

CABINET MEETING  
Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013

PUBLIC APPENDICES

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6b	<b>Annual Audit Letter 2011/12</b>	
	• Annual Audit Letter 2011/12	1 to 8
7a	<b>Disposal of Land to Housing Associations for Affordable Housing Development</b>	
	• Land Disposal Maps	9 to 10
7b	<b>Update on delivering the Stock Transfer Promises</b>	
	• Appendix A – Greenfields Community Housing Association - Promises Tracking & RAV Actions – Completion & Sign off Report	11 to 12
	• Appendix B – Greenfields Community Housing Association - Final Internal Audit Report. Implementing Promises Follow Up audit (October 2012)	13 to 23
10a	<b>Minutes from Cabinet Sub Groups</b>	
	• Local Development Framework Sub-Committee - 5th December 2012	24 to 29
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# Annual Audit Letter 2011/12

Braintree District Council

OCTOBER 2012



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## **Code of Audit Practice and Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies**

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission contains an explanation of the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body and no responsibility is taken by auditors to any Member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

[Local Government Code of Audit Practice 2010](#)

[Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies](#)

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# Executive summary

This Annual Audit Letter summarises the findings of the work we have completed in respect of the year ended 31 March 2012.

## SUMMARY OF HIGH LEVEL AUDIT ASSURANCES



### Financial statements

- The financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council's financial affairs and income and expenditure for the year and were properly prepared in accordance with the 2011 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.
- The Annual Governance Statement was not misleading or inconsistent with other information of which we were aware.



### Internal control

- The significant financial systems are generally adequate for preparing the financial statements.
- One deficiency in internal control, within the main accounting system, was identified and reported.
- We were able to rely on the work of Internal Audit.



### Whole of Government Accounts

- As the Council is below the reporting threshold for a full review, we completed only a limited assurance review of the Whole of Government Accounts which required us to agree the information included for property, plant and equipment and pensions.



### Use of resources

- We were able to satisfy ourselves that in all significant respects, the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2012.
- We issued an unqualified value for money conclusion.

Our detailed findings and recommendations were reported to Management and the Governance Committee in our Annual Governance Report to Those Charged with Governance (September 2012).

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# Introduction

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS LETTER

The purpose of this Letter is to summarise the key issues arising from the work that we have carried out during the year. Although this Letter is addressed to the Members, it is also intended to communicate the significant issues we have identified, in an accessible format, to key external stakeholders, including members of the public.

The Letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) and also on the Council's website.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AUDITORS AND THE COUNCIL

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing auditors to local public bodies in England.

As the Council's external auditors, we have a broad remit covering financial and governance matters. We target our work on areas which involve significant amounts of public money and on the basis of our assessment of the key risks to the Council achieving its objectives.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

## SCOPE OF THE AUDIT

Our main responsibility as the appointed auditor is to plan and carry out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, we are required to review and report on:

- the Council's financial statements
- whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money).

## REPORTING THE AUDIT

We provided reports to "those charged with governance" (the Governance Committee) and management on the findings of the audit focussing on key issues regarding internal control, financial governance, accounting arrangements and use of resources. We aim to provide management with clear recommendations to assist with governance and service improvements that will add value to the audit.

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Reports issued during the year were:

- Audit Fee Letter issued April 2011
- Annual Audit Plan issued December 2011
- Annual Governance Report to those charged with governance issued September 2012
- Annual Audit Letter issued October 2012
- Grants and Certification Work (2010/11 returns) issued February 2012.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our aim is to deliver a high standard of audit which makes a positive and practical contribution that supports the Council's own agenda.

We recognise the value of your co-operation and support and would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance and co-operation provided during the course of the audit.

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# Key findings

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The Council serves a population of around 144,000, including three market towns within the 236 square miles of this largely rural district.

The Council comprises 60 elected Members representing 30 wards. It employs approximately 480 full time equivalent staff, and spends approximately £91m per annum, providing a range of public services to the residents of the District. The Council's spend is funded by Central Government Grants, Council Tax, fees and charges and other sources of income.

Further information on the activities of the Council is detailed in its Annual Reports and the Corporate Strategy 2012-2016 which are publicly available on the Council's website at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk>.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

We issued an unqualified true and fair opinion on the financial statements on 20 September 2012. Our opinion confirmed the financial statements gave a true and fair view of the Council's financial affairs at 31 March 2012 and of the income and expenditure recorded during the year then ended.

The Council's arrangements for preparing a set of financial statements free from material error were again effective, and preparation for, and support during, the audit were again both of notably high quality.

One material disclosure error was identified and amended within the financial statements. Only one other immaterial misstatement was identified and adjusted during the audit, which amounted to £75k. These matters were reported in detail in our Annual Governance Report (September 2012).

There were two uncorrected misstatements reported to Those Charged with Governance. Overall, the net impact on the financial statements should these have been corrected would have been to increase income and net assets by £52,000. Members accepted that these misstatements would remain uncorrected on the basis that their impact was not significant to the accounts.

## Annual Governance Statement

We were satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement was not inconsistent or misleading with other information we were aware of from our audit of the financial statements.



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## INTERNAL CONTROL

The Council's significant financial systems were generally adequate as a basis for preparing the financial statements although one deficiency in the main accounting system was identified and reported to Those Charged with Governance.

## WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS

As the Council is below the reporting threshold for a full review, we completed only a limited assurance review of the Whole of Government Accounts which required us to agree the information included for property, plant and equipment and pensions. The short form assurance statement was issued on the 20 September 2012.

## USE OF RESOURCES

### **Financial resilience**

Our financial resilience work has considered the Council's arrangements for financial governance, financial planning and financial control.

The Council has maintained its good track record of member and officer involvement in reviewing financial matters and consulting on expenditure priorities. Clear leadership is shown in ensuring that the Council's overall financial position is understood within the organisation.

### ***Financial outturn 2011/12***

The Council delivered against the budget and reported an underspend of £658k, which included delivering £2.1m of savings during the year.

### ***Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)***

We reviewed the MTFS, undertaking a comparison exercise with other authorities within our portfolio, and concluded that the assumptions did not appear to be unreasonable and that Braintree's document was of a notably high quality, accessible and clear.

As part of the compilation of the MTFS, the Council undertook a public consultation where members of the public were consulted on their views on future spending decisions.

Overall, the Council appears to be well-placed to manage the delivery of required savings over the next few years, and has flexibility in its reserves to support financial resilience.

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### **Challenging economy, efficiency and effectiveness**

Our review of economy, efficiency and effectiveness has considered the Council's arrangements for prioritising resources and improving efficiency and productivity.

There are a number of areas where service improvements and efficiencies were made during the year including the introduction of a food waste collection service and a trade waste recycling service, joint working on the human resources/payroll system with another authority which went live in April 2012, re-location of the operations department to save operating costs and the refurbishment of Causeway House which has enabled space to be freed up to let out.

#### ***Links between budget proposals and service performance***

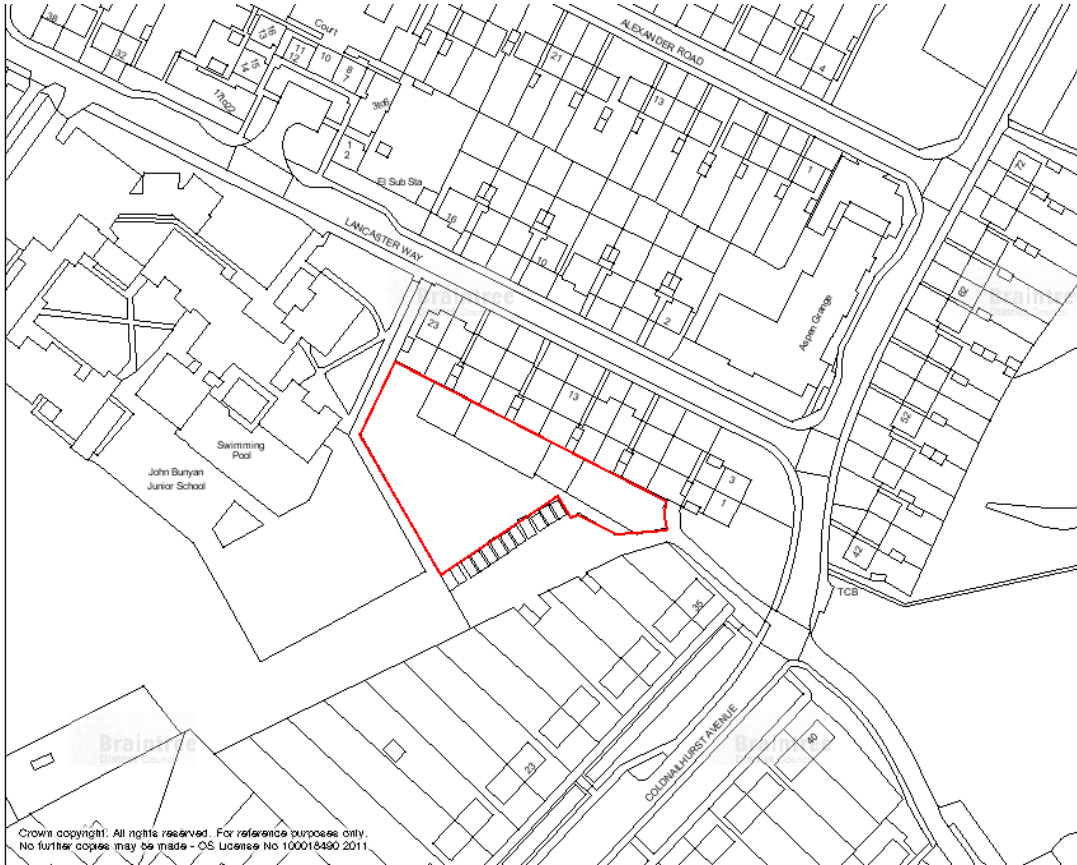
There is a clear trail of considerations made by the Council in terms of the potential impact that budget decisions may have on services, through initial service reviews, "Star Chambers" and public consultation. However, we found that the quality of documentation of service reviews was variable, despite clear templates, as was the articulation of the impact of proposed budget/resource decisions on specific targets.

The links between performance targets set for services and the decisions made as part of the budget process were less clear, although we understand the Council's objective of maintaining front line service performance and the need to set stretching targets where financial resources available are reducing.

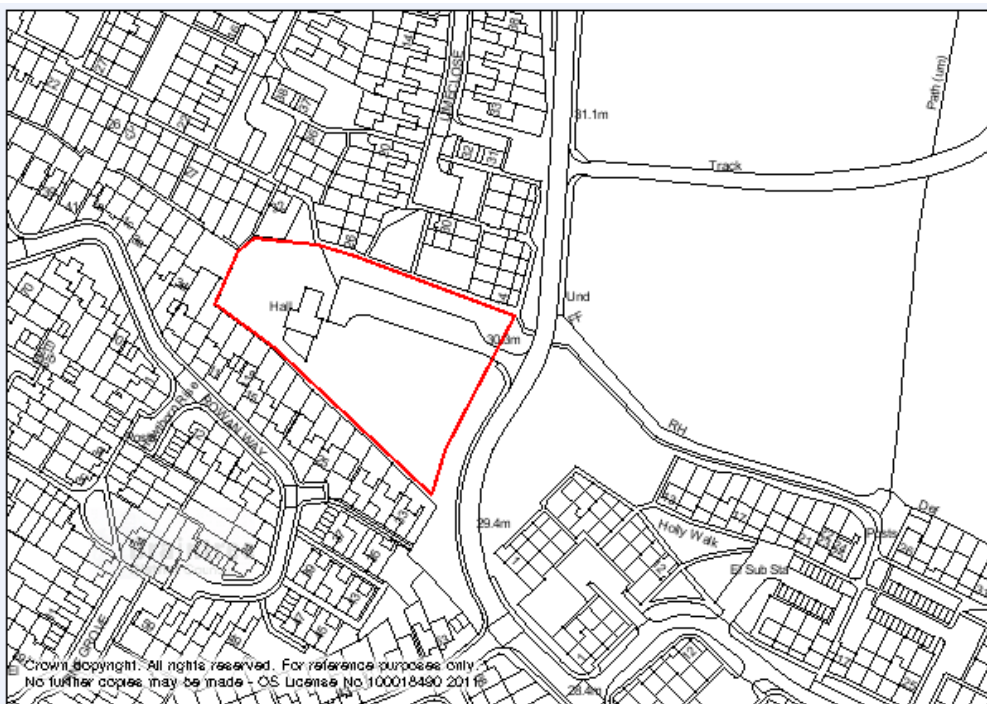
In terms of actual performance resulting, for 2011/12 the Council has maintained performance despite the tight financial environment being faced. Only two performance indicators out of a total of seventeen were below target and these were within 5% of the original target set. This is a commendable performance.

## Appendix A

### Land Off Lancaster Way, Braintree



### Land off Forest Road, Witham



## Land off New Street, Halstead



# Appendix A Promises Tracking & RAV Actions – Completion & Sign off Report



## Description Strategic 7

Action Code & Title	Description	Action Actual Outcome	Dates Completed Date	Lead
TRP-F&R-OD.23 Appropriate training would be provided for all staff and Board members	Appropriate training would be provided for all staff and Board members.OD49	Staff training needs are determined from the annual performance review process and are captured in the Training Plan, approved by Resources Committee, most recently, 10 November 2011. Progress against this is monitored by the Joint Leadership Team, most recently 29 June 2012. Training is categorised into 10 themes and is delivered by a small panel of preferred providers. Board training needs are captured in an annual skills and training needs assessment and through individual performance review discussions with the Chairman. A Training and Development framework was agreed by the Board in July 2011 - an annual training programme has been prepared and provided to members. Specific training for Board member candidates has been developed in conjunction with the NHF.	30-Jun-2012	Finance & Resources Director - David Hall
TRP-F&R-OD.24 Greenfields Community Housing would be expected to demonstrate good quality, focussed on customers' needs and represent good value for money.OD24	Greenfields Community Housing would be expected to demonstrate that its services are good quality, focussed on customers' needs and represent good value for money.OD24	Performance results for 2011/12 were considered by Operations Committee 9 May 2012 and by the Board 31 May 2012. Results show continuing progress in many areas with a number now achieving top quartile levels including rent collection and responsive repairs. In total 22 of 33 indicators achieved target for the year. The area of underperformance against target was void repairs where the Board agreed a different approach during the year to focus on improving relet condition at the expense of relet times and increased unit costs. Customer satisfaction as measured in both monthly climate tracker surveys and the STAR survey carried out in June 2012 has increased overall and for individual services. Overall satisfaction per STAR improved from 83% to 92%. Value for Money benchmarking for 2011 indicated that four of eight services measured achieved target.	30-Jun-2012	Finance & Resources Director - David Hall

Item No. 7b  
Appendix A

Action Code & Title	Description	Action Actual Outcome	Dates Completed Date	Lead
		Information not yet available for 2012.		
TRP-HMT-LHOD.34 Provide excellent and cost effective services for Leaseholders through a specialist service team.	Provide excellent and cost effective services for Leaseholders through a specialist service team. Prepare timely and accurate information about cost of services for which charges are payable including a full breakdown of the management charge.LHOD7	LPG met on 19.04.12 agreed actions up to date and completed as far as could be achieved	25-Apr-2012	Housing Director - Sandra Crosby
TRP-HMT-OD.01a Tenants and leaseholders would be at the heart of the housing service.	Tenants and leaseholders would be at the heart of the housing service.OD3	CGG agreed report re Leaseholder Board Member. Board abstained from agreeing to the recommendation going to the AGM	06-Aug-2012	Head of Neighbourhoods - Pam Richardson; Housing Director - Sandra Crosby
TRP-HMT-OD.04 Tenants and leaseholders would be encouraged to work with local communities.	Tenants and leaseholders would be encouraged to work with local communities in developing Community Options Studies - local action plans to identify their local issues and priorities for their area. Putting in place monitoring arrangements to ensure the action plans are fully implemented within their timescales. Encourage tenants and leaseholders to participate in developing local action plans and deciding local priorities.OD3,4,22,24&25	Leaseholders have been involved with a number of community studies.	23-May-2012	Housing Director - Sandra Crosby
TRP-HMT-OD.05 Sheltered Housing – provide a handbook outlining the services available and service standards for residents in sheltered housing.OD55	Sheltered Housing – providing a handbook outlining the services available and service standards for residents in sheltered housing.OD55	New older persons handbook delivered to all sheltered accommodation tenants.	24-Apr-2012	Housing Director - Sandra Crosby
TRP-HMT-OD.09 Offering information, encouragement, support and training for residents.	Offering information, encouragement, support and training to enable residents to fully participate where they choose.OD25	A range of training opportunities have been provided for involved residents that has included training alongside staff which has given them the skills and knowledge to get involved, be more confident in their decision making and also understand the business more. The Greenfields Academy was also established in 2012 which provided a range of training opportunities for non involved residents with 3 residents getting back into work as a result.	04 –Oct-2012	Housing Director - Sandra Crosby



## Final Internal Audit Report Implementing Promises Follow Up audit

October 2012

**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**



The issues raised in this Internal Audit Report are those that have been identified based on the work undertaken by the Audit Matters Team in accordance with the agreed audit briefing document. It should therefore be noted that the issues identified are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses that may exist or all the improvements that might be made.

Item No. 7b  
Appendix B

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Report Timetable	
Lead Officer:	Mike Gosling – Performance Manager
Date of Fieldwork:	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2012
Fieldwork Auditors:	Steve Davies – Senior Auditor
Reviewed By:	Greg Barr – Audit Manager
Final Report:	22 October 2012

Audit Director

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## KEY AND DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATION GRADINGS

Grade	Score	Definition
<b>Fundamental</b>	<b>100</b>	<p>Fundamental issue that would materially affect the Operating Association or Group accounts or ability to deliver the service under review or non-compliance with legislation and/or regulatory requirements.</p> <p>This level of recommendation would require immediate attention and action as appropriate.</p>
<b>Major</b>	<b>35</b>	<p>This may be a breach of standing orders, or a systematic or repeated breach of policies and procedures resulting in the potential for reputation and/or financial risk or any issue that would have a major impact on the organisation.</p>
<b>Significant</b>	<b>5</b>	<p>A one-off breach of procedures that identifies an important need to strengthen procedures or controls or possibly introduce new systems or procedures.</p>

## 1. Introduction

A follow up audit has been undertaken as part of the 2012/13 Internal Audit Plan to assess the progress made in implementing the recommendations from the previous Internal Audit report Implementing Promises dated August 2012. The follow up visit also sought to establish whether the remaining promises that were not considered to be implemented by Greenfields (and were not reviewed) at the previous audit visit had now been implemented.

The previous audit review Implementing Promises identified that the systems in place to implement the promises made at transfer were operating effectively to deliver the key objectives. There was however areas where management had agreed actions to enhance the control weaknesses identified which are shown at section 5 of this report.

## 2. Scope & Objectives

The scope of this review was to evaluate progress in implementing the 'promises' made to residents at transfer.

### **CONTROL OBJECTIVES:**

The control objectives of this audit have included determining whether:

- An Action plan has been produced that includes timescales for the promises made at transfer to be implemented.
- Management Information is produced to monitor progress in implementing the promises.
- The implementation of the promises has been reported to residents.

## 3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 A total of 6 recommendations were agreed with management following the previous Internal Audit review Implementing Promises. This review has established that of the 6 recommendations made, 5 (83%) have been implemented. One recommendation (17%) which was to report back to tenants and leaseholders on the progress made in implementing the promises made is not due to be implemented until the end of December 2012.
- 3.2 A summary of recommendations made in the previous Internal Audit reports and progress with implementation is detailed below. Progress reports on each recommendation are detailed in Section 5 for information. The key issues are outlined below in Section 4.

Review: Implementing Promises made					
	Number of Recommendations				Total
	Fundamental	Major	Significant	Minor	
<b>Implemented</b>	0	0	5	0	5
<b>Partially Implemented</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Not implemented and therefore outstanding</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Not yet due</b>	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

- 3.3 At the time of the previous audit visit 7 promises were not considered to have been completed by Greenfields and therefore they were not subject to review. All 7 promises have since been completed and were reviewed at the follow up visit. The review established that all 7 promises had been implemented and evidence is available on Covalent to confirm this. The table at 6.1 details the position in regard to each of these 7 promises. As a result all the promises made at transfer have been implemented.

## 4. KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 The recommendation made in regard to promise TRP-F&R-OD.09 has been implemented. The promise was to respond to requests for rent statements within 3 days. A record of requests showing the date of response is now used, review of the record confirmed that the target was being met.
- 4.2 The recommendation made in regard to promises TRP-HMT-LHOD.22a and PRS-LHOD.22 has been implemented. In addition to the grounds maintenance standard that is available to residents a series of consultation events have been held and a survey undertaken to get tenants views on the maintenance of communal areas.
- 4.3 The recommendation made in regard to promise TRP-HMT-OD.17 has been implemented. The recommendation stated that the promise made to allow transfer cases up to two weeks to move should be publicised. The letter sent to existing tenants to offer them a transfer now explains this as does the Lettings Policy.
- 4.4 The recommendation that the 'time taken to respond to requests for permission to undertake improvements would need to be monitored' made in regard to promise TRP-PRS-OD.23 has been implemented. Progress is now monitored using Covalent.
- 4.5 The recommendation 'to ensure evidence exists that a promise has been implemented, the note section on Covalent should be updated to explain how the promise has been implemented and relevant documents should be uploaded' has been implemented. The recommendation was discussed at the Joint Leadership Team meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> July and the evidence required to confirm that a promise had been implemented was agreed.

- 4.6 Review of the 7 promises that were not considered to be complete by Greenfields at the audit visit in June confirmed that they have now been implemented and that evidence is available on Covalent to confirm this. Following the checks undertaken at the follow up visit on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012 all the promises made at transfer are now considered to be fully implemented. A table at 6.2 shows the status of all the promises made at transfer.

## 5. Progress on Implementation of Recommendations

Grading	Score	Recommendation	Management Action	Who	By When	Current Status
Significant	5	TRP-F&R-OD.09 It is recommended that if the promise is to be met the time taken to respond to requests for statements would need to be monitored to establish whether the time taken to issue a statement following a request is actually three working days.	Accepted. We believe and understand that we have responded and provided a statement within 3 days when requested, however we have not routinely recorded requests in order to evidence this. For the period to 30 September we will keep records of requests received and the date of preparation of a rent statement. If we do not receive a request during this time we will consider mystery shopping in order to test this process.	Steve Tate, Head of Finance	30.09.12	<b>Implemented</b> The spreadsheet recording requests is available on Covalent. At 09.10.12 there have been a total of 27 requests since the first request was recorded on 03.07.12. All requests had been dealt with within the 3 day target.
Significant	5	TRP-HMT-LHOD.22a and PRS-LHOD.22. It is recommended to consider the promise fully implemented and leaseholders and tenants should be provided with details of the standards to which	Accepted. A mini review of the grounds maintenance contract will be carried out during August with consultation events being held across the district giving residents an opportunity to share their views on the current service and how we could improve going forward. The outcomes and	Sandra Crosby, Housing Director	30.09.12	<b>Implemented</b> A consultation exercise was undertaken during September 2012 at 6 estates chosen because they are the largest estates with large areas that need to be maintained. Tenants and

Grading	Score	Recommendation	Management Action	Who	By When	Current Status
		open spaces (communal areas) are to be maintained and evidence should be available that local tenants have been consulted to agree the standard of maintenance in their area.	changes made as a result of the consultation will be published in September/October 2012.			leaseholders were asked to complete a survey; 97 tenants responded and action has been agreed. Tenants have also been invited to submit proposals for estate improvements.
Significant	5	TRP-HMT-OD.17. It is recommended that if the promise is to be fully implemented the promise to allow two weeks' notice for transfers should be publicised in information made available to tenants.	Accepted. The offer letter sent to transferring tenants has been changed to inform the residents of this transfer promise.	Sandra Crosby, Housing Director	30.09.12	<b>Implemented</b> The amended offer letter is on Covalent, it includes a sentence stating 'If you are transferring from another Greenfields property you may have two weeks to move before starting your tenancy'. Section 7.2 of the Lettings Policy also explains that transfers have a two week period to move.
Significant	5	TRP-PRS-OD.23. It is recommended that if the promise is to be met the time taken to respond to requests for permission	Accepted, the monitoring spreadsheet will be amended to include the response date, and this will now be included on the new monthly neighbourhoods	Sandra Crosby, Housing Director	30.09.12	<b>Implemented</b> The spreadsheet previously used to record requests had been amended to include the

Grading	Score	Recommendation	Management Action	Who	By When	Current Status
		to undertake improvements would need to be monitored to establish whether the time taken to respond following a request is actually seven days.	performance monitoring report to ensure we are hitting the target.			date permission was given. However from 01.10.12 Covalent has been used to record requests, notify the appropriate offers of the action required and record the date permission is given. Reports can be produced from Covalent to monitor performance.
Significant	5	It is recommended that to ensure evidence exists that a promise has been implemented the note section on Covalent should be updated to explain how the promise has been implemented and relevant documents should be uploaded.	Accepted, we will ensure that notes are recorded on Covalent to explain the position / outcome with respect to each promise and that appropriate evidence is included for each item.	Mike Gosling, Performance Manager	30.09.12	<b>Implemented</b> The July 2012 audit report was discussed at the JLT and the evidence to be recorded on Covalent to confirm that a promise had been implemented was agreed.
Significant	5	It is recommended that a specific report is provided to residents and leaseholders either via the Annual Report to residents or through the	Accepted. Update reports on progress with transfer promises have been provided regularly to CGG and included in Annual Reports, Gateway to Greenfields and at the AGM. Progress	Mike Gosling, Performance Manager	31.12.12	<b>Not yet due</b> This will be completed following this audit review.

Grading	Score	Recommendation	Management Action	Who	By When	Current Status
		Newsletter that sets out the progress made in implementing the promises illustrated with examples of the resulting improvements in the service provided.	reports have also been published on the website. Once completion is accepted by the Board and CGG we will produce a newsletter style report to all residents on completion of the promises.			





# Minutes

## Local Development Framework Sub-Committee

5<sup>th</sup> December 2012



Item No. 10a

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
D L Bebb	Yes	Lady Newton	Yes
G Butland	Yes	W D Scattergood	Apologies
A V E Everard	Yes	C Siddall	Yes
M C M Lager	Apologies	M Thorogood	Apologies
J M Money	Yes	R G Walters	Yes

#### 40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor G Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 – Proposed Allotments at Great Notley as he was a Ward Councillor for Great Notley and Braintree West and Chairman of Great Notley Parish Council.

Councillor R G Walters declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7 – Proposed Allotments at Great Notley as he was a Member of Great Notley Parish Council.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion when the matter was considered.

#### 41 MINUTES

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the reference to 'Salvation Army Hall' in the decision to Minute 36 being amended to 'Royal British Legion Hall', and to the two references to 'Sherbourne House, Braintree Road, Witham' in Minute 37 being amended to 'Sherbourne House, Collingwood Road, Witham'.

#### 42 QUESTION TIME

**INFORMATION:** One statement was made. Details of the person who spoke at the meeting are contained in the Appendix to these Minutes.

Principally, these Minutes record decisions taken only and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions.

## **AMENDMENTS TO DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES ON HOUSING, DESIGN AND HERITAGE, COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AND SPORT, RECREATION AND TOURISM**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report setting out recommended draft policies and supporting text for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The report included recommended changes to draft policies and supporting text requested by Members of the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee and the Planning Committee. The policies were in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Core Strategy and they would replace the Local Plan Review policies once the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan had been adopted by the Council. The Plan, together with the Core Strategy and NPPF, would be used in the determination of planning applications. Public consultation on the draft policies and public examination by an independent planning Inspector would take place prior to adoption.

**DECISION:** That, subject to the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan being approved in its entirety by the Council for public consultation:-

The draft policies and supporting text on housing, design and heritage, community facilities, and sport, recreation and tourism issues, as set out in the report, be approved for inclusion in the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, subject to the following amendments:-

### **ADM 8 Housing and Density**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to the final paragraph being amended to read 'On large sites of 10 or more dwellings, the Council will encourage the provision of a proportion of dwellings to be capable of adaptation, without major structural alterations, to meet the needs of people with disabilities' and to the explanatory text being amended to ensure that references to 'stair lifts' are not ambiguous, and to the inclusion of references to a 'shower' and 'wet room' in the design of bathrooms.

### **ADM20 Layout and Design of Development**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to additional explanatory text referring to 'local distinctiveness arising from eg. Village Design Statements; Conservation Area Appraisals; or Parish Plans' and to the penultimate paragraph of the Policy being amended to read 'Use of the most sustainable modes of transport is promoted in the design and layout of new development, the highway impact is assessed and the resultant traffic generation and its management shall seek to address safety concerns and seek to avoid significant increases in traffic movement, particularly in residential areas'.

### **ADM 21 Outdoor Advertisements**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to it being amended to read 'Proposals for outdoor advertisements which would be significantly detrimental to the visual amenity of the area, or to public and highway safety, will be refused'.

44 **DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN  
POLICIES ON THE COUNTRYSIDE, NATURE CONSERVATION AND LANDSCAPE,  
RETAIL AND TOWN CENTRE ISSUES, COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT AREAS,  
THE ENVIRONMENT, AND DELIVERING AND MONITORING THE STRATEGY**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report setting out recommended draft policies and supporting text for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The policies were in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Core Strategy and they would replace the Local Plan Review policies once the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan had been adopted by the Council. The Plan, together with the Core Strategy and NPPF, would be used in the determination of planning applications. Public consultation on the draft policies and public examination by an independent planning Inspector would take place prior to adoption.

**DECISION:** That, subject to the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan being approved in its entirety by the Council for public consultation:-

The draft policies and supporting text on the countryside, nature conservation and landscape, retail and town centre issues, comprehensive development areas, the environment, and delivering and monitoring the strategy, as set out in the report, be approved for inclusion in the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, subject to the following amendments:-

**ADM45 Built Development in the Countryside**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to the third from last paragraph being amended to read 'Proposals for intensive livestock breeding which may generate unacceptable noise, smells or other kinds of pollution will not be considered within 250m of residential dwellings'.

**Paragraph 4.10**

It was agreed that reference to Great Notley as a 'District Centre' should be retained, but that the 'Local Centre' reference should be deleted.

**ADM54 Retail Site Allocations**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to the removal of the reference to 'New Local Centre – North-West Braintree, off Panfield Lane, Braintree.'

45 **PROPOSED ALLOTMENTS AT GREAT NOTLEY**

**INFORMATION:** Members were reminded that at its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the Local Development Framework Panel had agreed the draft Master Plan for the Great Notley Employment Growth location west of the A131, subject to the provision of allotments. It was reported that the developers of the site had subsequently put forward a proposal to provide 30 full sized allotments on approximately 1.4ha of land located to the north-west of the site.

**DECISION:**

- (1) That the Master Plan for the Great Notley Employment Growth Location be amended to include an area for allotments in the north-western part of the growth

location, as identified in Appendix 1 to the Agenda report, and that the amended Master Plan be approved.

- (2) That the identified area in the north-western part of the Great Notley Growth Location be allocated for allotments in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan

#### 46 **BRAINTREE RETAIL STUDY UPDATE 2012**

**INFORMATION:** Members were reminded that the Council had commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to prepare a retail study update to ensure that the retail boundaries, allocations and policies in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan were based on robust, up to date evidence.

This study included an assessment of existing retail provision, town centre health-checks, a survey of existing shopping patterns, an assessment of retail capacity and need and recommendations on future retail provision and policy.

In discussing this item, reference was made to land at Broomhills Industrial Estate, Pods Brook Road, Braintree which had been put forward by Indigo Planning Limited on behalf of Sainsbury's Plc as a site for a new supermarket. A representative of Indigo Planning Limited had made a statement relating to this and the Retail Study during Question Time. It was agreed that copies of a letter dated 12th November 2012 received from Indigo Planning Limited commenting on the Braintree Retail Study Update 2012 and the response by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partnership should be sent to Members of the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee with these Minutes.

#### **DECISION:**

- (1) That the Retail Study Update 2012 be approved as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.
- (2) That the Local and District Centre boundaries as shown in Appendix 1 to the Agenda report be approved.
- (3) That the retail and other town centre uses site allocations, as set out in paragraph 6.1 of the Agenda report (and repeated below), including the allocation of the area above the former Co-operative Store, Kings Chase, Witham as a housing site, be approved.

Land at George Yard, Braintree

Land at Manor Street, Braintree

Tesco Store and car park and Pound End Mill Building, Braintree

Sainsbury's Store and car park, Braintree

New Local Centre North-West Braintree, off Panfield Lane, Braintree

Newlands Shopping Centre (including land to the rear of Coach House Way), Witham

Former Co-operative Store, Kings Chase, Witham

New Local Centre at Maltings Lane Neighbourhood, Witham

Land East of the High Street, Halstead

EMD Site, Kings Road, Halstead

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.34pm.

Councillor R G Walters  
(Chairman)

## APPENDIX

### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SUB-COMMITTEE

5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2012

### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

#### Details of Questions Asked / Statements Made During Public Question Time

1. Statement Relating to Item 8 – Braintree Retail Study Update 2012

Statement by Ms Leanne Croft, Indigo Planning Limited, Swan Court, Worple Road, London (for Sainsbury's Plc)

# Minutes

## Local Development Framework Sub- Committee 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012



Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
D L Bebb	Apologies	Lady Newton	Yes
G Butland	Yes	W D Scattergood	Yes
A V E Everard	Apologies	C Siddall	Apologies
M C M Lager	Yes	M Thorogood	Apologies
J M Money	Yes	R G Walters	Yes

Councillor P Horner was also in attendance.

### 47 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Councillor M C M Lager declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 – Proposed Visually Important Space Allocations at Braintree, Castle Hedingham, Cressing, Feering, Finchingfield, Hatfield Peverel, Silver End and Witham as he was a Member of Witham Town Council which had been consulted on the matter.

Councillor J M Money declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9 – Proposed Visually Important Space Allocations at Braintree, Castle Hedingham, Cressing, Feering, Finchingfield, Hatfield Peverel, Silver End and Witham as she was a Member of Witham Town Council which had been consulted on the matter, and a District Council Ward Member for Witham South.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion when the matter was considered.

### 48 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** The Minutes of the meeting of the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 49 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** One statement was made. Details of the person who spoke at the meeting are contained in the Appendix to these Minutes.



Principally, these Minutes record decisions taken only and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions.

50 **PROPOSED INFORMAL RECREATION ALLOCATION - LAND OFF STONEHAM STREET, COGGESHALL AND PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATION - HAROLD SIMS HOUSE, SIMS CLOSE, EARLS COLNE**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that land adjacent to the Doctor's surgery, to the rear of Stoneham Street, Coggeshall was currently allocated for community uses in the Local Plan Review and on the draft Proposals Map Inset for Coggeshall. However, as the new community hall intended for the site was no longer required, it was proposed that the land should instead be allocated for informal recreation use in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and on the Coggeshall Inset Map. This was its current use.

It was reported that Harold Sims House, Sims Close, Earls Colne currently provided specialist bedsit housing with communal facilities, including bathrooms. As such it did not count towards the District's housing supply. However, in September 2012 planning permission had been granted to convert the building to 13 self-contained flats, each of which would have a private bathroom. As such, the properties could contribute to the District's housing provision and the site included on the Council's list of new residential sites of 10 or more dwellings. It was therefore proposed that the site should be shown on the draft Inset Map for Earls Colne as a residential site.

**DECISION:** That, subject ultimately to approval by Council:-

- (1) Land adjacent to the Doctor's surgery, to the rear of Stoneham Street, Coggeshall, be allocated for informal recreation uses in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and on the Coggeshall Inset Map.
- (2) Harold Sims House, Sims Close, Earls Colne be allocated as a residential site of 10 or more dwellings in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and on the Earls Colne Inset Map.

51 **VIABILITY REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT SITES IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

**INFORMATION:** Members were reminded that Lambert Smith Hampton had been commissioned by the Council to examine the viability of forty sites across the District for new/continued employment use and that on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee had agreed employment site allocations.

Members were reminded that the Sub-Committee had agreed to the allocation of sites at Central Park, Halstead, Hunwick Engineering, Factory Lane West, Halstead and Tanner's Dairy, Sible Hedingham being discussed with Halstead Town Council, Halstead District Ward Councillors, Sible Hedingham Parish Council and Sible Hedingham District Ward Councillors respectively. However, as it had not been possible to complete these discussions before this meeting, it was proposed that the existing employment allocations at Halstead and the B1/D1 uses at Sible Hedingham should remain on the draft maps for the purpose of public consultation. Members of the Sub-Committee would be able to reconsider these sites and the views of the Town and Parish Councils before the submission versions of the maps were agreed.

**DECISION:** That, subject ultimately to approval by Council:-

The Viability Review of Employment Sites in the Braintree District be approved as part of the Local Development Framework evidence base.

52

**DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN  
POLICIES FOR FREEPORT; BRAINTREE RETAIL PARK; BROOMHILLS,  
INDUSTRIAL ESTATE AND SITE AT THE CORNER OF SPRINGWOOD  
DRIVE/RAYNE ROAD, BRAINTREE**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report setting out recommended draft policies and supporting text for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The policies were in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Core Strategy and they would replace the Local Plan Review policies once the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan had been adopted by the Council. The Plan, together with the Core Strategy and NPPF, would be used in the determination of planning applications. Public consultation on the draft policies and public examination by an independent planning Inspector would take place prior to adoption.

It was reported that the site of Broomhills Industrial Estate, Pod's Brook Road, Braintree was currently identified for employment use. A planning application had recently been submitted to develop a supermarket on the land. The Employment Viability Study 2012 assessment indicated that the site could be developed for more intensive employment uses and made more prominent in order to attract national occupiers. The Viability Study had concluded that Broomhills Industrial Estate should be retained as an employment site. The site had also been assessed as part of the Retail Study Update 2012 which had concluded that whilst it could meet qualitative need in the western part of Braintree, it was out of the town centre. The Study had concluded that the scale of convenience floor space proposed by the current planning application significantly exceeded the more limited capacity which had been forecasted and which could be better met through the development of a supermarket at the North-West Braintree growth location.

With regard to land at the corner of Springwood Drive and Rayne Road, Braintree (BOS4) it was reported that this was currently identified as an employment area, but had been put forward for possible bulky retail use. The site had been assessed as part of the Employment Viability Study 2012 which had concluded that it should be retained for employment purposes. The Retail Study Update 2012 had recognised the need for bulky comparison goods to better serve North-West Braintree, but it had not recommend that this site should be specifically allocated.

**DECISION:** That, subject ultimately to the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan being approved in its entirety by the Council for public consultation:-

- (1) The draft policies and supporting text on Freeport Outlet Centre, Braintree Retail Park, leisure and entertainment and car parking at Freeport Outlet Centre and Braintree Retail Park, as set out in the report and attached as an Appendix to the report, be approved for inclusion in the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, subject to the following amendments:-

### **Policy ADM 64 Car Parking – Freeport and Braintree Retail Park**

In considering this Policy, the Sub-Committee agreed that the Inset Map for Freeport, Braintree (attached as an Appendix to the Agenda) should be amended to designate Braintree Swimming Pool as Formal Recreation, to designate the area of land between Braintree Swimming Pool and the railway line as Visually Important Space, and to not designate land previously identified for a possible extension to Braintree Swimming Pool (Gym) for any specific use.

- (2) That land at Broomhills Industrial Estate, Pod's Brook Road, Braintree, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be retained for employment uses.
- (3) That land at the corner of Springwood Drive and Rayne Road, Braintree, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be retained for employment uses.

## **53 DRAFT SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN POLICIES ON THE ECONOMY**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report setting out recommended draft policies and supporting text for the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The policies were in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted Core Strategy and they would replace the Local Plan Review policies once the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan had been adopted by the Council. The Plan, together with the Core Strategy and NPPF, would be used in the determination of planning applications. Public consultation on the draft policies and public examination by an independent planning Inspector would take place prior to adoption.

**DECISION:** That, subject to the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan being approved in its entirety by the Council for public consultation:-

The draft policies and supporting text on the economy, as set out in the report, be approved for inclusion in the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, subject to the following amendments:-

### **ADM 65 Employment Policy Areas**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to the first paragraph being amended to read 'Employment policy areas are identified on the Proposals Map and listed in Appendix 2, where the following uses will be considered appropriate and where the following employment uses will be permitted and retained:-'

The Sub-Committee approved the following additional Policy:-

### **Policy ADM 66A Business and Industrial Uses**

Locations for B1 business uses and B2 industrial uses are identified on the Proposals Map and listed in this policy, where only use classes B1 and B2 will be permitted, unless they are both essential and ancillary to the main use of any unit and do not occupy more than 5% of the floor-space of the main unit.

Land rear of Kings Head, Chapel Road, Ridgewell

Land at Pale Green, Helions Bumpstead

## **Policy ADM 70 Change of Use of Commercial Buildings in the B Use Classes**

The Sub-Committee approved this Policy, subject to the third paragraph of the criteria being amended to read 'The building is not within an employment policy area, or an area allocated for B1 or B2 uses as shown on the Proposals Map'

### **54 PROPOSED VISUALLY IMPORTANT SPACE ALLOCATIONS AT BRAINTREE, CASTLE HEDINGHAM, CRESSING, FEERING, FINCHINGFIELD, HATFIELD PEVEREL, SILVER END AND WITHAM**

**INFORMATION:** It was reported that the Open Space Audit 2006, which formed part of the Green Spaces Strategy, had identified a number of unallocated amenity areas across the District. Whilst these areas contributed towards open space provision and the overall character of the street scene, they were not currently protected and it was proposed that they should be allocated as Visually Important Space in the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Document.

**DECISION:** That, subject to the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan being approved in its entirety by the Council for public consultation:-

That the following areas, as indicated on the maps attached as an Appendix to the Agenda report, be allocated as Visually Important Space:-

Corner of Cressing Road and Chapel Hill, Braintree

Between Arnhem Grove and Alexander Road, Coldnailhurst Avenue, Braintree

Two sites fronting Nos. 1 – 10 and fronting Nos. 19 – 30 Deer Park, Castle Hedingham

Two sites land off the B1018 Braintree Road, adjacent to The Close and North of The Close, Cressing Tye

Two sites fronting Nos. 1 – 13, Glebe Gardens, Feering

Two sites land West of the B1057 and North of (fronting Nos. 1 – 6) Stephen Marshall Avenue, Finchingfield

Land at Hadfelda Square, adjacent to the library, The Street, Hatfield Peverel (subject to Hatfield Peverel Parish Council and the Doctors' Surgery clarifying if the land is required for car parking)

Site North of junction between Boars Tye Road and Silver Street, Silver End

Two sites fronting Nos. 75A – 103 odds and fronting Nos. 3 – 43 odds, land at Glebe Crescent, Witham, and central site at Bramston Green, Witham

Site fronting Nos. 125 – 141 odds, Powers Hall End, Witham

Sites 5 (rear of Ouse Chase, Cam Way and Tamar Avenue), 6 (rear of Medway Avenue), 7 (rear of Medway Avenue and rear of Douglas Grove), 8 (rear of Ness Walk and rear of Helford Court), 9 (rear of Helford Court and rear of Brent Close) and 10 (fronting Nos. 5 – 13 odds Colne Chase), off Humber Road, Witham

Site 11 adjacent to the pond, Forest Road, Witham and site 12 land between Cypress Road and Cut Throat Lane, Witham

Sites 13 (Goda Close), 14 (Goda Close), 15 (Turstan Road), 16 (Osbert Road), 17 (Godric Road), 18 (corner of Allectus Way), 19 (between Allectus Way and Faber Road), 20, 21 and 22 (between Allectus Way and Wulvesford), 23, 24 and 25 (between Edmund Road and Wulvesford), 26 (opposite Claudius Way, between Allectus Way and Wulvesford), 27, 28 and 29 (between Allectus Way and Wulvesford) and 30 (between Alfreg Road and Wulvesford), off Allectus Way, Hatfield Road, Witham

## 55 DRAFT REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**INFORMATION:** Members were reminded that in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council was required to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) outlining community involvement in planning applications and plan making.

Due to amendments in legislation and other recent changes, the SCI had been reviewed and a copy of the draft revised statement was attached as an Appendix to the Agenda report.

The draft revised SCI would be subject to a six week public consultation period commencing on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013 which would be concurrent with consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. Following this, any responses received would be considered by the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee and the SCI would be amended where appropriate. A revised SCI would subsequently be presented to Cabinet and Council for adoption.

**DECISION:** That the draft revised Statement of Community Involvement be approved for public and stakeholder consultation.

## 56 SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROPOSED CONSULTATION STRATEGY

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report on the proposed Strategy for public consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Document.

It was proposed that consultation should take place over a six-week period between 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013. As part of the consultation, a series of exhibitions would be held in Braintree, Halstead and Witham, the Key Service Villages and Great Yeldham as these were settlements where residential allocations of ten or more dwellings were proposed. These settlements also acted as focus points for surrounding villages. Each exhibition would include general information about the Plan, together with specific local information.

Respondents would be encouraged to submit comments via the Council's online consultation portal 'Objective', although written responses would also be accepted.

In discussing this item, Members were asked to determine if a letter/leaflet should be sent to all households in the District to advise people about the consultation period and exhibition dates and to invite them to view documents on the Council's website. It was anticipated that the cost of delivering a letter to every household, plus materials and printing costs, would be approximately £5,000 excluding VAT.

### **DECISION:**

- (1) That the proposed Strategy for public consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Document be approved, subject to early notification of editorial text being sent to Parish Councils for inclusion in Parish Magazines and display on Parish notice-boards; and in addition to the Braintree

and Witham Times and the Halstead Gazette, to details being published in the local newspaper circulating in the Northern part of the District.

- (2) That a letter/leaflet is not sent to all households in the District to advise people about consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

57 **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT/  
SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN -  
INTRODUCTORY SECTION AND APPENDICES - DELEGATED APPROVAL**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Council was required to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for all Development Plan documents. In addition, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was also required in order to comply with European Legislation.

A combined SA/SEA report would be prepared to assess and predict the economic, social and environmental effects which were likely to arise from the implementation of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

The report was being produced by Essex County Council Officers and it would be published for public and stakeholder consultation for a six week period beginning on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013. In order to incorporate the decisions made by the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012, it was necessary to delegate authority to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee to approve the SA/SEA

It was reported that the introductory section of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, together with the Appendices to the Plan had not been finalised and it was proposed that these too should be approved by the Chairman of the Sub-Committee so that it may be published for public consultation on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

**DECISION:** That the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee be authorised to approve the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment and the introductory section and Appendices of the draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan for the purpose of public consultation.

**Future Meetings**

It was reported that the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee's meetings scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 had been cancelled. However, a new meeting date had been arranged for 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at which consideration would be given to the extraction sites proposed in Essex County Council's Minerals' Plan which was at the final stage of public consultation. The Plan would also be considered by the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013 when the Council's response would be determined.

At the close of the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Officers for their hard work in preparing the Local Development Framework documents. The Chairman wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.15pm.

Councillor R G Walters

(Chairman)

## APPENDIX

### LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SUB-COMMITTEE

13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2012

### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

#### Details of Questions Asked / Statements Made During Public Question Time

1. Statement Relating to Item 6 - Viability Review of Employment Sites in the Braintree District and Item 7 - Draft Site Allocations and Development Management Plan Policies for Freeport; Braintree Retail Park; Broomhills Industrial Estate and site at the corner of Springwood Drive/Rayne Road, Braintree

Statement by Mr Gerry Wade, Derrick Wade Waters, Chartered Surveyors, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex (for Indigo Planning Limited and Sainsbury's Plc)

# Minutes

## Developing Democracy Group

8<sup>th</sup> January 2013



Present:

Members	Present	Members	Present
Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor M C M Lager	Apologies
Councillor P R Barlow	Yes	Councillor V Santomauro	Apologies
Councillor J C Beavis	Yes	Councillor C Siddall	Yes
Councillor G Butland (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor G A Spray	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes		

20. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** There were no interests declared.

21. **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Developing Democracy Group held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to Councillor Santomauro being recorded as present.

22. **DISTRICT ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW**

**INFORMATION:** Nicola Beach, Chief Executive, gave a presentation on the work which had been undertaken to date in developing the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on the size of the Council and she reminded Members of the Group on the timetable for the review, including the key dates for the submission of documents.

Nicola Beach advised Members that a full Council Meeting had been arranged provisionally for 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013 to discuss the Boundary Review. However, the Boundary Commission had subsequently indicated that the Council's submission did not have to be formally ratified by full Council unless the Council was seeking a review which included a request for single Member Wards only. It had also been confirmed by the Commission that a Council approved submission did not carry any more weight than submissions made by Political Groups and/or individual members. Nicola Beach requested the Group determine whether it supported single Member Wards only; its view on the number of Councillors; and whether there was consensus.

The Group considered the working draft of the supporting document on Council size which had been prepared by Officers and circulated in advance. The document sought to address the questions set out in the Commission's guidance and collated the responses received to the recent Member questionnaire. Amendments to this document were put forward by Members for inclusion in a revised draft.



It was reported that Professor Paul Wiles, Lead Commissioner of the Boundary Commission, had offered to attend a special meeting of the Developing Democracy Group at the Council's Offices on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 to answer any queries which Councillors and Officers may have. It was agreed that this meeting may not be necessary if Political Groups were making their own submissions and that any queries could be dealt with via email.

#### **DECISION:**

- (1) That single Member only Wards **not** be sought as part of the Boundary Commission's Review.
- (2) That, for the purpose of the Council's submission, there is no consensus on the number of Councillors, but each Political Group be invited to submit their own proposals to the Boundary Commission.
- (3) Therefore, the Council meeting scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> January is to be cancelled.
- (4) That the working draft of the supporting document on Council size be amended as indicated by Councillors at the meeting, subject to the responses at paragraph 8.1 and 8.2 being deleted and Political Groups and/or individual Councillors invited to submit their own responses to these. This updated draft will be circulated to all Developing Democracy Group Members for further comment and to the Boundary Commission.
- (5) That the Commission be requested to confirm if the approach being taken by the Council is acceptable and, if so, whether further guidance might be provided via email. If agreed, the Developing Democracy Group meeting proposed for 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 be cancelled.
- (6) That following referral to the Boundary Commission, and subject to (5) above the submission be sent by email to all Councillors setting out the agreed approach with a reminder that they may submit their own submissions as well as that of Political Groups and the deadline for doing this. It was noted that Councillor Abbott had been in contact with Councillor Pell about a joint submission between their groups and Councillor Abbott would confirm this to the Chief Executive.
- (7) That a Press Release be issued setting out the Council's stance based on the agreement that there should not be single Member only Wards; and also indicating the number of Councillors which each Political Group considers to be appropriate i.e. Conservative Group 50 (+ 2 or – 2); Green Group 60 (status quo); Labour Group 60 (status quo).

The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 6.18pm.

G BUTLAND  
(Chairman)