

# Minutes

## Cabinet

8<sup>th</sup> March 2021



These minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A recording of the meeting is available at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

### Present:

Portfolio	Cabinet Member	Present
Leader of the Council	Councillor G Butland	Yes
Deputy Leader of the Council and Economic Development and Infrastructure	Councillor T Cunningham	Yes
Communities Culture and Tourism	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Corporate Transformation	Councillor J McKee	Yes
Environment and Place	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Finance and Performance Management	Councillor D Bebb	Yes
Health and Wellbeing	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Homes	Councillor K Bowers	Yes
Planning	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes

Also present as invitees of the Leader: Councillor D Mann, Leader of the Labour Group and Councillor Mrs J Pell, Leader of the Halstead Residents Group.

### 54 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** There following interest was declared.

Councillor Mrs Pell declared and Non Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6 'Third Quarter Performance Report 2020-21' as Chairman of the Halstead Public Gardens, who were mentioned in the report.

### 55 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman as soon as possible.

### 56 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were no questions asked or statements made.

## 57 APPOINTMENT TO CABINET SUB COMMITTEE

**INFORMATION:** Members were asked to note the change in Membership to the Local Plan Sub-Committee.

Members were reminded that the Local Plan Sub-Committee was a Sub-Committee of Cabinet and its membership, under the Councils constitution, was appointed by the Leader who was responsible for informing Cabinet of any changes to the membership.

It was reported that the changes to the LPSC as set out in the report would come into effect from 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021. The size of the LPSC would remain unchanged, and the total membership remained at 12 Members. The membership of the LPSC had been amended and Councillor David Bebb, current Vice-Chairman of the LPSC, would step down and be replaced by Councillor Wendy Scattergood, who would also be appointed as Vice-Chairman.

Members were advised that the Leader of the Green and Independent Group had made an amendment to the Groups allocated membership nomination and this had been agreed with the Leader of the Council. Accordingly Councillor Jenny Sandum would step down and be replaced with Councillor Paul Thorogood.

**DECISION:** That Cabinet noted the change in Membership to the Local Plan Sub-Committee as set out in the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To ensure that the Cabinet Sub-Committees maintain full membership so as to continue to discharge its functions as delegated by the Leader of the Council.

## 58 BUSINESS PLANNING AND ANNUAL PLAN

**INFORMATION:** Members were reminded that the current Annual Plan ran until March 2021 and under normal circumstances, a new Annual Plan for 2021/22 would be presented to Cabinet in March and agreed for the following year. Due to the number of challenging circumstances services had faced over the last year, it had been recognised that services required additional time to understand what the priorities for the following year were and to discuss delivery of proposed projects and actions with their teams.

It was considered appropriate to allow services adequate time to fully take stock and consider what projects and actions they would be able to deliver over the coming months and years in order to deliver the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024. It was recognised that this would differ across services and that's some services would have more areas to consider than others. It was therefore proposed to extend the Annual Plan 2020/21 for six months until the end of September 2021 to allow additional time for a number of projects in the Annual Plan 2020/21 to be delivered and for the following Annual Plan to follow the same 18 month timescale and run from October 2021 until March 2023.

**DECISION: That Cabinet agreed:**

1. The extension of the Annual Plan 2020/21 until September.

2. A new 18 month plan from October 2021 until March 2023.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To agree the Council's key priorities and actions for 2020/21.

59 **THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21**

**INFORMATION:** Members were updated on the performance of the Council at the end of the third quarter (October 2020 to December 2020).

It was reported that in the third quarter, 41 projects were on track and continued to be progressing well and nine projects had an amber status due to impact of the pandemic. Targets had not been set for all performance indicators this year due to the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus. For the targets that remained, seven performance indicators had met or exceed target and seven performance indicators had missed their target. Four had missed target by less than 5% and three had missed their target by more than 5%. Members were informed that the areas of underperformance were in relation to recycling rates, average waiting time for disabled facility grants, average call answering time in the Customer Service Centre, the percentage of complaints responded to within timescale, the collection rate for Business rates, the collection rate for Council Tax and the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days. Further details can be found in the main report.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some areas of good performance in the third quarter and these were in relation to:

- A total of 95 affordable homes had been delivered across the District bring the total for the year so far to 177 beating the target of 150.
- In respect of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park the infrastructure contract remained on programme and within budget.
- Building work had started in the third quarter on the I-Construct Innovation in Construction Hub. The Hub would be home to a team offering business support, grant schemes and advice to firms connected to the construction industry.
- A number of new discretionary grants were launched in the third quarter to support businesses impacted by the second lockdown and the restrictions of the Tiers taking the total number of grants to eleven. Since March 2020, the Council had issued £35 million to over 2,600 businesses. The Cabinet Member passed on his thanks to the Revenues and Benefits, and Economic Development Teams for their massive efforts in the swift delivery of these grants.

In respect of financial performance, it was reported that the estimated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Council's finances for the year was £3.548 million: £1.311million of additional expenditure and £2.237million reduction in income. The amount of government support received was £1.952 million of emergency funding plus £297,930 of New Burdens funding. It was also projected that the Council would be entitled to claim £714,000 under the government's Income Compensation Scheme, for which £411,365 had already been received. The net financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the General Fund revenue account was therefore projected at £584,000 of overspend. Other projected budget variances, including the return on the investment in the Viridor's recycling facility, staff vacancies in Finance and Sustainable Development and reduced fuel costs for Operations' services, net to a positive amount of £863,000.

Whilst the impact of the in-year projected variances (Covid related and other) on the General Fund was a net positive variance of £279,000, this was after a drawdown from the General Fund unallocated balance earlier in the year, of £135,420, to fund the increased cost of the annual pay award from April 2020. The overall estimated position for the year was therefore a net addition to the General Fund unallocated balance of £143,580. General Fund unallocated balances at 31st March 2021, were estimated to be £5.417 million based on budgeted additions/ reductions and this latest in-year projected variance. The approved capital programme totalled £72.759 million, with £37.514 million profiled into the current financial year. At the end of December 2020, £18.717 million had been spent across the programme with an expectation that the rate of spending would increase during the final quarter of the year.

Councillor McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation wished to commend all staff and managers for their continuous hard work, motivation and support to the organisation throughout the pandemic.

Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member for Performance and Finance, Corporate Transformation advised Members that this was his last meeting of Cabinet before formally resigning as a District Councillor, and wished to put on record his thanks to the organisation and to pay tribute to his fellow Members and Officers for their tremendous support and camaraderie during his time as a Braintree District Councillor over the past 14 years.

**DECISION:** That Cabinet noted and endorsed the Council's performance as at the end of the third quarter, as detailed in the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To inform the Cabinet of the performance of the Council.

The Leader of the Council passed on his thanks and best wishes to Councillor Bebb for his service as a Braintree District Councillor over the past 14 years and in particular the way in which he had represented his constituents in Hatfield Peverel during the many years he had been a Member there, and for the committed role he had played as a Cabinet Member over the past 10 years.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 7.48pm.

COUNCILLOR G BUTLAND  
(Leader of the Council)