

Minutes

Council Meeting



25th July 2022

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 (from 7.22pm)	Yes	Councillor I Pritchard	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes	Councillor M Radley	Yes
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rehman	Apologies
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Sandum	Apologies
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Yes
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Apologies	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor P Euesden	Apologies	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor T Everard	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Yes
Councillor Mrs D Garrod (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor A Hensman (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood	Yes
Councillor S Hicks	Yes	Councillor N Unsworth	Apologies
Councillor P Horner	No	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	No
Councillor T McArdle	Yes	Councillor Mrs S Wilson	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Apologies
Councillor A Munday	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Yes
Councillor Mrs I Parker	Yes		

At the start of the meeting, Councillor A Hensman the Chairman of the Council was pleased to welcome Mr D Gascoyne who had been appointed as the Council's new Chief Executive with effect from 26th September 2022. Mr Gascoyne observed the meeting.

The Chairman of the Council stated also that Agenda Item 7 - 'Motion by Councillor James Abbott – Sustainable Management and Treatment of Waste' had been withdrawn from the Agenda and that it would not be considered at the meeting.

25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 9 – 'Braintree District Draft Local Plan Section 2 – Adoption' as a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council, which had submitted representations on the Draft Local Plan; and, as he had taken part personally at various stages of the Plan process.

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 10 – 'Members' Forum Proposal – Planning' as a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council, which had submitted representations following consultation on the proposal.

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12 – 'Climate Change Strategy – Monitoring and Reporting Plan' as a Member of 'Essex Climate Action Commission'.

On behalf of Members of the Council, Councillor A Hensman the Chairman of the Council, declared a joint non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 8 - 'Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan – Adoption' and Agenda Item 9 - 'Braintree District Draft Local Plan Section 2 – Adoption' as Mr R Mitchell, who was speaking at the meeting during Question Time was a former Elected Member of Braintree District Council and a former Elected Member of Essex County Council and he was known to some of them.

Councillor P Schwier declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 12 – 'Climate Change Strategy – Monitoring and Reporting Plan' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council and as the author of a report setting out Essex County Council's stance and proposed Action Plan in response to a report published by Essex Climate Action Commission.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 8 – 'Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan – Adoption' as the Chairman of 'Kelvedon Against Urban Sprawl' (KAUS). Councillor Thorogood stated that having taken advice from the Council's Governance Team, he would participate in the debate and decision on this matter.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 9 – 'Braintree District Draft Local Plan Section 2 – Adoption' as the Chairman of 'Kelvedon Against Urban Sprawl' (KAUS). Councillor Thorogood stated that having taken advice from the Council's Governance Team, he would participate in the debate and decision on this matter.

Councillor R Wright declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 9 – ‘Braintree District Draft Local Plan Section 2 – Adoption’ as a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council, which had submitted representations on the Draft Local Plan.

Councillor R Wright declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 10 – ‘Members’ Forum Proposal – Planning’ as a Member of Rivenhall Parish Council, which had submitted representations following consultation on the proposal.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors remained in the meeting, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the discussion when the Items were considered.

26 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 20th June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the first paragraph of ‘Minute 14 – Declarations of Interest’ being amended to read as follows:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6, ‘Motion by Councillor Mrs Iona Parker – National Grid Sustainable Energy Generation’ as part of the proposed route of the pylons was potentially close to where he lived. Councillor Abbott had taken advice prior to the meeting and was able to remain present during the consideration of the Item on the condition that his participation in the discussion was in relation to the broader issues.

27 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were four questions asked/statements made. The questions/statements related to Agenda Items 8 and 9 and to matters which were not on the Agenda for discussion as follows:-

‘Wethersfield Airfield – ‘Green Infrastructure and Possible Provision of a Prison’ (not on the Agenda for discussion)

Statement read by Mr Alan MacKenzie
(Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, responded to the statement).

Question/Statement read by Mr Mark Ault
(Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, responded to the question/statement).

Agenda Item 8 - ‘Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan – Adoption’ and Agenda Item 9 - ‘Braintree District Draft Local Plan Section 2 – Adoption’

Statement read by Councillor Ms India Jayatillake on behalf of Kelvedon Parish Council
(Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure, replied to the statement).

Statement read by Mr Robert Mitchell
(Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure, replied to the statement).

ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

INFORMATION: The following announcements were made:-

Chairman's Announcements

Engagements

The Chairman was pleased to announce that since the last meeting of Full Council held on 20th June 2022 he had attended 17 engagements, which are summarised below.

Armed Forces Day Event, Braintree Town Hall Centre
 Eastlight Community Homes, Community Engagement Event, Halstead
 Essex Equality Network Meeting, Guest Speaker (Virtual Meeting)
 Ecolnes Refillery Store, Earls Colne (Visit and to congratulate Cherry McKean on being awarded an MBE for work in the community)
 Colchester Garrison Show for the Armed Forces, Colchester
 Royal British Legion Halstead Armed Forces Day Event, Halstead Public Gardens
 Biffa Material Recycling Facility, Great Blakenham
 The Phoenix Café/Deli - Grand opening/ribbon cutting, Braintree
 Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre Family Fun Day, Weavers Park, Braintree
 Community Catch-up, Halstead
 The High Sheriff's Summer Reception, Chelmsford
 Abberton Rural Training (ART) Celebration Event and Horticulture Show, Colchester
 Photo call for the gardens behind the Town Hall Centre, Braintree
 Jack Petchey's "Speak Out" Challenge! Grand Final, London (To congratulate Evey Daly from Notley High School and Braintree Sixth Form who had been one of 15 grand finalists from a group of 27,000 entrants)
 Employee of the month presentation
 Sculpture in the Walled Garden, Marks Hall Gardens and Arboretum, Coggeshall
 Long Service Award certificate presentations

Councillor Mrs J Pell – Long Service Award

The Chairman was pleased to present a certificate to Councillor Mrs J Pell to acknowledge and to congratulate her for 35 years continuous service as a Braintree District Councillor. Councillor Mrs Pell had been elected to the Council in 1987 and she had been a constant presence since, representing residents and communities in Halstead and, in particular, the Ward of Halstead Trinity. Councillor Mrs Pell had also been the Chairman of the Council in 2004/05.

The Chairman was pleased to report also that earlier in the day he had presented a certificate to Councillor Mrs Pell to mark her 40 years' of service as a Halstead Town Councillor.

In response, Councillor Mrs Pell thanked the public for electing her to represent them, which she had been very proud to do, and she also thanked the Council and fellow Councillors for their support and for giving her the opportunity to be the Chairman of the Council.

Councillor J Newston and Councillor P Pawsey - Long Service Awards

The Chairman extended his congratulations to Councillor Joe Newston for 35 years' service to Great Maplestead Parish Council and to Councillor Patrick Pawsey for 35 years' service to Little Yeldham, Tilbury Juxta Clare and Ovington Parish Council. The Chairman remarked that these were wonderful achievements for two people who had undoubtedly worked tirelessly for their communities.

Leader's Announcements

The Leader did not have any announcements.

29 PRESENTATION TO ANDY WRIGHT - CHIEF EXECUTIVE

INFORMATION: Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, reported that this was Mr Andy Wright's last meeting of Full Council before retiring as the Council's Chief Executive.

Councillor Butland reported that Andy Wright had joined the Council in 2013 as a Corporate Director and that he had been appointed as the Acting Chief Executive in 2017 before becoming Chief Executive permanently in 2018. Councillor Butland thanked Andy sincerely for his work and help during his time with the Council and, in particular, for the way in which he had dealt with the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Councillor Butland wished Andy a long and happy retirement.

Councillors Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Hensman, Mrs Kilmartin, Mann and Mrs Pell also expressed their best wishes to Andy for the future and they thanked him for his calm and approachable manner and for the sound advice which he had always given.

Andy responded by thanking Members for their comments and he acknowledged the support that they had given him. Andy said that Braintree District Council was a special place to work and he commended the Council's Management Team and all staff. Andy said that it had been an honour and a privilege to be the Council's Chief Executive for the past five years. However, it was now time for him to move on to spend more time with his family and to take on new ventures.

30 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR JAMES ABBOTT – SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT OF WASTE

INFORMATION: It was reported that Agenda Item 7 - 'Motion by Councillor James Abbott – Sustainable Management and Treatment of Waste' had been withdrawn from the Agenda and it was therefore not considered.

31 KELVEDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – ADOPTION

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the adoption of the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan. Once approved, the Neighbourhood Plan could be used in the determination of planning applications within the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan area.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, Kelvedon Parish Council had applied for the Parish to be designated as a Neighbourhood Area and this designation had been confirmed on 30th March 2015.

Following submission of the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan to the District Council, the Plan had been subject to public consultation. Subsequently, the District Council in agreement with the Parish Council had appointed an independent examiner to review if the Neighbourhood Plan met the basic conditions required by legislation and whether it could proceed to a referendum. The examiner's report published in November 2021 had concluded, that subject to modifications the Plan did meet the basic conditions. A referendum had been held on 3rd March 2022 at which 94.39% of those people who had voted had supported the Neighbourhood Plan. In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) the District Council was required to 'make' a Neighbourhood Plan if more than half of those voting voted in favour of the Plan unless this would breach, or would otherwise be incompatible with a European Union obligation, or any Convention rights within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998.

It was therefore proposed that the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan should be 'made', that it should form part of Braintree District Council's Development Plan, and that the 'Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan - Regulation 19 Decision Statement' attached at Appendix 1 to the report should be approved.

It was reported that an application for a Judicial Review which had sought to challenge the Council's acceptance of the Neighbourhood Plan and to quash the results of the local referendum had been submitted, but it had been refused by the High Court on 12th April 2022. An appeal against the decision of the High Court had subsequently been submitted, but this too had been refused by the High Court on 9th June 2022. It was noted that if the District Council agreed to adopt the Neighbourhood Plan, a legal challenge could be submitted within the six week period following adoption.

In discussing this Item, Councillors acknowledged the time and effort which had been required to progress the Neighbourhood Plan to this stage and they thanked Kelvedon Parish Council and the team of local volunteers who had been involved in the process for their commitment and hard work.

DECISION: That the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan – Regulation 19 Decision Statement attached at Appendix 1 to the Agenda report be approved, and the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan made under Section 38A(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).

REASON FOR DECISION: To consider the adoption of the Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan.

32 **BRAINTREE DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL PLAN SECTION 2 – ADOPTION**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the proposed adoption of Section 2 of Braintree District Draft Local Plan.

It was reported that Braintree District Council had submitted its Draft Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2017. Section 1 of the Plan, which was shared with

Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council, contained strategic cross boundary issues and this had been adopted by the Council in February 2021 following formal Examination and the submission of Main Modifications. It was proposed that the Council should now adopt Section 2 of the Local Plan which contained policies relating specifically to the Braintree District for the period up to 2033.

Mr Jameson Bridgewater and Ms Anne Jordan had been appointed by the Planning Inspectorate to examine Section 2 of the Local Plan and an Examination had taken place in July 2021. The Inspectors had subsequently recommended 'Main Modifications' in order to make the Plan sound and a list of these Modifications had been sent to the Council in November 2021. The 'Main Modifications' were set out in a schedule attached at Appendix 2 to the Agenda report. On 25th November 2021, the Local Plan Sub-Committee had agreed that these 'Main Modifications', together with Additional Modifications and consequential amendments to the Plan's maps should be subject to public consultation. It had also been agreed that revised versions of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) and the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) should also be subject to public consultation. The SA/SEA was attached at Appendix 4 to the Agenda report. It was noted that the SA/SEA had been updated further in response to minor changes to the 'Main Modifications' and a copy of the revised document had been published. The HRA had not been updated. Public consultation had taken place between 6th December 2021 and 24th January 2022 and the comments submitted had been published on the Council's website and sent to the Planning Inspectors for consideration.

The Council had received the Inspectors' final report on the Plan on 14th June 2022 and this had been published on the Council's website. A copy was also attached at Appendix 1 to the Agenda report. The Inspectors' report stated that the duty to co-operate had been met and that, subject to the recommended 'Main Modifications', the Plan satisfied the requirements of Section 20(5)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and it was sound. A copy of the Local Plan including all Modifications was attached at Appendix 3 to the Agenda report.

If the adoption of Section 2 of the Plan was approved, the Council would be required to publish an 'Adoption Statement' on its website. Once adopted, Section 2 of the Plan would replace the remaining parts of the Council's Replacement Local Plan 2005 and its Core Strategy 2011. In the future, the Development Plan for the District would comprise the Essex Minerals Plan, the Essex Waste Plan, Sections 1 and 2 of Braintree District Local Plan and any local Neighbourhood Plans; and all planning applications would be determined in accordance with it.

Concern was expressed that a renewable energy policy which the Council had sought to include in the Plan had not been supported by the Inspectors who had been appointed to review the Plan. However, it was stated that the requirements for renewable energy would be met via other mechanisms.

A Member drew attention to a possible discrepancy on the Proposals Map relating to the development boundary between Rivenhall and Witham and it was agreed that this should be checked by Officers.

In discussing this Item, Councillors acknowledged that the Plan was the culmination of a long process and they thanked those people who had participated in the process,

including past Chairmen of the Local Plan Sub-Committee, for their input. Councillors thanked the Officers of the Council's Planning Policy Team for their hard work and, in particular, they praised Ms E Goodings, the Council's Head of Planning and Economic Growth, for her knowledge and professionalism which had earned her respect both locally and beyond the District.

DECISION:

- (1) That the findings of the Planning Inspectors' 'Report on the Examination of the Braintree District Council Local Plan Section 2' received on 14th June 2022 (as attached at Appendix 1 to the Agenda report) and their final 'Schedule of Main Modifications – June 2022' (as attached at Appendix 2 to the Agenda report) be noted.
- (2) That, in accordance with Section 23(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the formal adoption of the Braintree District Council Local Plan Section 2, incorporating the Inspectors' final 'Main Modifications', 'Additional Modifications' and 'Modifications to Local Plan Maps' (as attached at Appendix 3 to the Agenda report) be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION: To approve and adoption of the Braintree District Council Local Plan Section 2', subject to agreed Modifications.

33 **MEMBERS' FORUM PROPOSAL - PLANNING**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the proposed introduction of a Members' Forum as part of the process for determining planning applications.

Members were reminded that on 7th December 2020 the Council had approved a new Scheme of Delegation for the determination of planning applications, which included the proposed Members' Forum. The Forum would enable applicants and agents to present their proposals to Members of the Planning Committee during the pre-application, pre-submission, or application stages of the planning process prior to determination by the Committee. The Council had approved the proposed 'Members' Forum' in principle, subject to the Terms of Reference, governance arrangements, and frequency of meetings of the Forum being considered by the Council's Monitoring Officer, Planning Committee, Developing Democracy Group, and Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. This process had now been completed, including consultation with Town Councils and Parish Councils, and the Council was requested to approve the proposal. The Terms of Reference for the proposed Members' Forum were set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Currently, Officers and statutory consultees engaged with applicants at the early stages of the planning process, but it was considered that the process would also benefit from earlier engagement by Members. This would enable Members to gain an understanding of what applicants sought to achieve and how they intended to engage with the local community. It would also enable applicants and Officers to note any issues of concern that Members might have and how proposals might be improved before being presented to the Planning Committee.

It was acknowledged that the Members' Forum would not be a decision-making body and that it would not express a view on the acceptability of a proposal. Meetings of the Forum could be held either 'in person' and/or virtually and they would be recorded. The Forum's Terms of Reference and meeting dates would be published on the Council's website. Applications referred to the Members' Forum would primarily be those defined within Part A of the Scheme of Delegation, namely major development proposals. Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), Council-led proposals and 'significant' applications may also be referred to the Forum. The membership of the Members' Forum would comprise all Members and all Substitute Members of the Planning Committee. In addition, Braintree District Council Ward Member(s) for the Ward in which the development was proposed and the neighbouring Ward, if relevant, would be invited, together with up to two representatives of the relevant Town Council or Parish Council(s) and the neighbouring Town Council or Parish Council if the proposed development was adjacent to a boundary.

Prior to a meeting of the Members' Forum, Officers would prepare a factual briefing note for all Members and other representatives who would be attending in order to summarise the proposal. The applicant would also prepare an information pack which would be circulated in advance of the meeting. It was envisaged that up to three proposals could be considered at each meeting of the Forum depending on the scale of the schemes. Applicants would be invited to present their proposals, following which Members and other representatives would be able to ask questions and to seek clarification.

All Members of the Planning Committee would be required to undertake additional training prior to attendance at a Members' Forum meeting and a new guidance note would be issued to Councillors to explain the parameters of their involvement in the Forum process and to provide information on pre-determination and bias. Guidance would also be issued to representatives of Town Councils and Parish Councils. It was noted that decisions relating to the planning process would continue to be taken in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and the Planning Committee's Terms of Reference. As the Members' Forum was not a Committee of the Council, the Council's 'Members' Allowance Scheme' did not currently apply to it. However, Councillors would be able to claim expenses for attending meetings. It was proposed that meetings of the Forum should take place in the evening once every three weeks dependent on demand and that the number of Planning Committee meetings should reduce from 26 to 17 meetings per year. It was also proposed that the cost of a Forum should be met by applicants and that the Council's current fees and charges should be revised.

The Members' Forum proposals had been considered by the Developing Democracy Group on 27th May 2022, the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 30th May 2022 and the Planning Committee on 31st May 2022. The proposals had also been subject to consultation with Town Councils and Parish Councils during June 2022. Summaries of the comments which had been submitted and the responses to these were set out in Section 4 and Appendix 2 to the Agenda report. Whilst there had been a number of detailed comments, no substantive objections had been submitted and there had been widespread support for the Members' Forum proposal.

In presenting this Item, Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure referred to three amendments to the Terms of Reference. These

proposed that the section headed 'Composition of the Members' Forum' should be amended to include invitations being issued to Essex County Councillors representing the Division in which the development was proposed; that the third bullet point in the section headed 'Functions of the Members' Forum' which reads 'The potential consideration of smaller sites within the' should be deleted; and that the words 'and Vice-Chair' should be added after the word 'Chair' in the fifth line of the section headed 'Applications considered by the Members Forum'.

In discussing this Item, reference was made to Section 106 legal agreements. It was reported that a proposed review of such agreements by a 'Section 106 Member Reference Group' should instead be carried out by the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee as part of its current scrutiny review work programme.

Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure, thanked Officers for their work on the Members Forum, in particular Mr C Paggi, Planning Development Manager and the Governance and Members Team.

DECISION: That the Planning Members' Forum and the Terms of Reference, as set out in the Agenda report and at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, subject to the Terms of Reference being amended as follows:-

The section headed 'Composition of the Members' Forum' to be amended to include invitations being issued to Essex County Councillors representing the Division in which the development was proposed;

That the third bullet point in the section headed 'Functions of the Members' Forum' which reads 'The potential consideration of smaller sites within the' be deleted;

That the words 'and Vice-Chair' be added after the word 'Chair' in the fifth line of the section headed 'Applications considered by the Members Forum'.

REASON FOR DECISION: To approve the proposed Planning Members' Forum and the Terms of Reference,

34 **CHIEF EXECUTIVE/HEAD OF PAID SERVICE – INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on proposed interim arrangements for the role of the Council's Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service for the period of time following the retirement of the current Chief Executive and the newly appointed Chief Executive commencing employment.

The Council's current Chief Executive, Mr Andy Wright, was due to retire on 31st August 2022, but as he proposed to utilise annual leave his employment with the Council would in effect end on 10th August 2022. However, the Council's newly appointed Chief Executive, Mr Dan Gascoyne would not commence his employment with the Council until 26th September 2022.

As the Council was required to have a Head of Paid Service in place at all times, it was proposed that interim arrangements should be put in place. This would ensure that the functions, responsibilities and delegations associated with the role of Chief

Executive, Head of Paid Service, Electoral Registration Officer and Local Government Returning Officer could be fulfilled.

It was considered that these roles and statutory functions could be carried out by assigning them to the Council's existing Management Team, namely Mrs Cherie Root, Corporate Director (Operational); Mr Dominic Collins, Corporate Director (Growth); and Ms Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director (Support Services). The proposed allocation of duties was set out in Appendix A to the Agenda report.

DECISION:

- (1) That Mrs Cherie Root, Corporate Director (Operational), be appointed as the Interim Head of Paid Service.
- (2) That Mrs Cherie Root, Corporate Director (Operational), be appointed as the Interim Electoral Registration Officer and the Interim Local Government Returning Officer.
- (3) That the interim arrangements and delegations to Mrs Cherie Root, Corporate Director, (Operational); Mr Dominic Collins, Corporate Director (Growth); and Ms Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director (Support Services) relating to the role of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service, as set out in Appendix A to the Agenda report, be approved.
- (4) That it be noted that these interim arrangements will be in effect for the period from 11th August 2022 until 25th September 2022 inclusive after which time all delegations and associated powers will be vested in the Council's new Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree interim arrangements for the functions of the Council's Chief Executive/Head and Service for the period between the current Chief Executive retiring and the newly appointed Chief Executive commencing employment.

35 **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY – MONITORING AND REPORTING PLAN**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on a proposed monitoring plan, including targets, in respect of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Members of the Council were reminded that in July 2019 the Council had declared a Climate Emergency and that it sought to make the Council's activities carbon neutral by the year 2030 as far as practicable. In October 2019, the Council had established a Climate Change Working Group in order to develop the Council's Climate Change Strategy and associated Action Plan.

The objectives of the Climate Change Strategy were to make Council activities carbon neutral as far as practicable by 2030; to support partners, residents and local businesses to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030; and to build resilient communities that could adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The draft Strategy had been subject to extensive public consultation, following which the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan had been approved by

Full Council on 20th September 2021. It had also been agreed that a monitoring and reporting plan, including key targets, should be produced and reported to Full Council for approval.

The Council was directly responsible for reducing its impact on the climate and the environment by changing the way it delivered its services, and it would work with local organisations, partners and the wider community in order to reduce waste, carbon emissions and pollution. The Council would also aim to support the District as a whole to achieve carbon neutrality.

The Council's Climate Strategy was reliant on the Environment Act 2021 which had been enacted on 9th November 2021 and on secondary legislation which was awaited in respect of waste management, air quality and biodiversity. The Strategy was also reliant on recommendations contained within the Essex Climate Action Commission's report entitled 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral', which had been published in July 2021. This report set out a comprehensive plan for Essex to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 in line with United Kingdom statutory commitments; and to make Essex more resilient to climate impacts such as flooding, water shortages and overheating. At a meeting held on 24th November 2021, Essex County Council had fully supported the Commission's recommendations and it had agreed an Action Plan in response. A copy of the Action Plan was attached at Appendix A to the Agenda report. Many of the actions within the District Council's Climate Action Plan aligned closely with Essex County Council's Plan.

The District Council's initial Climate Action Plan contained 73 actions which related to seven key themes. 39 of the actions related directly to the Council's impact on the climate and 34 actions related to the impact of the District as a whole. The progress of projects within the Action Plan would be reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis and an annual report would also be submitted. Details of the performance indicators and targets relating to the Council's impact on the climate were set out in Table 1 of the Agenda report. Details of activity indicators which the Council would use to monitor the impact of the District as a whole on the climate were set out in Table 2 of the Agenda report.

A total of £616,000 had been allocated across the Council's budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 to support the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy. To date £355,100 had been committed, leaving a residual balance of £260,900. If the objectives of the Strategy and its associated Action Plan were to be achieved, substantial investment would be needed at an international, national and local level, particularly in relation to infrastructure projects and long term programmes.

In a correction to the report, it was noted that the reference to the 'Cabinet Member (Environment) in paragraph 4.5 of the report should state 'Cabinet Member - Climate Change and the Environment'.

DECISION:

- (1) That the recommended monitoring and reporting plan, methodology and targets for the Climate Change Action Plan be approved.
- (2) That an annual Climate Change Action Plan report be produced.

REASON FOR DECISION: To approve a monitoring plan with targets for the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

36 **CABINET'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL**

Before opening the debate, the Chairman reminded Members of the Procedural Rules relating to this Item as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Each Member may put up to two questions to the Cabinet which would be responded to by the Leader of the Council, or a Cabinet Member. Councillor Abbott, as the Leader of the Opposition may put up to four questions to the Cabinet.

Questions should relate to the functions of the Leader, or a Cabinet Member, the powers and duties of the Council, or matters pertaining to the District. Members may not ask supplementary questions and no statements may be made.

Where a response cannot be given during the meeting, a written answer will be issued within 10 working days of the meeting and circulated to all Members.

The Chairman stated that a period of one hour was normally allowed for this Item. However, as the time was 9.53pm there were 22 minutes remaining for the consideration of the Item. It was subsequently moved, seconded and agreed by Councillors that, as required by the Constitution, the meeting be extended beyond 10.15pm by 10 minutes to enable the remaining business on the Agenda to be transacted.

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to introduce the Cabinet's report to Full Council. The Leader stated that he had no additions to make to the report. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to ask questions. Questions were not limited to the content of the report and could be about matters relating to a portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council, or matters pertaining to the District.

Members then asked several questions arising from the report. A webcast of the questions to and the responses of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website and its YouTube channel at:
<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

The main topics were as follows:-

- Councillor J Abbott queried if reports that the proposed realignment of the A120 would not proceed as envisaged were accurate and, if so, if there would be an urgent reappraisal of the A120 in terms of sustainability and climate change.
- Councillor J Abbott referred to the on-going conflict in Ukraine which could escalate further and he queried if there were sufficient resources and hosts within the District to accommodate any additional refugees who may wish to stay.

- Councillor J Abbott referred to energy efficiency measures and he asked if anything could be done to prevent energy being wasted by organisations and companies, for example where street lights were left switched on during the day.
- Councillor Mrs J Beavis referred to the increased use of the Council's leisure centres and she asked for further information, in particular, about swimming activities and participation by young people.
- Councillor Mrs J Beavis referred to the 'Community Asset Mapping' exercise which had taken place across mid Essex recently and she asked if a copy of the report could be forwarded to Members of the Council.
- Councillor Mrs I Parker referred to the Longfield Solar Farm Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and she queried when the Council would be submitting its 'Local Impact Report' setting out its views on the impact of the proposal on the District.
- Councillor Mrs I Parker referred to the cutting of grass verges and she queried if safety cuts could also be requested where there were bends in roads, in addition to those requested for road junctions.
- Councillor Mrs W Scattergood queried when the transfer of Council-owned land at Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet would be completed.
- Councillor P Thorogood referred to a visit that he had made recently to a recycling centre at Great Blakenham, Suffolk where he had been advised that 25% of the waste sent for processing could not be recycled as the material was too small to form bales, and he queried if the process could be changed in order to increase recycling rates.
- Councillor T Walsh queried if the postponed visit by Councillors to the Horizon 120 site at Great Notley had been re-arranged.
- Councillor T Walsh noted that the Council had a target to provide 250 affordable housing units across the District during the year 2022/23 and he queried if these would all be provided in collaboration with Eastlight Community Housing Association and/or with other Housing Associations.
- Councillor Miss M Weeks referred to the Council's three-year trial into using more sustainable and environmentally friendly methods of weed control which had concluded that the use of Glyphosate remained the most efficient and cost-effective method and she queried how continued use of Glyphosate would enable the Council to protect the environment and improve biodiversity.

The following actions were agreed in response to questions raised by Members. Written answers would be issued within 10 working days of the meeting and circulated to all Members:-

- Councillor K Bowers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills, agreed to check when the transfer of Council-owned at Colchester Road, Bures Hamlet would be ready to complete.

- Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, agreed to send a copy of the 'Community Asset Mapping' report to all Members of the Council.
- Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being, agreed to provide information about the use of the Council's leisure centres, specifically in respect of swimming activities and participation by young people.
- Councillor R van Dulken, Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation, agreed to ascertain if processes at Great Blakenham, Suffolk recycling centre could be changed to enable small materials to be recycled, thereby increasing recycling rates.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman reminded Councillors that the next meeting of Full Council would be held on 10th October 2022.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.22pm.

Councillor A Hensman
(Chairman)