

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP AGENDA

Tuesday, 14th January 2020 at 7:15pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
(Please note this meeting will be audio recorded)

www.braintree.gov.uk

Members of the Community Development Group are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Councillor Mrs C Dervish
Councillor Mrs D Garrod (Chairman)
Councillor A Hensman (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Mrs I Parker
Councillor Mrs J Pell

Councillor Mrs L Walters
Councillor Miss M Weeks
Councillor Mrs S Wilson
Councillor B Wright

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

A WRIGHT
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members 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.

Question Time

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak. Members of the public wishing to speak are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by midday on the working day before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee Meeting is due to be held on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Monday, (where there is a bank holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Friday).

The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time. Members of the public can remain to observe the public session of the meeting.

Please note that there is public Wi-Fi in the Council Chamber, users are required to register in order to access this. There is limited availability of printed agendas.

Health and Safety

Any persons attending meetings in the Council offices are requested to take a few moments to familiarise themselves with the nearest available fire exit, indicated by the fire evacuation signs. In the event of an alarm you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by officers. You will be assisted to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent during the meeting in order to prevent disturbances.

Webcast and Audio Recording

Please note that this meeting will be audio recorded only.

Documents

Agendas, reports and minutes for all the Council's public meetings can be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

We welcome comments from members of the public to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended, you can send these via governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION

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1 Apologies for Absence

2 Member Declarations

1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.
2. To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.

3 Public Question Time
(See paragraph above)

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Community Development Group held on 30th October 2019 (copy previously circulated).

5 Scrutiny Review into Community Woodlands - Second Evidence Gathering Session
Members to receive a presentation from Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor.

Community Woodlands Report - Second Evidence Gathering Session **4 - 8**

6 Urgent Business - Public Session
To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

PRIVATE SESSION

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Community Woodlands – Second Evidence Gathering Session		Agenda No: 5
Portfolio Corporate Outcome:	Environment and Place A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported	
Report presented by:	Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor	
Report prepared by:	Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor	
Background Papers:		Public Report
None.		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>Members of the Community Development Group are invited to note the information contained within the main report provided by Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor, about community woodlands within the Braintree District and the role they have.</p> <p>This report provides a broad overview of community woodlands, explaining the role they play within communities and their context within the provision of publicly owned woodlands managed by Braintree District Council as part of the wider mosaic of public open space provision. The current role of volunteers working within some of these local woodlands is explained and examples other projects, at both regional and national levels, are included to in order to show the scope of activities, of which range from the creation of new woodland plantings to palliative therapies within established woodlands.</p>		
Recommended Decision:		
<p>That Members note the information provided and highlight any issues or aspects of the report that they wish to explore further within the scope of the Scrutiny Review.</p>		
Purpose of Decision:		
<p>To assist Members with forming their evidence base as part of the Scrutiny Review.</p>		

Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.	
Financial:	No matters arising out of this report.
Legal:	No matters arising out of this report.
Safeguarding:	No matters arising out of this report.
Equalities/Diversity:	No matters arising out of this report.
Customer Impact:	No matters arising out of this report.
Environment and Climate Change:	There are no matters arising out of this report; however, should be aware of future potential impact that may be undertaken in this area of part of their Scrutiny Review.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	There are no matters arising out of this report; however, Members should be aware of future potential impact that may be undertaken in this area of part of their Scrutiny Review.
Risks:	No matters arising out of this report.
Officer Contact:	Shaun Taylor, Landscape Services Team Supervisor
Designation:	Landscape Services
Ext. No:	2315
E-mail:	Shaun.taylor@braintree.gov.uk

Community Development Group, 14th January 2020

Community Woodlands

1. **Evidence Base** - One of the main aims of community woodland projects is to encourage interest in woodlands, including amongst those people and groups who can't afford to buy their own wood. Over the last few years, woodlands.co.uk, a commercial organisation that is primarily an agency for the sale of woodlands has been running a community woodlands project. In that space of time, woodlands.co.uk have had more than 500 requests from people who wish to use woodlands for activities involving the local community. They now have visitor groups for children's events, scouts, forest schools, social forestry, bush craft courses, woodlands management demonstrations, off-road horse riding organisations, orienteering and coppicing.
2. **Research** by the Forestry Commission would suggest that there are broadly five types of community woodland which are based largely on a particular set of circumstances and the motivation of members of the community who want to actively engage in woodland management.
 - **Urban regeneration:** Often on neglected public land where there has been a local community involvement with management often in the form of a Friends Group, or similar.
 - **Community resource:** Woodland owned and managed by the local community, normally through a Parish Council.
 - **Economic partnership:** Land owned by others - community management for economic benefits such as firewood or charcoal production.
 - **Community place:** Land owned by others. Community volunteers often manage and work for conservation or wellbeing/therapy workshops.
 - **Lifestyle alternative:** Group work and live in the woodland.
3. **Woodlands** owned by Braintree District Council - Friend groups and school parties currently use and help to maintain woodlands in various parts of the District. Active groups work with woodlands at Coggeshall Pieces in Halstead, Woodlands on the Bocking Blackwater/Marks Farm development and the woodland areas, mostly stands of alder and willow within the river corridor and linear open space running from Marshalls Park and Hoppit Mead.
 - Cuckoo Wood, Great Notley – an ancient woodland with a diverse range of species. Potential to manage more extensively for firewood from coppice rotation practices and consequential benefits for biodiversity. Limited gated access due to sensitive nature of the site and regularly used by school groups as part of the Forest School programme.
 - Marks Farm Woodlands - part of the recently extended Bocking Blackwater Local Nature Reserve. These woods have had some litter clearance and other conservation activities undertaken by the Friends of Bocking Blackwater. A more recent woodland area close by at Rivermead requires regular coppicing to prevent growing trees becoming a problem for residents.

4. **James Cooke Community Woodland, off Maldon Road, Witham** - Witham Town Council and local people planted the woodland in 1993/94 to provide an area of quiet relaxation for local people and to create habitat that is attractive to a wide variety of wildlife. The woodland was planted using British trees local to the area and open grassland areas within the wood provide a wide range of habitats in which to view birds, butterflies and other wildlife.
5. **Public Open Space** - Apart from the woodlands within Council ownership, most of the more aesthetic and attractive areas of open space tend to be concentrated along the main river corridors of the Colne, Blackwater and Brain, although these areas contain quite high concentrations of trees, often with new plantings created by friends/volunteers – a deliberate policy of planned new planting would limit the space available for some other forms of recreation; a new community woodland planted on agricultural land would need to be considered as a land purchase or as part of an integrated mosaic of open space provision for a new garden community development(s). Parcels of land on the edge of the major settlements which may be attractive as a starting point for a new woodland would probably be in use for agriculture and in the current climate, many areas are subject to speculative planning applications with the attendant prospect of a higher land value.
6. **Risk** – public perception of woodland management is sometimes antagonistic, with some resistance to change; active management – reintroduction of coppice works (cutting trees back to the base for them to regenerate in the spring) may be alarming to residents where the vista and potential screening provided by nearby trees may change. Public perception of the site's user groups: initial use of the Sudbury site by Eden-Rose coppice founded by Rob Brooks - who has developed and maintained town centre woodlands for both palliative care and people living with challenging issues - was initially met by some opposition. The Sudbury site initially experienced issues with residents concerned over the impact some users may have on the site – particularly when some of the visitors had behavioural problems.
7. **Examples:**
 - **The New Reeding Woods Group, North Suffolk** - This group was set up in the spring of 2003 with the intention of finding land that could be planted to provide community woodland for the residents of the Villages of Denham, Horham and Athelington. Run by the community, for the community, the project aimed to provide a resource that was sadly lacking in a rural area where most of the woodland is privately owned. The project planned to find and purchase land, financed by grants and local fund raising, grow trees from locally collected seeds, nurture them in a tree nursery at St Edmunds School, and eventually plant them in the woodland area. From the start, this project was supported by the Green Light Trust. By the autumn of 2004, land adjacent to Pound Lane between Horham and Athelington became available, and eventually enough funding was found to buy the land in trust for the three villages. Plans were then

developed on the layout of the area, and a wildflower meadow and a wildlife pond were incorporated into the design. The whole area was fenced to keep it rabbit proofed, and eventually the pond was excavated. Trees were then planted and the meadow area strewn with green hay from local churchyards by children and local residents. A friends group was set up, and regular working parties cut the hedges and rides and helped to mulch the young trees. The woodland is now almost 20 years old and although it is still a work in progress, it is a much appreciated resource, especially by local dog walkers, as it provides an enclosed area where dogs can run free. The New Reeding Woods group initially received funding from The Suffolk Environmental Trust, The Forestry Commission, The Heritage Lottery Fund, Mid Suffolk District Council and Suffolk County Council, as well as local donations.

- **Botesdale and Rickinghall Community Woodland Project** - In the spring of 2006, Claire Appleby posted a notice in the village magazine inviting people to a meeting that was to be held in June. The meeting would discuss an idea to form a Community Woodland Group. 'Barwoods' was set up with encouragement and help from the Green Light Trust. In the village of Rickinghall, the first project was Low Meadow, a triangular piece of land gifted to the Parish Council at the western end of the village, where a footpath leaves the Bury Road. Ten standard trees were put in alongside the hedge and footpath, and four dozen native shrubs and a short length of hedge were planted opposite. Alongside the ditch that forms the third side there are weeping willows that are pollarded in rotation, and a black poplar was donated and planted there. The central area is cut and raked to encourage wildflowers to return and there were already two seats and a memorial tree. Also in Rickinghall, the group planted a new wood next to the village allotments. Already, over 200 trees have been established with a hedge on two sides. The trees are almost entirely native species and that include a ring of apple trees that are local to this area (as well as a medlar and a quince). In the village of Botesdale, the group were given a small wood that has been named 'Miller's Orchard,' as it contains a great variety of fruit trees and the site is thought to have supported a windmill.
- **The Arboretum at Tortworth, in Gloucestershire** is a very special place. It has a long and interesting history and boasts some incredible exotic trees. The trees are a living history of the woodland and the family that planted it; however, a few years ago, the collection was at risk of decline through lack of management. Three years ago, a new owner purchased the woodland and the trees were given a new lease of life - while also changing lives. The 20 acre site is now managed by a community woodland group who are gently restoring the trees and at the same time, making a difference for local people.
- **Hurstbourne Tarrant, in Hampshire** provides the backdrop for five mile multi-terrain race. 2018 was the 10th year that this event had taken place, following part of the Test Way through woods and farmland, taking in the beautiful scenery of the North Wessex Downs. The race coincides with the perfect time to view the spectacular bluebells in Doles Wood.

NOTE: These last two examples were taken from:-

<https://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/category/community-woodland-use/>