeted withdrawal	(353)
Add:	
Projected variance at this quarter	60
<b>Est. Balance at 31 March 2014</b>	<b>7,411</b>

Movements shown on the General Fund balance are in respect of:

- The budget approved by Council for 2013/14 included an anticipated drawdown from balances of £352,519.
- Projected full-year variance as per this quarter's review of £60,000

### Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked reserves reflect funding set aside for a specific purpose and must be utilised in accordance with this purpose. The following table sets out the latest plans for movement on reserves in the current year:

<b>Category of Earmarked Reserve</b>	<b>Balance at 1 April 2013 £'000</b>	<b>Estimated Movement £'000</b>	<b>Est. Balance at 31 March 2014</b>
Capital Investment	3,170	987	4,157
New Homes Bonus (Year 3 allocation)	-	606	606
Risk Management	301	31	332
Service Reserves	2,930	(241)	2,689
Change Management	375	(87)	288
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,776</b>	<b>1,296</b>	<b>8,072</b>

### **Commentary on estimated movement on earmarked reserves:**

**Capital Investment reserves** show an increase mainly due to the addition of New Homes Bonus (Year 1 and 2 allocations) which the Council has agreed would be earmarked for future investment in affordable housing and infrastructure projects. Allocations from these reserves are subject to progress of spend against the Council's capital programme and decisions taken on financing the spend.

**New Homes Bonus (Year 3 allocation)** is currently being held in reserve pending decisions around its future use.

**Risk Management reserves** includes £72,000 added to the treasury management reserve - £40,000 in line with the interest equalisation strategy adopted in the four-year Medium Term Financial Strategy, and £32,000 over achieved interest projected for the current year. An allocation of £24,000 is planned from the insurance reserve to meet the cost of security improvements at the Lakes Road depot.

**Service Reserves** have a projected net movement of -£241,000, which is less than the originally budgeted by £46,000. Main changes from that originally planned include the addition to reserves of government grants received for welfare support, localisation of council tax support, and community rights where there are no immediate plans for their use; balances to be held in reserve as requested by service management for Housing (welfare reform) and Development Service (Community Infrastructure Levy); and an anticipated drawdown of £90,000 by the Operations service against monies set aside in 2012/13 for redesign of waste management services and to extend the door stepping campaign to promote recycling.

**Change Management reserves** are projected to reduce by £87,000, which is in line with the movement reflected in the original budget. Spending met from these reserves is incurred to achieve corporate improvements and/ or to realise on-going staffing savings.

### **Risks and Assumptions to the Forecasts**

The forecasts reflect the service managers' "best estimate" of the predicted outturn for the year. Previous year outturn and trends in-year have been considered, however, as always, these are subject to changing circumstances and unforeseen events. Directors and service managers continue to scrutinise all expenditure commitments in light of the planned savings set out in the medium term financial strategy.

Non-government grant income is inherently difficult to predict as it is substantially demand led and impacted by external factors.

No variance has been predicted on the Leisure Service as the budget for this service includes an allowance for contract variations which is currently considered sufficient to meet any variation.

### **Capital Investment**

The total capital investment expected in the year is as follows:

<b>Approved New Programme for 2013/14</b>	<b>£'000s</b> <b>3,641</b>
<b><u>Add:</u></b>	
Projects approved previously where spending is profiled into the current year	12,082
Projects approved in-year	13
<b>Programme for 2013/14</b>	<b>15,736</b>

The capital investment programme is reported over two themes:

- General Fund Services – Spending on Council owned assets and services.
- Housing investment – mainly spent on partnership schemes with social landlords, and providing disabled facilities grants and home improvements grants.

The current spend against the programme for the year is shown below:

	Programme 2013/14	Actual spend	Grants approved but not yet claimed	Budget Remaining	Spend/ Grants approved at end of Quarter
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
General Fund Services	12,863	3,461	-	9,402	27%
Housing Investment	2,446	507	132	1,807	26%
Capital Salaries	427	214	-	213	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,736</b>	<b>4,182</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>11,422</b>	<b>27%</b>

General Fund Services programme includes the main construction phase for the new Witham Leisure Centre (£7.5 million out of a total project budget of £9 million) which is due to be completed in August 2014, plus over £1 million of improvement works to other leisure facilities. A total of £358,000 is also planned for open space and play area improvements.

Planned housing investment includes £914,000 set aside for disabled facility (DFG) and other home improvement grants against which £312,000 has been paid up to end of September. A further £1.5 million is provided to support the building of affordable homes in partnership with housing associations.

Actual spend on capital projects during the second quarter amounted to £2.836 million compared to that in the first quarter of £1.346 million.

### Capital resources

The main source of new capital resources anticipated for the year are from preserved right-to-buy receipts (£400,000) and the Council's share of the VAT shelter operating in conjunction with Greenfields Community Housing (£702,000).

Greenfields have reported that there were 18 right-to-buy sales completed in the first six months of the year generating over £1 million in capital resources for the Council. This compares favourably with the budget and the total for the previous year when 16 sales were completed generating £684,000. Provisional amounts for the VAT shelter total £450,000 to the end of September.

A Government grant of £318,000 has been received towards funding for disabled facility grants. Income of £141,000 has been received from developers under Section 106 Agreements which will be used on future capital projects.



<p><b>Cabinet Response to the Recommendations from the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee on the Review of Braintree Halstead &amp; Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency</b></p>	<p><b>Agenda No: 10a</b></p>
<p><b>Corporate Priority: Supporting Vulnerable People in our Community</b>  <b>Portfolio Area: People</b>  <b>Report presented by: Cllr Jo Beavis</b>  <b>Report prepared by: Angela Verghese</b></p>	
<p><b>Background Papers:</b></p> <p>Report and Minutes Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, Minutes of Council Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013</p>	<p><b>Public Report</b></p>
<p><b>Options:</b></p> <p>To support or not support the proposed responses.</p>	<p><b>Key Decision: No</b></p>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>At the Council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013, the Chairman of the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee presented their report which made recommendations relating to the Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency (BDVSA). The Report was also received at Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013.</p> <p>Attached to this Report is a summary of the recommendations made by the Committee together with the proposed response. Both the CAB and BDVSA have been consulted on these responses.</p>	
<p><b>Decision:</b></p> <p>That Cabinet approves the responses outlined in the attached summary and delegates the actions to the Corporate Director to take forward.</p>	
<p><b>Purpose of Decision:</b></p> <p>To consider and respond to the proposed recommendations made by Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</p>	

<b>Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	None at this stage. There will be resource implications for 2015/16 onwards when new Service Level Agreements for both BDVSA and the CAB. During 2014 the Council will need to consider its approach to a new SLA for both organisations
<b>Legal:</b>	None
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	None at this stage
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	None
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	Representatives from BDVSA and the CAB were consulted and gave evidence to the Task & Finish Group prior to their reporting to Overview & Scrutiny
<b>Risks:</b>	None at this stage
<b>Officer Contact:</b> Angela Verghese	
<b>Designation:</b> Community Wellbeing Manager	
<b>Ext. No.</b> 2329	
<b>E-mail:</b> angelaverghese@braintree.gov.uk	

## BRAINTREE HALSTEAD & WITHAM CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB)

### Recommendations For Braintree District Council:

Issues	Response
<b>1. Financial Support:</b>	
1.1 To continue to provide its core funding contribution and to maintain close partnership working with the CAB. This funding and support is essential for the CAB to provide its services to benefit local residents, who are amongst some of the most vulnerable people in the District	1.1 The current 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the CAB continues until 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015. Six monthly monitoring reports are required under the terms of the SLA. Regular Liaison meetings are held between the CAB and BDC officers which the Cabinet Member for People also attends. During 2014 the Council will need to consider its approach to a new SLA for both organisations
<b>2. Non Financial Support:</b> To identify ways to increase its non-financial support to the CAB including:	
2.1 In addition to the Council's representative on the Trustee Board a deputy should be available to make sure BDC is always represented by one/two people. Both of these Representatives to have voting rights	2.1 Further investigation will be needed to see whether or not this can be implemented. Representation on the Trustee Board is governed by Charity Commission rules and the CAB's Memorandum & Articles and would also require agreement by the CAB Trustee Board.
2.2 In kind support eg PR advice, administrative assistance.	2.2 This will be discussed at the regular Liaison Meetings between the CAB and BDC
2.3 To provide a Member representative on the Essexwide Group of Citizens Advice Bureaux	2.3 Such representation on this independent organisation will be subject to the constitution of the Essexwide Group of Citizens Advice Bureaux and further investigation will be undertaken to determine if this can be implemented. Currently the Group consists of the Chairs, or designated representatives, of Essex, Thurrock and Southend Citizens Advice Bureaux only.
<b>3. Partnership Working:</b>	
3.1 To continue to work in partnership with the CAB and to seek opportunities to develop joint solutions to meet emerging needs	3.1 Regular Liaison meetings are now held between representatives of the CAB and BDC to identify areas of emerging need/mutual interest which the Cabinet Member for People also attends. BDC and the CAB also work in partnership, through a separate SLA, whereby referrals are made by the Council Tax collection team to the CAB money advice service. BDC and the CAB are members of the Braintree Advice Services Partnership which secured external funding of £100,000 to develop and pilot

	a 6 month model to improve and co-ordinate advice services within the District starting in April 2014.
<b>4. Awareness Raising:</b>	
4.1 To increase Parish Councils' awareness of the scope and limitations of the CAB's services	4.1 Information is already circulated by the CAB to Parish Councils and BDC can offer support with this as required
4.2 To increase Members' awareness of the scope and limitations of the CAB's services through wider dissemination of its Monitoring information and through the Members' Portal, Member Induction Training and Members' Evenings.	4.2 Six monthly Monitoring Reports, required by the SLA, are now circulated to all Members. All Members were invited to the CAB AGM and sent a copy of their Annual Review. The CAB have offered to provide an information session for Members if required. This will be considered for inclusion in Members' Evening in 2014/15

### Recommendations For Braintree Halstead & Witham Citizens Advice Bureau:

<b>1. Gateway Assessment Process</b>	
1.1 To implement this process for handling enquiries as quickly as possible with the support of all staff and volunteers. This was strongly supported by the Task & Finish Group who felt that this new procedure should be able to be implemented as quickly as possible and would seem to be the way forward to progress the future increase in enquiries in a shorter amount of time.	1.1 The CAB have implemented this process and are beginning to achieve a better balance through improved telephone access reducing the need for some clients to visit the Bureau for advice. Progress on this can be reviewed at the regular Liaison meetings between BDC and the CAB.
<b>2. Volunteers:</b>	
2.2 To investigate opportunities to recruit volunteers for appropriate tasks that do not require extensive, lengthy training as advisers, eg administrative tasks	2.2 Additional volunteers have been recruited to support the Essential Living Fund Payments Scheme recently taken over by the CAB and further opportunities to recruit volunteers for non advice roles will be identified in future.
<b>3. Fundraising:</b>	
3.1 They should develop a fundraising strategy to enable the Bureau to identify potential sources of funding and achieve increased income from a wider range of sources.	3.1 This CAB's progress on developing and implementing a fundraising strategy will be reviewed at the regular Liaison meetings between BDC and the CAB.
<b>4. Opening Hours:</b>	
4.1 To investigate whether it is feasible to extend opening hours for appointments at weekends, and/or evenings in order to increase access.	4.1 The CAB are already investigating variations in opening hours and this can be followed up at regular Liaison meetings. However, any such changes will take time to implement and will be subject to securing and training additional volunteers as well as securing additional funding that might be required.

<b>5. Premises:</b>	
5.1 To seek a satisfactory solution to the problems arising from the Braintree premises through further discussions with the Council's Estates Department	5.1 The CAB are now proactively seeking alternative accommodation for 2015 onwards. BDC is aware that the Braintree CAB is seeking to relocate premises and we support the CAB's active approach to re-location.

## BRAINTREE DISTRICT VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AGENCY

### Recommendations For Braintree District Council

Issues	Response
<b>1. Financial Support:</b>	
1.1 To continue to provide its core funding contribution and to maintain close partnership working that sustains and values both BDVSA and the local voluntary sector	1.1 The current 3 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with BDVSA ends on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2015. Six monthly monitoring reports are required under the terms of the SLA. During 2014 the Council will need to consider its approach to a new SLA for both organisations. The Local Compact, Voluntary & Community Sector Partnership Board, led by BDVSA, support good productive relationships with the voluntary sector and provide a means whereby any problems or issues arising can be identified and resolved at an early stage through mutual agreement
<b>2. Non Financial Support:</b>	
To identify ways in which it could provide non-financial support to BDVSA including:	
2.1 In addition to the Council's representative on the Executive Committee a deputy should be available to make sure BDC is always represented by one/two people. Neither of these Representatives would have voting rights	2.1 Representation on the Executive Committee is governed by the Charity Commission rules and BDVSA's Memorandum & Articles. It would also require agreement by BDVSA's Executive Further investigation will be needed to see whether or not this can be implemented
2.2 To make representations on BDVSA's behalf to support them in securing funding from Essex County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group	2.2 BDC's role is about influencing funder organisations. This will be achieved via the Health & Wellbeing Panel where BDVSA will have the opportunity to influence ECC and the Mid Essex CCG
<b>3. Awareness Raising</b>	
3.1 To increase Members' awareness of the services BDVSA provides through wider dissemination of its Newsletter, monitoring information and through Member Induction Training and Members' Evenings	3.1 1BDVSA's Newsletter is now emailed to all Members, Monitoring Information is now being forwarded to all Members. Other recommendations regarding Member training will be followed up. A new CEO is in post from 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2013 and a new approach is anticipated. An information session about BDVSA will be considered for inclusion in Members' Evening in 2014/15.

3.2 To provide more information and improved links to BDVSA on the Council's website

3.2 There is a link to BDVSA'S website on the Funding and Volunteering pages of the council's website.

### Recommendations For BDVSA

Issues	Response
<p><b>1. New Premises:</b></p> <p>1.1 To investigate alternative premises to provide a higher standard of accommodation and a more positive environment. This would greatly enhance BDVSA's image, presence and working conditions for its staff. It is the Task &amp; Finish Group's opinion that this could help to re-energize the organisation and encourage it to be more proactive in promoting its services to the voluntary sector. It will enable staff to work more productively in less cramped conditions, with room for volunteers to be used to undertake work to support or expand the activities of BDVSA, eg volunteers working on publicity and promotion. Possible accommodation options to be investigated include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's property portfolio: an initial discussion has taken place between the Chair of the Task &amp; Finish Group and Andrew Epsom, Asset Manager</li> <li>• Accommodation at Greenfields Community Housing offices: The Chair of the Task &amp; Finish Group has met Greenfields' Community Empowerment Manager who will make further enquiries.</li> <li>• Empty shop premises in a town centre.</li> <li>• Creation of a community hub for a variety of voluntary organizations (including BDVSA) to operate from.</li> </ul> <p>However, it is noted that BDVSA may struggle to secure adequate premises without incurring additional costs (rent, heat, etc) as they enjoy a peppercorn rent of £7,440 per annum, excluding electricity, at their current premises.</p>	<p>1.1 No viable options have been identified following approaches to Greenfields. However, BDC are now in discussion with BDVSA on their potentially co-locating into Causeway House. As an interim measure BDC will offer office space for up to 2 days per week to the Chief Executive Officer of BDVSA,.</p>

<b>2. Profile Raising/Publicity:</b>	
2.1 To consider ways to ensure that more organisations that could benefit from their services are made aware of them eg use of in kind specialist advice and/or volunteer support for publicity campaigns	2.1 With the new CEO coming into post a new approach is anticipated. The Council already regularly signposts local organisations to BDVSA as well as individuals seeking to set up new clubs or groups

Cllr Beavis will ensure that Members are advised of progress towards addressing the recommendations in this report that have not yet been actioned. This will be communicated, as appropriate, through Cllr Beavis's Reports to full Council.



Cabinet  
9<sup>th</sup> December 2013



<b>Cabinet Response to Recommendations Arising from the Affordable Housing Task &amp; Finish Group</b>	<b>Agenda No: 11a</b>
<b>Corporate Priority:</b> Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth <b>Portfolio Areas:</b> Prosperity <b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr Lady Newton <b>Report prepared by:</b> Tim Lucas, Housing Research & Development Manager	
<b>Background Papers:</b>  Affordable Housing Task & Finish Group report to Council 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2013.	<b>Public Report</b>
<b>Options:</b>  To support or not support the proposed response.	<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>  The report of the Affordable Housing Task & Finish Group was considered by the Council on 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2013 and referred to the Cabinet for consideration and response. The Action Plan arising from the report is attached to this report and sets out the recommended Cabinet responses.	
<b>Decision:</b>  That Cabinet approves the response outlined in the attached summary and delegates the actions to the Corporate Director to take forward.	
<b>Purpose of Decision:</b>  To consider and respond to the proposed recommendations arising from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group.	

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

<b>Financial:</b>	Actions will be delivered within existing resources as far as possible; any that require additional funding will be subject to a business case.
<b>Legal:</b>	None
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	No specific impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	No specific impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	No specific impacts arising directly from this report.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	N/A
<b>Risks:</b>	No specific risks arising directly from this report
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Tim Lucas
<b>Designation:</b>	Housing Research & Development Manager
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2124
<b>E-mail:</b>	timlu@braintree.gov.uk

## Cabinet response to recommendations arising from Affordable Housing Task & Finish Group

	<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Cabinet Response</b>
<b>1</b>	Develop a new Housing Strategy for the district for the period 2014 to 2019 that includes findings from the new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2013 and data and analysis from the Housing StatNav (a housing data section of the Council's web-site).	<p>This recommended action will be undertaken in the normal course of events.</p> <p>The current Housing Strategy covers the period 2009-2014, so a new strategy is due next year. The information from both the StatNav and SHMA will be taken into account in devising the new strategy.</p>
<b>2</b>	Explore what type of intermediate housing is needed locally to meet needs most effectively.	<p>'Intermediate housing' is housing that is targeted at people who could sustain a mortgage but do not have sufficient income to access the open market. The most common form of 'intermediate' housing is shared ownership.</p> <p>We expect the new SHMA to recommend the level and type of supply needed locally. The new Housing Strategy will set out how the Council intends to meet that need. This action will therefore be undertaken in due course.</p>
<b>3</b>	Discuss with the Community & Housing Investment Partnership (CHIP) Board the potential for using the CHIP fund to facilitate land banking locally.	<p>Agreed. Cabinet recommend discussions are held at a future CHIP Board Meeting.</p> <p>The CHIP Fund was established at the time of the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Greenfields Community Housing. The Board comprises representatives from the Council and Greenfields.</p>
<b>4</b>	Develop a cost benefit analysis with regards to investing council money, for example, how many households will benefit from a given investment.	Most reports on investment in housing already set out this information. Future reports will routinely consider the value of the resources we are giving (or foregoing).
<b>5</b>	Agree how information on BDC capital and other resources can be made available to members.	Estimates of capital resources available and allocations to projects are contained in the annual budget setting reports. Information on capital spending and resources is reported within the quarterly performance management reports.
<b>6</b>	Work with Essex County Council to establish a method for appraising the true value of land i.e. in terms of benefits	There is currently an Essex County Council project considering the value of land used for affordable housing. The Council will continue to

	to the local community and to specific customer groups as well as red book valuations.	co-operate with the Essex study and a report will be presented back to members on the results. This will form part of the work for the preparation of the new Housing Strategy
<b>7</b>	Pilot an equity share scheme based on council owned land. E.g. council puts forward land for a housing association to build out a scheme. A proportion of the units are sold for 60% of market value with the council retaining the remaining equity of the property. When the owner moves on, the equity can be recycled into further affordable housing or property can stay as equity housing.	Agreed. Officers are to consider this approach for future affordable housing developments and if appropriate to recommend where a pilot scheme could be viable.
<b>8</b>	Council to adopt a flexible approach to delivery of affordable housing through Section 106.	<p>The nature of s106 negotiations is that the Council has to be flexible.</p> <p>Section 106 agreements are undertaken as part of the planning approval process. They place conditions on how land is used and are binding on the parties to the agreement. Commonly, they are used to ensure that a proportion of new development is for affordable housing. The Council has to undertake negotiations that are specific to each site.</p>
<b>9</b>	Agree methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS).	<p>Information on LAMS will be included as part of housing performance monitoring.</p> <p>Under LAMS schemes, local authorities lodge capital with a bank for a fixed period (usually 5 years). The capital is used to underwrite mortgage deposits to help people buy houses locally and is reimbursed back to the Council with interest (less any claims for mortgage default). The proposed local scheme involves a partnership of Braintree DC and Essex CC, working with Lloyds Bank.</p>
<b>10</b>	Engage with housing associations and developers to gauge how effective our role in enabling affordable housing is and consider how we compare to our comparator local authorities and whether there is best practice elsewhere.	Feedback from stakeholders and researching best practice will be part of the process in the development of the new Housing Strategy

11	<p>Publish the 'Help to Buy' newsletters produced by zone agent, Moat Homes on the council's website.          (Shared ownership properties built by housing associations and developers are marketed by 'zone agents' around the country. The agent for all of Essex is Moat Homes. Moat administers the registration of people who are interested in such opportunities and advertise the properties on their web-site.)</p>	<p>Agreed. The Councils Housing Team will facilitate the posting of the 'Help to Buy' newsletter on the Council website.</p>



<b>Proposed Purchase of Eckard House Site, Easton Road, Witham</b>	<b>Agenda No: 11b</b>
<p><b>Corporate Priority:</b> Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth and providing value for money</p> <p><b>Portfolio Area:</b> Prosperity; Planning and Property; Performance</p> <p><b>Report presented by:</b> Cllr Lady Newton and Cllr David Bebb</p> <p><b>Report prepared by:</b> Andrew Epsom</p>	
<p><b>Background Papers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to the Station (Passenger Focus capacity study 2007)</li> <li>• Full Council Meeting Agenda 23/9/2013</li> <li>• Pre Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (LDF).</li> </ul>	<b>Public Report</b>
<p><b>Options:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Approve the purchase of Eckard House site</li> <li>2) Do not approve the purchase of Eckard House site</li> </ol>	<b>Key Decision: Yes</b>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <p>Passenger Focus commissioned a station car park capacity report in 2007, which identified a shortage of commuter car parking in Witham. As a result, Planning Policy has now allocated this site in the Pre Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Plan as a car park which was approved at the Full Council meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013.</p> <p>The Council is proposing to purchase the site (as shown outlined in red on the plan at Appendix 1) which is currently vacant, for the purpose of converting it to a commuter car park. This site will provide approximately 60 space commuter car parking scheme constructed to current parking standards.</p> <p>Acquisition terms have now been agreed with the Vendor, the details of which will be made available to Members in the Private Session of this Committee meeting</p>	
<p><b>Decision:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That Cabinet approves the acquisition of the Eckhard House site in Witham on the terms as set out in the report in Private Session and delegates to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Property and the Corporate Director (Sustainable Development) to agree detailed terms and conditions and</li> </ol>	

2. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council to approve capital funding on the terms set out in the report in Private Session.

**Purpose of Decision:**

To enable the Council to facilitate additional commuter car parking in Witham.

<b>Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail</b>	
<b>Financial:</b>	It is proposed that this project will be funded by internal borrowing charges. This will ensure the preservation of scarce capital resources for other non-income generating projects.
<b>Legal:</b>	The purchase of the Eckard House site is subject to Full Council approval and subject to contract. The Council's Legal Service will be instructed to act on the Council's behalf in respect of the exchange of contracts and completion of this purchase and ensure that the Council's interests are protected at all times.
<b>Equalities/Diversity</b>	Disabled car parking spaces will be provided within the scheme to enable increased accessibility to the Witham mainline train station for disabled users. Appropriate access routes and signage between the car park and station will also be provided. Recent improvements at the station include a footbridge with lift access to enable users of the car parking to the east of the station better accessibility.
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	The Witham mainline station is very popular with commuters with the Greater Anglia car park achieving a 95% occupancy rate. With further residential development coming forward at Maltings Lane and the allocation of the growth locations at Lodge Farm and North East Witham, together with on-going growth in the District, demand for commuter car parking from within Witham and the wider District will remain strong and continue to grow going forward.
<b>Environment and Climate Change:</b>	Encouraging commuters to utilise public rail transport will have a positive impact on climate change and the environment. Therefore, it is important to continue to support the provision of facilities such as commuter car parking to meet and encourage on-going use and demand for public transport.
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	<p>The public and Members have been consulted in respect of the Pre Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Plan within which this site has now been allocated as a car park.</p> <p>The public and Members will be consulted further when a planning application is submitted for the development of this site as a car park.</p>
<b>Risks:</b>	See Risk matrix in the main body of the Report.
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Andrew Epsom
<b>Designation:</b>	Head of Asset Management
<b>Ext. No.</b>	2921
<b>E-mail:</b>	Andrew.epsom@braintree.gov.uk

## 1. **Background**

- 1.1 A study carried out in March 2007 “Getting to the Station - findings of research conducted at Witham” commissioned by Passenger Focus, as input into Network Rail’s Greater Anglia Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) states, *‘Witham station car park has 430 spaces, and is estimated to be between 93% and 100% utilised on average... Witham has a number of other car parks, close to the station, which can be used by rail commuters including the Council run White Horse Lane (100 spaces) and the privately run Cut Throat Lane (354 spaces). Both tend to be full with commuter parking during the week... There is clearly a car parking issue at Witham, and this relates to people accessing the station from outside the town. For these people, if they are able to continue to use Witham, additional car parking is required. There are a number of options and the local authority appears broadly supportive’.*
- 1.2 At the LDF Sub Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2013, Members agreed to ‘allocate Eckard House, Easton Road as car parking’. It is estimated that this could provide approximately 60 car parking spaces for the station. There is also a proposal for a second road access into Witham Station car park from Station Road contained within policy ADM49 ‘New Road Schemes’ which was approved by the LDF Sub Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Both these items are included in the Pre Submission Site Allocations and Development Management Plan which was approved by Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013 and which will shortly be the subject of a further public engagement period before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination.
- 1.3 BDC has also commissioned Essex County Council Highways to look at the impacts of both these proposals in a report which was agreed by the LDF Sub Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013. This report concluded that; *“an increase of 60 spaces in the capacity of the station car park is not expected to have a significant impact on traffic flows”.*
- 1.4 This project supports the Prosperity priority as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2012-16. This priority seeks to grow the district in ways that can be sustained for future generations and ensure that the district has sound transport infrastructure that meets the needs of the residents both now and into the future. Road and rail improvements are key elements within this corporate priority.
- 1.5 The Council is, therefore, proposing to purchase the Eckard House site to facilitate the provision of approximately 60 space commuter car park (including disabled and motor cycle parking) constructed to the current adopted Parking Standards. The site is currently vacant.
- 1.6 The site is currently on the market and following lengthy negotiations the Council has now agreed acquisition terms. The detailed acquisition terms are contained within the Private Session part of this report.

## 2. **Timetable**

- 2.1 Acquisition terms reported to Cabinet on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013.
- 2.2 Full Council approval on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013.
- 2.3 Exchange of Contracts by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.
- 2.4 Completion of purchase on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.
- 2.5 Submission of Planning Application – January 2014.
- 2.6 Grant of Planning Permission – May 2014.
- 2.7 Car park construction works completed by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014.
- 2.8 Car park available for commuter car parking from November 2014.

## 3. **Benefits**

- 3.1 There is a strong demand for commuter car parking in Witham and this scheme will provide approximately 60 additional commuter car parking spaces.
- 3.2 This scheme will provide valuable revenue income to the Council at a return significantly higher than the returns currently realised on the Council's cash investment income. Additional revenue income will greatly support the delivery of Council services going forward.
- 3.3 The availability of commuter car parking will encourage and support greater use of public transport reducing road congestion and have a positive environmental impact.
- 3.4 This is a unique opportunity to acquire a site of this size and in such close proximity to Witham mainline train station for commuter car parking, which could otherwise be lost to an alternative use.

## 4. **Risks**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>
Drainage	Surface water drainage on this site has previously been dealt with by soakaways. There is currently no access to a surface water sewer without crossing third party land.	Detailed site investigation works including a soil survey will be undertaken prior to the exchange of contracts to confirm the surface water drainage arrangements for a car park. An appropriate solution needs to be achieved to meet relevant statutory requirements.

<p>Access to and egress from the site via Easton Road</p>	<p>ECC Highways has been consulted regarding the proposed car park. Originally they indicated that they were not keen to support the car park scheme if access and egress was solely via Easton Road. However, a Traffic Impact Assessment carried out in August 2013 indicated that an increase of 60 spaces in the capacity of the station car park was not expected to have a significant impact on traffic flows. ECC Highways advised by email on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013 that “subject to a detailed planning application being made, the Highways Authority does not object” (to Easton Road being used for access to and egress from the site).</p>	<p>If, for whatever reason, ECC Highways does not support access to and egress from the site via Easton Road during the planning process, the Council will continue to work with ECC and Greater Anglia to provide an additional access / exit route to / from Greater Anglia’s car park via Station Road. This should help to mitigate any Highways issues. The Council could alternatively seek permission to use the site as a residential development site, which would have minimal impact on current traffic flow.</p>
<p>Strip of unregistered land between Easton Road and the Eckard House site</p>	<p>ECC Highways has confirmed that the carriageway and footpath along Easton Road are adopted but they cannot confirm precisely where the adopted highway terminates at the entrance to the station car park.</p> <p>A small strip of land between the Eckard House site and Easton Road is unregistered.</p> <p>There is no specific right of way granted over this land for the benefit of the Eckard House title.</p> <p>It is not clear if this strip of land forms part of the adopted highway or is in the ownership of a third party.</p>	<p>The site previously contained an office building with car parking prior to demolition. Clearly, access was available to the site via Easton Road and across the strip of unregistered land for this use.</p> <p>If the site is used as a car park then this will require a change of use. This issue will be examined by the Council’s Solicitor prior to exchange of contracts and should it remain a risk (in terms of a third party owner of the strip of land coming forward to negotiate the grant of access rights over this land for car parking purposes) then the Council would seek to put in place indemnity insurance.</p>

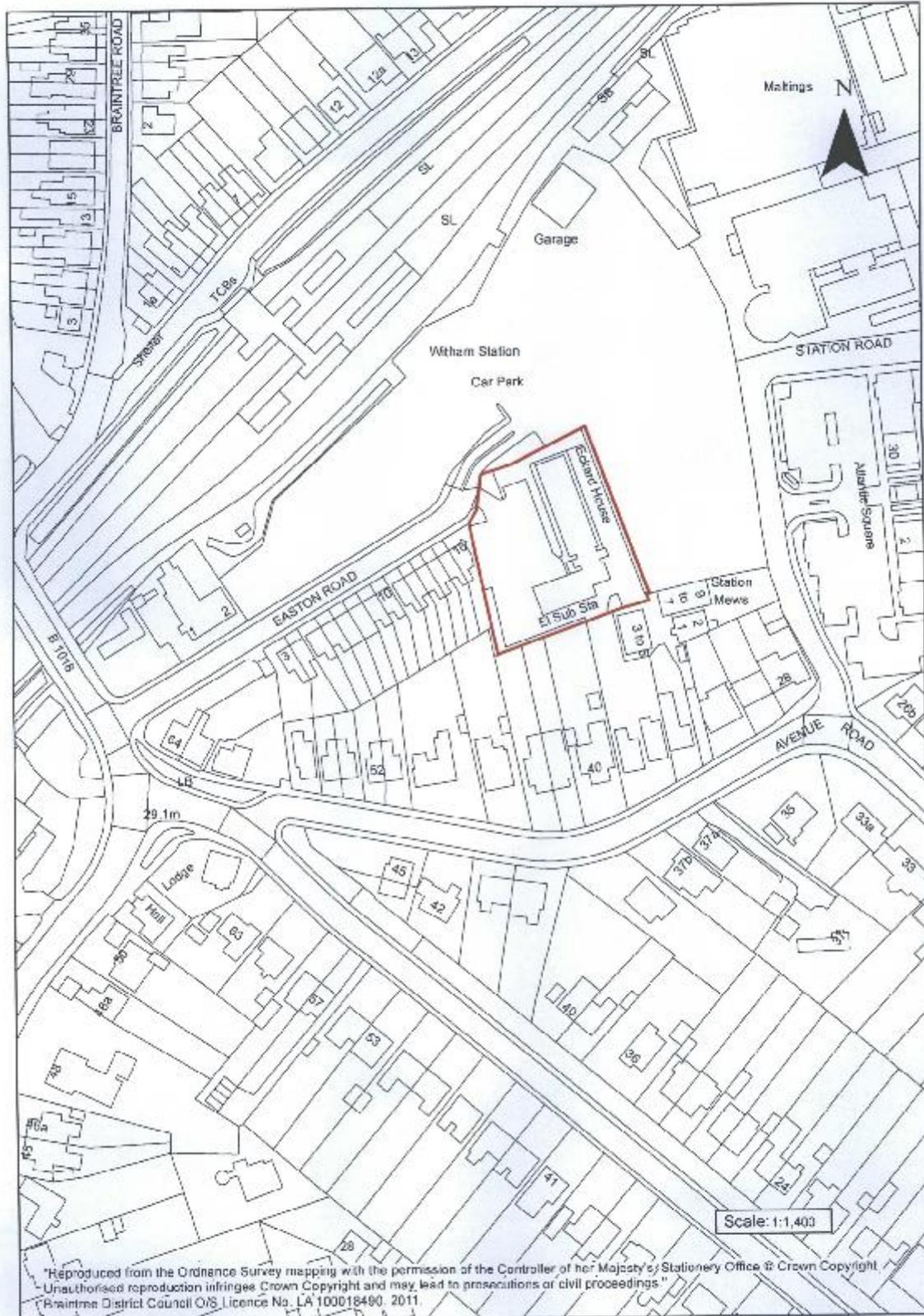
		If insurance cannot be obtained, the Council will need to assess the risk and if this is considered to be too great then the Council would withdraw from the transaction prior to the exchange of contracts.
Payment options for car park customers	It is important that BDC installs the right technology to make it easier for car park customers to pay. If the right payment methods are not available then this could impact on income.	The Head of Operations is currently carrying out a review of car parking in Witham. Payment options, including cashless car parking for customers, will be considered within this wider review.
Migration from Whitehorse Lane Car Park	Demand for the Whitehorse Lane car park may diminish if commuters find the Eckard House site more convenient.	Operations will need to review the tariff structure and payment options in order to keep this car park attractive, competitive and maximise income.  In the worst case scenario, alternative uses, such as residential, could be considered for the Whitehorse Lane car park.
Planning Permission Refused	The Council is unable to obtain a planning consent to use the site for commuter car parking.	The Council's fall-back position would be to utilise the site for an alternative use.

## 5. **Funding**

- 5.1 As a revenue producing project it is proposed that internal borrowing charges are made. This will ensure the preservation of scarce capital resources for other non-income generating projects.

## 6. **Conclusions**

- 6.1 This opportunity provides many benefits to the Council, including supporting the delivery of key Corporate Priorities, realising valuable revenue income and enhancing facilities for residents in the district. The Council should, therefore, pursue this acquisition subject to contract and the completion of any outstanding due diligence.



# Minutes

Agenda No: 14a

## Developing Democracy Group



3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013

Present:

Members	Present	Members	Present
Councillor J E Abbott	Yes (until 5.50pm)	Councillor M C M Lager	Yes (until 5.50pm)
Councillor P R Barlow	Yes	Councillor V Santomauro	No
Councillor J C Beavis	Yes	Councillor C Siddall	Apologies
Councillor G Butland (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor G A Spray	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes		

5. **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Developing Democracy Group held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **REVIEW OF MEMBER APPOINTMENTS TO EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

**DECISION:** That the update on the review of Member appointments to external organisations be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To update Members on the review of Member appointments to external organisations and the criteria for the review.

7. **DISTRICT ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW**

**DECISION:** That the progress and timetable on the Boundary Review be noted.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To inform Members of progress and the next stages of the Boundary Review led by the LGBCE.

8. **INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION.**

**INFORMATION:** Members received a presentation on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) from the Democracy Manager. Members noted the implications of IER and discussed several issues.

The following actions were agreed:

- All Members to receive the handouts from the meeting and be informed of IER;
- It is for political groups to notify electoral agents - not officers;

- Consideration will be given to publicising IER and involving Town and Parish Councils at the appropriate time.

It was noted that there were no plans to link IER to the “tell them once” system in local authorities and that consideration should be given to making representations to the Electoral Commission on this.

It was agreed that officers would look at agenda planning for the Developing Democracy group in the coming month and consider which items may be dealt with outside of a DDG meeting so meetings will only be held as required.

The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 5.56pm.

G BUTLAND  
(Chairman)

<b>Cabinet Member Decisions made under Delegated Powers</b>	<b>Agenda No: 14b</b>
<b>Portfolio Area:</b>	
<b>Report presented by: Not applicable – For noting only</b>	
<b>Report prepared by: Emma Wisbey, Local Governance Manager</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>Public Report</b>
Cabinet Decisions made by individual Cabinet Members under delegated powers (signed copies retained by Member Services)	
<b>Options:</b> For noting only	<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	
<p>All delegated decision taken by individual Cabinet Members are required to be published and listed for information on next Cabinet Agenda following the decision.</p> <p>Since the last Cabinet meeting the following Cabinet Members have taken delegated decisions:-</p> <p><b>Delegated Decisions - to note recently made delegated decisions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Councillor Lady Newton – Cabinet Member – Planning and Property</b> <b>Decision taken on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013</b></li> <li>• <b>Councillor Bebb – Cabinet Member – Performance and Efficiency</b> <b>Decision taken on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013</b></li> </ul> <p>To fund affordable housing scheme:</p> <p><b>Programme of open market purchase:</b></p> <p>To allocate £250,000 to Colne Housing Society to support the purchase of a minimum of 10 open-market properties for affordable housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Councillor Lady Newton – Cabinet Member – Planning and Property</b> <b>Decision taken on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013</b></li> </ul> <p>To transfer the land adjacent to 6 North End, Little Yeldham.</p>	

- **Councillor Wendy Schmitt – Cabinet Member – Place**  
**Decision taken on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

To temporarily amend the Council’s Grants Policy to limit Major Housing Grant applications to the replacement of boilers and heating systems only. This amendment to the policy will be short term and will only remain until the current backlog of Disabled Facility Grant referrals have been reduced to 10 applications on the waiting list.

- **Councillor Lady Newton – Cabinet Member – Planning and Property**  
**Decision taken on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

To transfer the land to the rear of 8 Abbotts Cottages, Sturmer.

- **Councillor Chris Siddall – Cabinet Member – Prosperity and Growth**  
**Decision taken on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

Approved the Braintree District Economic Development Prospectus.

- **Councillor Joanne Beavis – Cabinet Member – People and Participation.**  
**Decision taken on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

Approved the Christmas 2013 and New Year 2014 open times for all the Districts Leisure Centres.

Cabinet Decisions made by individual Cabinet Members under delegated decisions can be viewed on the Access to Information page on the Council’s website.

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

**Decision:**

For Members to note the delegated decisions

**Purpose of Decision:**

The reasons for each decision can be found in the individual Delegated Decisions

**Officer Contact:**

Emma Wisbey

**Designation:**

Local Governance Manager

**Ext. No.**

2610

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