

Minutes

Council Meeting



13th December 2021

These Minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. An audio recording of the meeting is available for six months at www.braintree.gov.uk

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Pell	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Yes	Councillor I Pritchard	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes	Councillor M Radley	Yes
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rehman	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Apologies	Councillor Mrs J Sandum	Yes
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Apologies
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor P Euesden	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Apologies
Councillor T Everard	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes
Councillor Mrs D Garrod	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor A Hensman (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood	Yes
Councillor S Hicks	Yes	Councillor N Unsworth	Yes
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Yes	Councillor D Wallace	Yes
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin	Yes	Councillor Mrs L Walters	Yes
Councillor W Korsinah	Yes	Councillor Miss M Weeks	Yes
Councillor D Mann	Yes	Councillor D White	Yes
Councillor T McArdle	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Wilson (Chairman)	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor A Munday	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Yes
Councillor Mrs I Parker	Yes		

Councillor Mrs S Wilson, Chairman of the Council welcomed everyone to the Council meeting, which was being held in a 'hybrid' format in the Council Chamber at Causeway House. This was due to the current uncertainties around the emergence of the new Covid variant and the need to minimise any risk posed to the safety of those in attendance. A period of three hours

would be allowed for this meeting. Members attending the meeting remotely were allowed to participate in the meeting but would not be permitted to vote on any items on the agenda.

51 **URGENT BUSINESS: APPROVAL OF REASON FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AT THIS MEETING**

INFORMATION: The Chairman used her discretion to re-order the agenda and allow an item of Urgent Business to be attended to before the scheduled business items. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, was invited to present the report.

Due to the discovery of the new Covid-19 variant, the Group Leaders had agreed to arrange for there to be a reduction in the number of Members in attendance at the meeting of Full Council on 13th December 2021. These measures would allow the Council to achieve 2m social distancing and comply with advice from the Director of Public Health. As a result of the agreement, Members who were not present in the Chamber during the meeting were instead in attendance via Zoom to allow them to engage in the debate, although they would not be permitted to vote on any agenda items. Members who were in attendance at the meeting remotely via Zoom would still be recorded as present.

DECISION: For the purposes of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council approved the following as a reason for a Member's non-attendance of the Council meeting on 13th December 2021:-

1. The Member took part in the meeting via Zoom as a result of the public health request for a reduced attendance in the Council chamber for that meeting; and
2. So that those attending would be able to engage in the debate but not be able to vote. Importantly, those attending the meeting virtually would not be affected by the six month rule.

REASON FOR DECISION: To approve a Member's absence from the meeting of Full Council on 13th December 2021, which arose out of the need to follow the new public health advice.

52 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 4, 'Public Question Time,' on behalf of all members of the Green and Independent Group as three of the speakers were known to them: Mr M Staines, Ms R Pearson and Mr C Riches.

Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 7c, 'Motion by Councillor Mrs J Beavis,' as a member of the Mid-Essex Patients and Community Forum.

Councillor S Hicks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 7c, 'Motion by Councillor Mrs J Beavis' as he was currently a contractor working in the care industry as a driver.

Councillors remained in the meeting, unless stated otherwise and took part in the debate and decision when the Items were considered.

53 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 11th October 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

54 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were eleven statements made. As the majority of the statements were in relation to the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) proposals for two prisons at Wethersfield Airfield, it was agreed that these would be heard first. The remaining statements would then follow.

Statements made in regard to the proposed prisons at Wethersfield Airfield

The first statement was made by Ms Rosie Pearson.

The second statement was made by Ms Rosalind Gourgey.

The third statement was made by Mr Mark Ault.

The fourth statement was made by Mrs Beverley Ault.

The fifth statement was made by Ms Trisha Roberts.

The sixth statement was made by Mr Jeremy Maddox.

The seventh statement was made by Ms Lesley Groves.

The eighth statement was made by Mr Nick Chapman.

In light of the statements made, Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, provided a verbal reply to the speakers. In his response, Councillor Butland explained that the Council was required to operate in line with the planning processes, lest it incur action from the Secretary of State which could prevent any decision making being made locally. At the present time, no planning application for any type of development on the Wethersfield Airfield site had been received by the Council. It was reiterated that at no time did the Council offer the site for the development of a prison; instead, the MOJ had requested an opinion as to what the Council felt should be included within an environmental statement as part of a scoping process.

For clarification, Councillor Butland had received a letter from the MOJ in common with a number of other Local Authorities to ask if there were any sites within the District which might be suitable for a prison. The MOJ indicated that the Braintree District could have a viable option for such a site, in conjunction with a number of sites in other Local Authority areas. The letter was responded to on 18th February 2016 by an Officer; in the response, issues around the suitability of the site were highlighted, which included a lack of sustainable transport options and the need for there to be appropriate travel planning and bus services for staff and visitors. In respect of connectivity to highways and public transport, the response stipulated that currently, the site was poorly

connected to public transport routes due to its rural location. Furthermore, the site was currently under the ownership of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and as such, public accessibility was largely restricted.

It was highlighted that the letter from the MOJ and the Council's subsequent reply was the only form of correspondence between the two parties since 2016. At the end of March 2016, the site at Wethersfield Airfield was announced in a list of publically owned brownfield sites which had been granted by Homes England for the development of a housing site. Following this, the Council met with Homes England and expressed its reservations at the inappropriateness of the site for the development of houses. Should any planning applications be received regarding development at the site in Wethersfield, the normal planning procedure would be adhered to, including determination by Members of the Planning Committee, and the option for the applicant to appeal if any such application was refused. As the landowners for the site, any offers for alternative uses of the land would need to be directed to the MOD. Should any such offers to the MOD be accepted, the Council would liaise with them if a planning application was then required. In the meantime, the Council would wait to see whether the MOJ would come forward with a planning application.

Public speakers were then assured that together with the Ward Councillors for the Wethersfield area, Councillor Butland was fully aware of the reservations being expressed locally by Parish Councils at the possibility of such a development. As a final point of note, it was underlined that should an application for the prisons come forward for the site, any representations that were subsequently made would need to be based on planning grounds.

Statements made in regard to other matters

The ninth statement was made by Mr Michael Staines and regarded air quality monitoring across the Braintree District. Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, indicated that the subject matter would be discussed as part of Agenda Item 7b, 'Motion by Councillor N Unsworth.'

The tenth statement was made by Mr Bruce Atkinson and regarded property tax policy. Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation, agreed to provide a written response.

The eleventh statement was made by Mr Colin Riches and regarded healthcare provision in the District. Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, gave a verbal response to the statement, and added that the issue would be discussed further as part of Agenda Item 7c, 'Motion by Councillor Mrs J Beavis.'

55 ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

INFORMATION: The Chairman's announcements covered the following:

The Chairman was pleased to have been in attendance at the funeral service for Sir David Amess MP in Southend. The service saw a very high turnout and a "wonderful memorial" for a man who was clearly held in such high regard by his constituents and colleagues.

It was with great sadness that the Chairman advised Members of the death of a former District Councillor, Mr Ian Pointon. Mr Pointon had represented Witham North Ward for the Labour Party and served on the Council for a total of 16 years, spanning the period from 1983 to 1987, and 1991 to 2003. Mr Pointon served as the Leader of the Council in 2001, 2002 and 2003 and during that time he was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, which introduced a new model of political management to Local Governments based on executive and scrutiny arrangements.

The Chairman was pleased to have been involved with the successful Christmas Light Switch On event in Braintree on 21st November 2021. At the event, the Chairman was delighted to welcome Miss Beth Schriever, Olympic BMX Gold Medallist, who helped switch on the lights. In addition to the event in Braintree, the Chairman had also been involved with a number of other Light Switch On events across the District and added that it had been a genuine privilege to be involved with these.

The Chairman was also pleased by the high level of public attendance at last week's carol service event, despite concerns raised due to the prevalence of Covid. The Chairman wished to express her thanks to all who attended.

The Chairman had also taken part in a number of community visits to the following: 'Just Content' publishing services; 'Bumble and Yarn'; 'Intel Limited' in Feering; the 'Re-Think Art and Social Group,' and the 'Oak Rooms Spa' in Halstead. Furthermore, the Chairman had attended the celebration for the Queen's Award for Global Resale in Braintree.

The Leader's announcements covered the following:

Covid-19 - Omicron variant

In light of the Government's move to Plan B in response to the risk of the Omicron variant, citizens were required to wear a face covering at the majority of indoor public settings and large venues from 13th December 2021. Employees were being encouraged to work from home where this was possible, and from 15th December, citizens would be required to show an NHS Covid pass before admission into night clubs, some venues and large events to show that they were vaccinated and had had a negative test result in the last 48 hours. The booster vaccine programme was to be significantly accelerated to increase protection against the variant, with the target date brought forward by one month. The new target would require a significant increase in the capacity and rollout of the vaccine programme, and health colleagues were working on plans to reach this target. The Council continued to support its health colleagues through the work of the Essex Resilience Forum, and would be looking at support needed in terms of capacity and resources, and transport and communication.

As of the current date, it was reported that there were 610 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 in the Braintree District, which represented an increase of 12.4% from the previous week. The key message from the Director of Public Health, Dr Mike Gogarty, was to get a booster vaccine, which hugely increased the body's ability to combat the virus (indeed, the level of immunoglobulin increased up to forty fold with the booster jab). The Omicron variant was projected to become the dominant strain of Covid-19 within the next few days. Collectively, the health service and Local Authorities were expanding capacity to help ensure that as many people as possible were vaccinated.

The NHS Vaccination Programme would offer every adult the chance to book a Covid-19 booster vaccine by the end of 2021, and it was noted that the national booking service would be open to everyone aged 18 and over from 15th December 2021. The NHS was prioritising booster vaccines and was urging people to book an appointment before attending a vaccination venue. At Chelmsford City Racecourse, more pre-booked and walk-in appointment slots were being made available for the upcoming weekend.

With regard to business continuity, the Council was currently working to protect its frontline services. Causeway House would continue to be kept open for the time being, which would require some staff to be present in the building to support this process; however, the situation would be kept under review should advice change in light of the impacts of the variant. Officers had reinstated a response structure to ensure that resources were prioritised appropriately and key issues responded to. Internal reporting had also been increased. Staff and managers had also received updated guidance to minimise risks and help protect frontline services, and the organisation was working through national guidance to ensure clarity as to the role it would play in terms of supporting the District's businesses and the public to comply with the new arrangements.

White Paper

The 'Levelling Up' White Paper which was due to be received this month had been postponed until January 2022. The Leader would advise Members as soon as the Paper had been received.

Transport East Strategy – Video Link

A short video on the Transport East Strategy and Consultation was available at the following link:

[Public Consultation - Transport East](#)

The link would be circulated to all Members following the meeting.

Change in Cabinet Membership

With the upcoming appointment of a new Corporate Director, the Chief Executive and Leader had been giving consideration as to how tasks might best be allocated amongst the future Executive Team. The Leader was also keen that greater emphasis be given towards the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy. As a result, the Leader had decided to remove the role of the Cabinet Support Members and replace the post of former Councillor D Bebb. The Leader was therefore pleased to announce that Councillor R van Dulken would be joining the Cabinet to work with Councillor J McKee and Councillor Mrs W Schmitt. A revised list of Cabinet responsibilities would be circulated to Members in due course.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Lastly, the Leader was pleased to announce that Braintree District Council was significantly ahead when compared with the average results of Local Authorities

nationally. For example, in the category of the District being “a good place to live,” 89% of the responders agreed, compared to a national average of 78%. In the category of being satisfied with how the Council operates, 80% of residents said that they were satisfied, compared to a national average of 56%. In terms of offering “value for money,” the Council achieved 60% satisfaction compared to a national average of 43%. With regard to keeping residents informed, the Council scored 76% compared to a national average of 57%. The satisfaction score in respect of Waste Collection was 90% compared to a national average of 70%. With regard to Street Cleansing, the Council achieved 90% satisfaction compared with 65% nationally. Satisfaction with the District’s Parks and Open Spaces was 76% compared with 75% nationally, and the satisfaction rate in terms of the District’s Sports and Leisure Facilities was 69% compared with 58% nationally. The Leader expressed his grateful thanks to all members of Council staff for their tremendous efforts and indicated by the results, for which all staff should be proud.

Further to the meeting, an update was provided in respect of the customer satisfaction survey figures that were reported. The updated figures were as follows: with regard to Waste Collection, the national satisfaction rate was actually 75%, not 70%. In respect of Street Cleansing, the Council’s satisfaction rate was actually 76%, not 90%.

56 **ESSEX PLAYING FIELDS AWARDS 2021**

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, to present the Essex Playing Field Awards 2021. In her address, Councillor Mrs Schmitt was delighted to announce that this year, the Council had won 42 awards (six more than the previous year), including 21 in the gold category.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt expressed her sadness that due to the ongoing situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, it had not been possible for Officers in the Council’s Operation’s team to attend the meeting as they had done in previous years in order to receive their award in person. Nonetheless, Councillor Mrs Schmitt wished to extend her congratulations and sincere gratitude on behalf of the Council to the team for their achievement and hard work throughout the year.

57 **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR MRS D GARROD – CHAMPIONING MENTAL HEALTH**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion by Councillor Mrs D Garrod, as follows:-

The Motion

“This Council notes:

- *1 in 4 adults and one child in six will experience a mental health problem in any year.*
- *Mental ill health costs some £119 billion each year in England alone.*
- *People with a severe mental illness die up to 20 years younger than average in the UK.*
- *The Covid-19 pandemic has put extra strain on people’s mental health, and this is likely to last for some time after.*

This Council believes:

- *As a Local Authority we have a crucial role to play in improving the mental health of everyone in our community and tackling some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health.*
- *Mental health should be a priority across all the Local Authority's areas of responsibility.*
- *All Councillors, whether Members of the Executive or Scrutiny in all our work, including in our community and casework roles, can play a positive role in championing mental health on an individual and strategic basis.*

This Council has:

- *Signed the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health and has appointed Councillor Diana Garrod and Councillor Andrew Hensman as Mental Health Champions, who have both undertaken MHFA training.*
- *Appointed 12 Mental Health First Aiders as a point of contact for an employee who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress and appointed a Senior Officer (Cherie Root – Corporate Director as a Mental Health Champion).*
- *Identified Mental Health as a priority of the Braintree Health and Wellbeing Panel and created a District wide Mental Health Forum to bring together partners working in this field from statutory and voluntary sector to jointly work on priorities*

This Council will also:

- *Work to reduce inequalities in mental health in our community.*
- *Work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs.*
- *Tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our community.*
- *Proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about what they need for better mental health."*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor A Hensman.

There followed a general debate on the Motion as submitted by Councillor Mrs Garrod. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared **CARRIED**.

58 **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR N UNSWORTH – SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT BILL COMMITMENT TO BETTER AIR QUALITY IN BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion proposed by Councillor N Unsworth and seconded by Councillor T Walsh. The Motion was as follows:-

The Motion

"With the passing of the Environment Bill, Council welcomes and fully supports the commitment in this new legislation to improving the environment in every part of the United Kingdom.

Council notes that the Environment Bill focuses on Air Quality as one of its key priorities for environmental targets.

Council also notes that in its Adopted Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, it is committed to:

“Review our current air quality monitoring to ensure that it continues to monitor high risk pollutants and locations and take appropriate action”

Council agrees that in order to effectively deliver its duty to monitor and improve air quality, it is vital to develop an Air Quality monitoring regime that provides a network of modern effective detectors across the district.

Council therefore agrees that the Review of its Air Quality monitoring regime should deliver a system that:

- a. Represents a significant technological advancement;*
- b. Improves the scope of monitoring to include NOx, CO, SO2, O3 and small particles (PM 2.5 & PM 10) with accuracy certified to the correct standards;*
- c. Makes data more openly available so as to help the public make informed decisions about their air quality;*
- d. Helps the Council make informed strategic and planning decisions;*
- e. Enables Braintree District Council to notify Essex County Council of areas where ‘standards and objectives’ cannot be achieved in accordance with the Environment Bill.*

And recommends the review also considers a system that:

- f. Can be remotely accessed so as to minimise detector visits;*
- g. Does not require laboratory-based analysis of samples;*
- h. Makes air quality data available in real time.”*

The Chairman then informed Members that further to the publication of the Agenda for the meeting, Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, had submitted an amendment to the original Motion as submitted by Councillor N Unsworth. The proposed amendment sought to add and delete text of the original Motion, to be read as follows (changes underlined):-

“With the passing of the Environment Bill, Council welcomes and fully supports the commitment in this new legislation to improving the environment in every part of the United Kingdom.

Council notes that the Environment Bill focuses on Air Quality as one of its key priorities for environmental targets.

Council also notes that in its Adopted Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, it is committed to:

“Review our current air quality monitoring to ensure that it continues to monitor high risk pollutants and locations and take appropriate action”

Council agrees that in order to effectively deliver its duty to monitor and improve air quality, it is vital to develop an Air Quality monitoring regime that provides a network of modern effective detectors across the district.

Represents a significant technological advancement;
Improves the scope of monitoring to include NOx, CO, SO2, O3 and small particles (PM 2.5 & PM 10) with accuracy certified to the correct standards;
Makes data more openly available so as to help the public make informed decisions about their air quality;
Helps the Council make informed strategic and planning decisions;
Enables Braintree District Council to notify Essex County Council of areas where 'standards and objectives' cannot be achieved in accordance with the Environment Bill.

And recommends the review also considers a system that:
Can be remotely accessed so as to minimise detector visits;
Does not require laboratory-based analysis of samples;
Makes air quality data available in real time.

Council re-affirms this commitment and calls upon the Cabinet Member to implement any affordable changes that might be required following such a review."

For ease of reference, the proposed amendment is set out in full below:-

"With the passing of the Environment Bill, Council welcomes and fully supports the commitment in this new legislation to improving the environment in every part of the United Kingdom.

Council notes that the Environment Bill focuses on Air Quality as one of its key priorities for environmental targets.

Council also notes that in its Adopted Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, it is committed to:

"Review our current air quality monitoring to ensure that it continues to monitor high risk pollutants and locations and take appropriate action"

Council re-affirms this commitment and calls upon the Cabinet Member to implement any affordable changes that might be required following such a review."

The proposed amendment was then seconded by Councillor J McKee.

There followed a general debate on Councillor Mrs Schmitt's proposed amendment to the original Motion by Councillor Unsworth. Once the debate had concluded, a recorded vote was taken from only those Members attending the meeting in person and the results were as follows:

For the Motion:

Councillors: Butland, Coleridge, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Euesden, Everard, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, McKee, Mrs Parker, Mrs Pell, Pritchard, Ricci, Mrs Schmitt, Mrs Spray, Tattersley, van Dulken, Mrs Wilson, Wrench (19).

Against the Motion: Councillors: Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Thorogood, Unsworth, Wallace, Walsh, Wright (7).

Abstained:

Councillors: None.

The proposed amendment to the Motion was declared **CARRIED**. The amended Motion therefore became the Substantive Motion, as follows:-

The Substantive Motion

“With the passing of the Environment Bill, Council welcomes and fully supports the commitment in this new legislation to improving the environment in every part of the United Kingdom.

Council notes that the Environment Bill focuses on Air Quality as one of its key priorities for environmental targets.

Council also notes that in its Adopted Climate Change Strategy Action Plan, it is committed to:

“Review our current air quality monitoring to ensure that it continues to monitor high risk pollutants and locations and take appropriate action”

Council re-affirms this commitment and calls upon the Cabinet Member to implement any affordable changes that might be required following such a review.”

There followed a general debate on the Substantive Motion. Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared **CARRIED**.

59 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR MRS J BEAVIS – IMPROVING PRIMARY CARE IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a Motion proposed by Councillor Mrs J Beavis, and seconded by Councillor J Abbott. The Motion read as follows:-

The Motion

“Council notes that the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Build Back Better agenda and previous Government statements to increase NHS spending should deliver significant improvements in Primary Care.

Council notes that during the first half of the financial year, an additional £130m was made available to general practice to expand capacity via local commissioners. Council further notes that for the five months November to March, a new £250m Winter Access Fund will help patients with urgent care needs to get seen when they need to, on the same day, taking account of their preferences, instead of going to hospital.

Council accepts that new funding comes with specific targets to reduce the backlogs in Primary Care but that the shortage of local practitioners in General Practice settings will make this difficult in the short term.

However, Council notes that NHS England and NHS Improvement is working with systems to strengthen their existing plans to increase numbers of GPs towards the 6,000 Government manifesto commitment.

Council congratulates the Government on filling a record 3,793 GP specialty training places in the first recruitment round this year. It also notes that the latest comparable

data (June 2021 compared to June 2019) showed that there were now over 1,200 more full-time equivalent (FTE) GPs than two years before, with a headcount increase of almost 2,500.

Council notes that the Government's manifesto commits to expanding the number of other primary care professionals by 26,000. Council believes that this is essential to expanding general practice capacity and bringing a wider range of skills to the primary care team, enabling GPs to focus on what only GPs can do. PCNs have flexibility to employ any of 15 different roles and are successfully employing over 10,000 extra staff already.

Council welcomes the fact that Pharmacists joining PCNs will automatically be trained to prescribe, lifting workload from GPs; and that the NHS will continue to increase the role of community pharmacists in delivering appropriate clinical services.

Council notes that the Health and Care Bill, which is due to become an Act in 2022, establishes new Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and in our case Mid and South Essex ICS (MSEICS).

This Council therefore commits to continuing to work with its NHS Partners to support the improvement of Primary Care, particularly throughout the Braintree District."

The Chairman then informed Members that further to the publication of the Agenda for the meeting, Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, had submitted an amendment to the original Motion submitted by Councillor Mrs Beavis. The amendment had been seconded by Councillor P Tattersley.

The amendment was as follows (changed underlined):

"Council notes that the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Build Back Better agenda and previous Government statements to increase NHS spending should deliver significant improvements in Primary Care.

~~*Council is therefore concerned that the Government's intentions are not sufficiently translating into grassroots Primary Care in Braintree District, there being widespread concern about waiting times to see GPs and Practice Nurses.*~~

Council notes that during the first half of the financial year, an additional £130m was made available to general practice to expand capacity via local commissioners. Council further notes that for the five months November to March, a new £250m Winter Access Fund will help patients with urgent care needs to get seen when they need to, on the same day, taking account of their preferences, instead of going to hospital.

Council accepts that new funding comes with specific targets to reduce the backlogs in Primary Care but that the shortage of local practitioners in General Practice settings will make this difficult in the short term. ; ~~but in the medium and longer term improvement must be secured to meet the needs of existing communities and the many thousands of additional residents expected to live in the district within the new Local Plan period.~~

However, Council notes that NHS England and NHS Improvement is working with systems to strengthen their existing plans to increase numbers of GPs towards the 6,000 Government manifesto commitment.

Council congratulates the Government on filling a record 3,793 GP specialty training places in the first recruitment round this year. It also notes that the latest comparable data (June 2021 compared to June 2019) showed that there were now over 1,200 more full-time equivalent (FTE) GPs than two years before, with a headcount increase of almost 2,500.

Council notes that the Government's manifesto commits to expanding the number of other primary care professionals by 26,000. Council believes that this is essential to expanding general practice capacity and bringing a wider range of skills to the primary care team, enabling GPs to focus on what only GPs can do. PCNs have flexibility to employ any of 15 different roles and are successfully employing over 10,000 extra staff already.

Council welcomes the fact that Pharmacists joining PCNs will automatically be trained to prescribe, lifting workload from GPs; and that the NHS will continue to increase the role of community pharmacists in delivering appropriate clinical services.

Council notes that the Health and Care Bill, which is due to become an Act in 2022, establishes new Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and in our case Mid and South Essex ICS (MSEICS).

This Council therefore commits to continuing to work with its NHS Partners to support the improvement of Primary Care, particularly throughout the Braintree District. ~~to a new and energised priority towards improving Primary Care in the Braintree District by:~~

Establishing a new Braintree District Primary Care Local Strategic Partnership with the aims of:-

- ~~Re-establishing a Preventative Health Programme across our district~~
- ~~Formulating a Braintree District Primary Care Charter, under the banner of Livewell~~
- ~~Supporting increasing the numbers of GPs, Clinicians and Practice Nurses~~
- ~~Supporting expanding GP facilities in both town and village communities~~
- ~~A levelling-up of access to Primary Care across the Braintree District~~
- ~~Better utilise capacity in current Primary Care settings~~
- ~~Better and more focused delivery on S106 agreements from development sites, proportionate to population growth"~~

Councillor Mrs Beavis, as the Proposer of the original Motion, had accepted the amendment in advance of the meeting. The amended Motion had therefore become the Substantive Motion, as follows:-

Substantive Motion

"Council notes that the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Build Back Better agenda and previous Government statements to increase NHS spending should deliver significant improvements in Primary Care.

Council notes that during the first half of the financial year, an additional £130m was made available to general practice to expand capacity via local commissioners. Council further notes that for the five months November to March, a new £250m Winter Access Fund will help patients with urgent care needs to get seen when they need to, on the same day, taking account of their preferences, instead of going to hospital.

Council accepts that new funding comes with specific targets to reduce the backlogs in Primary Care but that the shortage of local practitioners in General Practice settings will make this difficult in the short term.

However, Council notes that NHS England and NHS Improvement is working with systems to strengthen their existing plans to increase numbers of GPs towards the 6,000 Government manifesto commitment.

Council congratulates the Government on filling a record 3,793 GP specialty training places in the first recruitment round this year. It also notes that the latest comparable data (June 2021 compared to June 2019) showed that there were now over 1,200 more full-time equivalent (FTE) GPs than two years before, with a headcount increase of almost 2,500.

Council notes that the Government's manifesto commits to expanding the number of other primary care professionals by 26,000. Council believes that this is essential to expanding general practice capacity and bringing a wider range of skills to the primary care team, enabling GPs to focus on what only GPs can do. PCNs have flexibility to employ any of 15 different roles and are successfully employing over 10,000 extra staff already.

Council welcomes the fact that Pharmacists joining PCNs will automatically be trained to prescribe, lifting workload from GPs; and that the NHS will continue to increase the role of community pharmacists in delivering appropriate clinical services.

Council notes that the Health and Care Bill, which is due to become an Act in 2022, establishes new Integrated Care Systems (ICS) and in our case Mid and South Essex ICS (MSEICS).

This Council therefore commits to continuing to work with its NHS Partners to support the improvement of Primary Care, particularly throughout the Braintree District."

There followed a general debate on the Substantive Motion as submitted by Councillor Mrs Beavis. During the debate, Councillor Butland moved a Motion without Notice in accordance with Standing Order 12.17 of the Constitution, sub-section (i) that the Substantive Motion be put to vote without further debate, and that the order of business on the Agenda be amended to allow Items 9 and 10 to be taken next, as these matters required decisions by Council within the three-hour time limit for the meeting. The Motion was seconded by Councillor T Cunningham.

On being put to the vote, the Motion to proceed immediately to the vote on the Substantive Motion was declared **CARRIED.**

Upon being put to the vote, the Substantive Motion was declared **CARRIED.**

60 **APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL COMMITTEE**

INFORMATION: Members gave consideration to a report which outlined the mid-year changes to the appointments made at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 19th April 2021 in respect of the membership of the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees. The report also identified any changes to political proportionality requirements set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

It was proposed that the following change be made to the membership of the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee:

Stepping down – Councillor R van Dulken
Proposed Member – Councillor J Wrench

As Councillor van Dulken had held the role of Chairman of the Committee, the role would then be allocated to the proposed Member, Councillor J Wrench.

Members were advised that a review of the political proportionality of the Committee membership had been undertaken in light of the changes that had arisen since the AGM. It was subsequently confirmed that no such changes had been made to the political proportions of the Council's Committees.

DECISION: That Council:-

1. Noted that there was no change to the political balance requirements; and
2. Approved the change to the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee as set out in paragraph 3.5 and 3.6.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Council has a number of Committees and Sub-Committees whose membership is determined to by the Council. This report outlines the mid-year changes to the appointments made at the Annual General Meeting on 19 April 2021 and identifies any changes to politically proportionality requirements set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

61 **INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

INFORMATION: Members gave consideration to a report on the proposed recruitment process to be undertaken for the appointment of Braintree District Council's (the Council) Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). The IRP's recommendations included the level of the Basic Allowance received by all Members, as well as the level of Special Responsibility Allowances and to who they should be paid. While it was for the Council to agree its Member Allowance Scheme, under the Regulations it must have regard to the advice and recommendations from the IRP before making any changes.

The Council did not currently have any IRP Members in place and a new IRP was therefore required. The Regulations specified that there must be at least three Panel Members and, as far as possible, the make-up of the Panel should be representative of the diversity of the communities in the local area. The Regulations also allowed for the Council to determine the term of office and the allowances paid to each of the IRPs. It was proposed that the new appointments continued to be for a three-year period, with

the provision to extend for one year. The arrangements would allow for flexibility going forward.

The Council would look to commence the recruitment process in January 2022, with a view to the Monitoring Officer and Governance and Member Manager conducting the interviews in February 2022.

DECISION: That Council:-

1. Approved the Independent Remuneration Panel's Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix 1;
2. Authorised the Monitoring Officer to commence the recruitment process for three Independent Remuneration Panel Members in accordance with the timetable set out in paragraph 3.6;
3. Authorised the Monitoring Officer at the conclusion of the recruitment process to appoint each of the three Independent Remuneration Panel Members; and
4. Delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Head of Finance, to set the level of remuneration for the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel and the two Independent Remuneration Panel Members.

REASON FOR DECISION: Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003 (the Regulations), Local Authorities are required to have in place and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). This report sets out the proposed recruitment process to be undertaken for the appointment of Braintree District Councils (the Council) IRP.

62 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT FOR 2021-22**

INFORMATION: Members considered a mid-year report on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, which was originally approved by Full Council on 22nd February 2021. The Council had adopted the Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which required the Council to receive at least one mid-year report on its treasury management activities.

The economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic continued to dominate the first half of the financial year. In respect of financial markets, it was explained that the Council was currently operating in a strenuous external market environment with low interest rates, uncertainty around credit markets and unsteady dividends being paid on assets. Inflationary pressures had also been building, with annual CPI inflation having increased to 3.2% in August 2021. However, other pressures, such as impacts of the new Covid-19 variant, were now emerging.

The credit outlook was viewed as positive with increases in investment duration limits, as advised by the Council's treasury management advisors, Arlingclose Ltd, following the completion of their review. The outcome of the review resulted in the maximum duration for all recommended counterparties being extended from 35 days to 100 days for unsecured investments.

With regard to borrowing, changes introduced to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) lending policy in November 2020 resulted in Local Authorities being prevented from borrowing from PWLB if their capital plans for the next three years included the acquisition of investment assets for yield. The Authority continued to hold £6million of LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender had the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Authority had the option to either accept the new rate, or to repay the loan at no additional cost. An initial assessment of the LOBO loans by Arlingclose indicated potential restructuring opportunities through a negotiated settlement with the lender; the risks and benefits, including restructuring savings, were currently being assessed. A proposal for the Council would be brought forward in the New Year.

For the period April to September, it was reported that the Authority's investment balances averaged £55.77million, with the highest amount held being £73.48million. As of 30th September 2021, the Council's total investment balances was £68.43million. The post-payment reconciliation of these funds, along with the current expected spend on the capital programme of circa £38million in the year, meant that cash balances were expected to reduce significantly towards the end of the current financial year.

In respect of pooled funds, the Authority had £19million invested in externally managed strategic pooled funds. The full-year budget for income from pooled funds was £686,000. As at the end of September, the funds had generated income of £423,539, which represented an annualised return of 4.45%. The improved market sentiment in the past six months was reflected in the valuation of these funds which, as at the end of September, had an overall valuation of £21.29million and represented an unrealised gain of £2.29million. An additional note was also made to the report: the Authority held unaccounted balances in excess of £5million in reserves. However, if significant balances were not held, the treasury management policy would demand a review of the size and shape of any holding of external pooled funds.

Lastly, it was noted that CIPFA had launched two consultations on changes to its Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice. These followed the Public Accounts Committee's recommendation that the prudential framework should be further tightened following continued borrowing by some Authorities for investment purposes. Responses to this consultation were to be submitted by no later than 16th November 2021.

DECISION: That Council received and noted the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for 2021/22.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Council has adopted the Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which requires the Council to receive at least one mid-year report on its treasury management activities.

The mid-year report was considered by the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 28th October 2021, which recommended its submission to Full Council.

Councillor Abbott moved a Motion without Notice in accordance with Standing Order 12.17 of the Constitution, sub-section (j) that the Council's Standing Orders are suspended to extend the duration of the meeting beyond the 3 hour time limit by a duration for 15 minutes beyond 10.15pm. This was seconded by Councillor Wright. On

being put to the vote, the Motion to suspend the Council's Procedure Rules was **DEFEATED.**

The remaining Items on the Agenda, 'Emergency Decision Taken by Chief Executive' would be transacted at an upcoming meeting of Full Council.

In line with the Council's previous virtual meeting arrangements, any Member wishing to ask a question of the Leader of Cabinet under Agenda Item 12, 'Cabinet Report to Full Council' were invited to submit them in writing to the Governance Team. A written response would be provided in 10 working days and would be circulated to all Members.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.15pm.

Councillor Mrs S Wilson
(Chairman)