

Minutes

Council Meeting



20th September 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	Apologies
Councillor J Baugh	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	Yes
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
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	Yes
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	Apologies
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Apologies	Councillor D Wallace	Yes
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin	Apologies	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	Apologies	Councillor Mrs S Wilson (Chairman)	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor A Munday	No	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 person' at New Rickstones Academy Theatre, Conrad Road, Witham.

37 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

On behalf of Members of the Green and Independent Group, Councillor J Abbott declared a joint non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' as Mr M Staines and Ms R Pearson, who had registered to participate during Question Time were known to them.

Councillor J Abbott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' as an Essex Climate Action Commissioner.

Councillor G Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' and Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' and Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council.

Councillor P Schwier declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' and Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council with special responsibility for the climate.

Councillor P Thorogood declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' and Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021' as a member of Essex County Council's Essex Climate Action Commission.

Councillor T Walsh declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan' as a member of Parishes Against Incineration. Councillor Walsh declared a non-pecuniary interest also in Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021' as a founder member of the Earls Colne to Kelvedon Plus Cycle Group.

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

38 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 26th July 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

39 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were five statements made. Councillor Mrs S Wilson, Chairman of the Council, used her discretion to allow statements by Mr P Kohn and Ms R Pearson to be read in the absence of these registered speakers. The statements related to Agenda Item Nos. 5 and 6 as follows:-

Agenda Item No. 5 - 'Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and Initial Action Plan'

Statement by Mr Michael Staines - Statement read by Mr Michael Staines (Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, replied to the statement).

Statement by Mr Kevin Dale – Statement read by Mrs Lesley Moxhay (Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, replied to the statement and she indicated that a written response would be sent to Mr Dale).

Statement by Ms Rosie Pearson - Statement read by Governance and Members Officer (Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, replied to the statement and she indicated that a written response would be sent to Ms Pearson).

Agenda Item No. 6 - 'Braintree Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan 2021'

Statement by Mr Robert Cowlin on behalf of the Marks Hall Estate - Statement read by Mr Robert Cowlin (Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, replied to the statement and he indicated that a written response would be sent to Mr Cowlin).

Statement by Mr Peter Kohn - Statement read by Governance and Members Officer (Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, replied to the statement).

40 **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2021-2030 AND INITIAL ACTION PLAN**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030 and the Initial Action Plan September 2021 – March 2023. These documents were attached at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the Agenda report.

Councillor Mrs S Wilson, Chairman of the Council invited Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, to present the Climate Change Strategy and the Initial Action Plan to Full Council. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to comment on the Strategy and Action Plan to which the Cabinet Member responded. An audio recording of the presentation, comments and responses is available on the Council's website and its YouTube channel at <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

It was reported that in July 2019 the Council had declared a Climate Emergency and an intention to make the Council's activities carbon neutral by 2030 as far as practicable. A Climate Change Working Group had also been established to develop the Climate Change Strategy and an Action Plan. It was acknowledged that the Council would not be able to achieve its climate change aims and objectives in

isolation and that it would need the support of local communities, organisations and individuals. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the proposed Strategy was dependent on the Essex Climate Action Commission and the Environment Bill 2020. The Strategy would be reviewed periodically and the Action Plan would be reviewed on an annual basis.

The draft Strategy had been subject to public consultation, which had commenced in May 2021 for a period of eight weeks. Most respondents had agreed that climate change should be a priority and they had supported the aims and objectives of the proposed Strategy. However, a broad range of views had been submitted about how climate change should be tackled and how actions should be prioritised. A summary of the consultation responses was attached at Appendix 3 to the Agenda report. The Strategy had been updated to reflect the outcome of the consultation process and ideas put forward had been incorporated into the Initial Action Plan.

The proposals set out in the Action Plan sought to make the Braintree District a more environmentally friendly and pleasant place to live by reducing waste, increasing recycling, improving air quality and providing improved public spaces. The proposals would also seek to address the impacts of climate change and to build resilience within communities across the District. The proposals were divided into short, medium and long term projects and were categorised into those which the Council could deliver directly, those which would be delivered in partnership, and those in which the Council would have a supporting, or enabling role.

It was proposed that the Cabinet Member for the Environment, with the support of the Climate Change Working Group, should develop a monitoring and reporting plan to track progress with the achievement of the aims and objectives set out in the Strategy and the Action Plan. A communications and engagement plan would also be developed to support the delivery of the Strategy.

In approving its budget for 2021/22, the Council had established an initial reserve of £500,000 to support the delivery of the Climate Change Strategy and £156,700 had been committed to date. It was proposed that a process should be established to approve the funding of future projects and this was set out in paragraph 4.3 of the Agenda report. Low value projects between £0 and £25,000 would be approved by a Corporate Director; medium value projects between £25,000 and £100,000 would be approved by the Cabinet Member for the Environment in conjunction with the Section 151 Corporate Director; high value projects between £100,000 and £250,000 would be subject to approval by Cabinet; and very high value projects over £250,000 would be subject to approval by Council. Priority would be given to projects for which external funding could be sought and those which could generate an income. Following this, priority would be given to funding feasibility studies, reviews and low value projects. Medium, high and very high value projects could be funded from capital resources, or unallocated reserves subject to availability.

In an update to the report, Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for the Environment, announced that the Council had allocated £30,000 for the purchase of 18,600 native tree whips and 73,000 bulbs which would be offered free of charge to local Town/Parish Councils, community/voluntary groups, charities, schools and colleges to plant across the District. This initiative would also contribute towards Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee Green Canopy project, 'Plant a tree for the Jubilee'.

Following the debate it was unanimously agreed that the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan should be supported. The Council wished to place on record its thanks to the Climate Change Working Group for their work and support in delivering the Strategy.

DECISION:

- (1) That the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report and the Climate Change Initial Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.
- (2) That the decision making process for individual projects to deliver the Action Plan, as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report, be approved.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for the Environment, with the support of the Climate Change Working Group, be requested to develop a monitoring and reporting plan including key targets and to report this to Council for approval.

41 **BRAINTREE CYCLING STRATEGY AND DRAFT CYCLING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2021**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the proposed Braintree Cycling Strategy and draft Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan, which were attached at Appendices 1 and 2 to the Agenda report. The Strategy set out a long-term plan, which it was hoped would lead to a significant and sustained increase in cycling by residents and visitors in the Braintree District and assist in tackling problems associated with poor health, inequality of opportunity, pollution and traffic congestion.

Councillor Mrs S Wilson, Chairman of the Council invited Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, to present the Cycling Strategy and Implementation Plan to Full Council. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to comment on the Strategy and Implementation Plan to which the Cabinet Member responded. An audio recording of the presentation, comments and responses is available on the Council's website and its YouTube channel at <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

The Cycling Strategy sought to promote and enhance cycling to residents and visitors to the District as a viable transport and leisure option; to identify how cycling levels could be increased in the District; to prioritise funding for new cycling schemes; to create a usable, high quality cycle network connecting residential areas with key employment locations, rail stations and town centres; and to create opportunities for increased recreational cycling in the District. The draft Strategy had been developed with the support of a Cycling Strategy Steering Group.

The Strategy had been subject to public consultation during June and July 2021 and an analysis of the responses submitted was set out in Appendix 3 to the Agenda report. There had been a very positive response to the proposed Strategy and each of the strategic priorities. Respondents had also been requested to identify the strategic priorities in order of importance and this information had been used to prioritise the actions within the draft Implementation Plan. A wide range of comments had also been submitted about cycling in general and these comments had been reflected in the draft Plan.

The Implementation Plan contained a number of action points and it identified how key elements of the Strategy would be delivered and how the Strategy would align with other key strategies such as health and well-being, climate change, decarbonisation and road safety. The Plan would include a District Cycling Action Plan and a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. These documents would be developed in partnership with Essex County Council and they would identify a series of routes within town centres linking to key destinations, and also routes within rural areas. The Implementation Plan would also highlight the need for further work to address maintenance and safety issues within the District. Whilst no funding had been allocated to projects within the Implementation Plan, bids could be made through the 2022/23 budget setting process. It was proposed that progress against the actions identified in the Plan should be reported to Full Council on an annual basis.

Following the debate it was unanimously agreed that the Cycling Strategy should be supported. The Council wished to place on record its thanks to the Cycling Strategy Steering Group for their work in delivering the Strategy.

DECISION:

- (1) That the Cycling Strategy 2021, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Growth), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, be authorised to approve the Cycling Strategy Implementation Plan.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.23pm.

Councillor Mrs S Wilson
(Chairman)