

Minutes

Council Meeting



21st July 2008

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J E Abbott	Yes	M Lynch	Yes
M J Banthorpe	Yes	D Mann	Yes
Miss L Barlow	Yes	T McArdle	Apologies
J Baugh	Apologies	N G McCrea	Yes(from 7.25pm)
Mrs J C Beavis	Yes	J McKee	Apologies
D L Bebb	Yes	H J Messenger	Yes
E Bishop	Yes	A M Meyer	Apologies
R J Bolton	Apologies	R G S Mitchell	Apologies
G Butland	Yes	Mrs J M Money	Yes
J C Collar	Yes	Lady Newton (Chairman)	Yes
M Dunn	No	J P O'Reilly-Cicconi	Apologies
Mrs E Edey	Yes	Mrs R O'Shea	Yes
J G J Elliott	Apologies	Mrs J A Pell	Yes
R Elliston	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
Dr R L Evans	Yes	D M Reid	Yes
A V E Everard	Yes	D E A Rice	Yes
J H G Finbow	Apologies	W Rose	Apologies
Ms L B Flint	Apologies	Mrs C Sandbrook	Yes
T J W Foster	Yes	Mrs W D Scattergood	Yes
Mrs B A Gage	Yes	Mrs J W Schmitt	Yes
M G Gage	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
Mrs M E Galione (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Mrs L Shepherd	Yes
J E B Gyford	Yes	Mrs J A Smith	Yes
N R H O Harley	Yes	Mrs G A Spray	Yes
Mrs S A Howell	Yes	F Swallow	Yes
P J Hughes	Yes	Miss M Thorogood	Yes
D L Hume	Yes	S M Walsh	Yes
M C M Lager	Yes	R G Walters	Yes
S J Lambourne	Apologies	R N Wilkins	Yes
E R Lynch	Yes	T S Wilkinson	Yes

The Chairman welcomed all Councillors and members of the public and press to the meeting, and drew attention to the evacuation procedure in case of an emergency, for mobile phones to be switched off and for Members to collect their mail.

22 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman referred to the following issues:-

- (1) On 14th July 2008 the Chairman had hosted the first of three **tea parties** at the Town Hall Centre, Braintree to recognise people from the community who undertake voluntary work or give their time for the benefit of others. A total of 23 guests had attended the event, with two further tea parties planned in November 2008 and February 2009.
The Chairman requested Members to contact the Civic Office at the Council if they wish to propose suitable people to attend the events.
- (2) The **Chairman's Charity Golf Day 2008** will be held on Wednesday 6th August 2008 at the Braintree Golf Club at Stisted. Further teams of four persons are needed, with details available from the Civic Office at the Council.
- (3) Congratulations were extended to local villages that had won awards in the **Village of the Year Awards** under the **Rural Community Council of Essex Awards 2008**. With regard to the Village of the Year category, Great Bardfield had achieved 2nd place, and Earls Colne had received a Merit Award. For the Best Kept Churchyard category, St Peters Ad Vincula at Coggeshall had been awarded first place, with St Mary & St Christopher at Panfield at second place.
- (4) The **lists of engagements** carried out by herself and the Vice-Chairman since the last meeting on 9th June 2008.

23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following interests were declared:-

- Councillor Lady Newton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6, Notice of Motion regarding Health Services in Witham, as she is a Non-Executive Director of the Mid-Essex Primary Care Trust.
- Councillors Miss L Barlow, M C M Lager and Mrs J M Money all declared a personal interest as Witham Town Councillors in Agenda Item 6, Notice of Motion regarding Health Services in Witham, as Witham Town Council is mentioned in the motion.
- Councillor Miss M Thorogood declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8 – Policy Recommendations and References, Best Value Performance Plan as a tenant Member on the Greenfields Community Housing Board.

Unless stated otherwise, all Councillors remained in the meeting.

24 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9th June 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There was one statement made the details of which is appended to these minutes.

26 **NOTICE OF MOTION – HEALTH SERVICES IN WITHAM**

INFORMATION: The Chairman referred to the motion and invited the proposer, Councillor Dr Evans, to address the meeting.

Councillor Dr Evans moved the motion, referred to its content and advised that residents will be delighted that this Council supports improved health services for the Witham area. Thanks were extended to the Witham & Braintree Times who had run a campaign on this issue. Councillor Gyford seconded the motion.

During the discussion the difficulties for the people of Witham and surrounding area accessing suitable health services in the right places and at the right time was noted. Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford is a large, centralised facility with new technologies and complex new treatments, but suffers from queues and car park charges and is difficult to access by public transport from the Witham area, and car travellers using the busy A12. Witham suffers from population growth and the health service provision has not grown to accommodate this. Local clinics with flexible opening hours were requested across Witham to bring medical services closer to patients, and save them travelling to see a specialist. Clinics for outpatients and minor injuries were proposed, together with ambitious aims for fracture clinics, maternity services, and immunisation provision. Some Members referred to the benefits of the cottage hospital in Halstead, and the opportunity for local residents to establish a League of Friends to raise funds for improved medical facilities.

The Leader of the Council advised that the motion was supported, although there is work to be achieved with colleagues at Witham Town Council to take the proposals forward. Members were informed that the list size for Witham averaged 2,250, whereas the benchmark formed by the Primary Care Trust stood at 1,700 – a difference that required approximately eight General Practitioners to bring up it up to standard. Witham has 30,000 patients, with the majority registered with one practice and the District Council should be working in partnership with Witham Town Council and the Mid Essex Primary Care Trust to clarify the proposals for Witham.

Councillor Dr Evans welcomed the support received from colleagues, the proposals for closer working with Witham Town Council, and the prospect of full, meaningful discussions with the Primary Care Trust.

DECISION: That the Notice of Motion as set out on Page (ii) of the agenda be endorsed.

27 **CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2008/09**

The Chairman introduced the item by welcoming the two newly elected members – Councillor Ron Elliston, Hatfield Peverel Ward; and Councillor Mrs Jennifer Smith, Braintree East Ward.

The Leader of the Council advised of changes to Committee Membership 2008/09 as follows:-

- Councillor R Elliston appointed to the Audit Committee (in place of Councillor Wilkins)
- Councillor Mrs J Smith appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (in place of Councillor Rose)

DECISION: That the appointment of Councillor Elliston to the Audit Committee, and Councillor Mrs Smith to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

28 **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES (PUBLIC SESSION)**

Cabinet 7th July 2008 – Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08

Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, presented the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/2008 tabled at the Council meeting – a compendium of past and future performance indicators. Overall, 2007/08 had shown sustained improvements with 74% of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) on target – compared to 68% last year, with 32% estimated to be in the top quartile nationally (30% last year). Sickness Absence, the Disability Discrimination Act/Access to Buildings, Housing Benefit and Housing Waste/Recycling were also areas where the BVPI's are improving. It was advised that a duplication error appears on Page 24 of the Plan, where the third line entitled 'BV12 Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence' should be deleted. (Post Meeting Note: Second line states correct information, subject to 7.6,7.4 & 7.2 being corrected to 9,8, & 7.2 respectively. The third line remains deleted)

It was queried if Performance Indicators will be received from Greenfields Community Housing. In response, it was advised that housing performance data will not be provided in future Quarterly Reports/Performance Indicators. However, the Council are in liaison with Housing Associations and housing providers, and accessible to performance data.

Councillor Abbott referred to the revised recycling/composting targets, including the combined target for recycling/composting for 2010/11 of 50% for the District Council, and the Essex County Council target to achieve 50% of composted waste by 2020 – resulting with the District Council being ahead of schedule nine years in advance. It was questioned why we had to host an imported waste factory for processing as the District are doing so well in composting and recycling.

DECISION: That the Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08 be endorsed.

29 **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS (PUBLIC SESSION)**

Councillor Wilkins – Access to and from Braintree High Street and its use by HGV's

INFORMATION: Councillor Wilkins queried if it was possible to undertake a survey, on vehicles coming into and out of Braintree, including the new executive coaches, weighing 24 tonnes fully loaded.

Councillor Harley, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Culture & Leisure, advised that he was prepared to look at this issue.

30 **QUESTION TIME (PUBLIC SESSION)**

(i) **Statements by the Leader/Cabinet Members and Deputy Cabinet Members**

INFORMATION: The following statements were made: -

'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power'. The Leader drew attention to the recently published White Paper on passing power to communities and includes incentives for voting, proposed amendment to Widdicombe rules, and changes in powers to backbench members.

Summaries will be provided to Members and the Local Government Reform Cabinet Sub Group will consider the White Paper.

'From the neighbourhood to the national'. The Leader also advised on the Policing Green Paper, with copies being made available to Members.

Project Management Training. The Leader reminded Members of the training session within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 23rd July 2008, entitled 'How the Council Manages Significant Projects'.

Customers and Communications Issues from Cabinet meeting 7th July 2008.

Councillor Mrs Beavis highlighted (i) the improvements to the Customer Services Strategy and the new booklet 'Improving Customer Service', and (ii) the Community Achievement Awards for persons contributing to a voluntary body or in the community. The closing date for awards is September 2008, with judging during October 2008.

Green Flag Award for Halstead Public Gardens. Councillor Walters was pleased to announce that Halstead Public Gardens have received a Green Flag Award – the national standard for quality parks and green spaces. They have also received Green Heritage Site Accreditation for 2008/09 – an award that recognises their local historic importance. Councillor Walters paid tribute to Council officers and gardeners, and supporters - the Friends of Halstead Public Gardens, Halstead Town Council and the River Colne Countryside Project.

Rickstones Pavilion and the Little Elms Pre-School, Witham. Councillor Mrs Schmitt advised that Little Elms Pre-School are to relocate to the local school and will not require further use of the Pavilion. Therefore, the full programme of works will not now be undertaken and only updating works to the changing rooms are to go ahead, i.e. rewiring, new boiler.

Funding for Riverview, Witham. Councillor Mrs Schmitt was pleased to announce that the Housing Corporation had allocated £2.49m to the extra care scheme at Riverview, Witham. This will be the largest scheme in Essex, be of mixed tenure and comprise of 55 units, with some for sale. A planning application will be submitted, with renewable energies being identified. It is anticipated that the scheme will commence in March 2009, be completed by 2010, and be a 'flagship' scheme for Witham.

(ii) **Oral Questions**

INFORMATION: Members were invited to ask any questions of the Leader on non-operational matters and the following questions were asked: -

Councillor Abbott referred to the last Council meeting and the comments made regarding **waste infrastructure in Essex**. On 25th July 2008, Essex County Council will be considering a planning application (between themselves and a joint partner) for a major waste site at Basildon, and the facility will produce solid recovered fuel (SRF) to be burnt under a waste incinerator process. Therefore, it was questioned if the 90,000 SRF produced at Basildon is targeted for a facility at Rivenhall. The Leader advised that the planning application has gone to Essex County Council, and the issues should be addressed to them.

Councillor E Lynch stated that, as the Council is a major partner with **Greenfields Community Housing** could an annual/six monthly review be provided, to recognise how the Housing Association is progressing. In response, the Leader advised that Councillors Banthorpe, Mann and Shelton sit as Council representatives on the Greenfields Community Housing Board and can provide reports, or be approached to provide information and help on issues.

Councillor Hughes referred to the **Best Value Performance Plan** and the **combined recycling targets** to rise to 50% by 2011. If the scoping opinion figures of the environmental impact assessment for the Rivenhall Airfield waste site for the burning of 90,000 tonnes of paper waste annually, what impact will that have on recycling figures in this district? The Leader responded that the Best Value Performance Plan are the target figures for Braintree District Council to seek to achieve.

Councillor Everard raised concerns to bus travellers visiting Braintree, with no recognition of a specific **bus park in the centre of the town**. The Leader stated that in the 'Three Towns: One Vision' proposals, a new bus park for the town centre is envisaged. It was agreed that the bus park to the rear of Braintree Town Hall does not look like a major bus terminus, and that proposals are in place for a good public transport interchange in the centre of Braintree.

(iii) **Chairmen's Statements**

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

(iv) **Minutes of Meetings in Public Session**

INFORMATION: Members were invited to raise any matters arising from the minutes of meetings held in public session that had been published since the Council Meeting on 9th June 2008.

Councillor E Lynch referred to Minute 20.6 (Amended Budget Sheet) of Braintree Local Committee held on 1st July 2008, and the request that all applications from charities be checked for their financial standing and are up to date on the Charity Committee website. He queried if this would be a District-wide requirement. The Leader advised that this would be drawn to the attention of the Witham Local Committee and Halstead Local Committee administrators.

Councillor Walters made reference to Minute 33, Refuse and Recycling Task and Finish Group, of the Cabinet meeting held on 7th July 2008. Further reference was made to the business efficiency review discussions at the Performance & Efficiency

Programme Board (24th June 2008) and recommendations that alternative weekly recycling is rolled out. This is subject to further discussion and an application for funding to Essex County Council. If this is achieved the Council will bring its recycling figures up to 48% by the end of 2009, and with further adjustments and consultation will be able to make progressive measures in recycling to realise 50% in 2011.

Councillor McCrea referred to the Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel, and advised that the LDF are moving towards their draft Core Strategy Preferred Options process, that will go out for consultation during the autumn. All Members will have an opportunity to comment on the draft document, and the LDF's aims to provide local distinctiveness, be more creative and increase vision for the future. The significant rural composition of this District had been recognised, and that the needs of the north of the district had to be distinguished in rural terms, from the differences in the south. All Panel Members are progressive towards Affordable Housing, sensitive to the feelings of rural villages on this issue, and aware of the current difficult economic climate.

Concerns were raised on the present economic situation regarding employment issues, the collapse of the money lending markets, and for young people being unable to buy property, and the impact all these will have on the LDF's proposals. In response, it was noted that the LDF's vision had a 15-20 year time horizon and will be beyond the current recession.

Councillor E Lynch welcomed the Chief Executive's report to Cabinet on 7th July 2008 (Minute 46 refers), considered it a benefit to all Members and requested if it could be received at Full Council.

The Leader advised that consideration will be given to the request. However, all Members do have the opportunity to attend the Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Bebb, as Chairman of the BDC Allotments Task and Finish Group, referred to the Cabinet meeting of 7th July 2008 (Minute 34 refers) and stated that the Group had been 'delighted' with the Council's response to the recommendations. However, some issues had to be highlighted – the strong demand for allotments, more effective communications, and methodology/consultation for current and future stakeholders. The budget provision from 2009/10 onward was noted, although utilising the resources held by each Local Committee could accelerate this.

In response, Councillor Walters, stated that the waiting list for allotments is up to date, that the findings of the reports would be communicated to the stakeholders, and that both Braintree Local Committee and Witham Local Committee have the opportunity to use some of their funds towards progressing the proposals.

31 **BUSINESS OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

INFORMATION: There were no reports received from Council representatives on external organisations.

As there were no items in private session, the Chairman closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.25pm.

Lady Newton
(Chairman)

APPENDIX
COUNCIL MEETING
21ST JULY 2008
PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Summary of Questions Asked / Statements Made During Public Question Time

1. Statement by Mrs Ann Foster, 34 Beadle Way, Great Leighs
Signage at Witham Cemetery

Mrs Foster referred to the new signs at Witham Cemetery that stated 'Welcome to Witham Cemetery'. This was considered outrageous and the comments of the Cabinet Member in the local press of 'a Cemetery is a place to be enjoyed by everybody' were 'out of order' and 'context'. Mrs Foster's son is laid to rest at the cemetery, together with babies, and families 'loved ones' and it was requested that the Cabinet Member issue an apology in the press. The sign should be removed and the 'Welcome to...' deleted.

In response, the Leader of the Council thanked Mrs Foster for her comments, and considered the issue 'difficult' to answer as, through his job with East Anglia Children's Hospices, he is in regular contact with parents who have lost their children. People should be encouraged to remember their children and to enjoy the time they had together. However, people deal with grief in different ways and the signage at Witham Cemetery should ask that all people who visit respect the cemetery. There was no intention to cause offence, and the Leader of the Council apologised to Mrs Foster, although the wording may not be considered out of context.