

# Minutes

## Council Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> September 2011



These minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A web cast of the meeting is available at [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk).

### Present:

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor J S Allen	Yes
Councillor M J Banthorpe	Yes	Councillor P R Barlow	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Apologies	Councillor J C Beavis	Yes
Councillor D L Bebb	Yes	Councillor E Bishop	Yes
Councillor R J Bolton	Apologies	Councillor G Butland	Yes
Councillor C A Cadman	Apologies	Councillor S Canning	No
Councillor T G Cunningham	Yes	Councillor J G J Elliott	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes (until 9.30pm)	Councillor A V E Everard	Yes
Councillor J H G Finbow	Apologies	Councillor M J Fincken	Yes
Councillor L B Flint	Yes	Councillor T J W Foster	Yes
Councillor M E Galione	Yes	Councillor C Gibson	No
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor S A Howell	Yes
Councillor H D Johnson	Yes	Councillor S C Kirby	Yes
Councillor M C M Lager	Yes	Councillor D J Louis	Yes
Councillor C Louis	Apologies	Councillor D Mann	Yes
Councillor J T McKee	Apologies	Councillor D G Messer	Yes
Councillor R G S Mitchell	Yes	Councillor J M Money (Chairman)	Yes
Councillor Lady P Newton	Yes	Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Apologies
Councillor Mrs I C F Parker	Yes	Councillor J A Pell	Yes
Councillor R P Ramage	Yes	Councillor D M Reid	Yes
Councillor D E A Rice	Yes (until 9.15pm)	Councillor W J Rose	Yes
Councillor C Sandbrook	Yes	Councillor S Sandbrook	Yes (until 7.45pm)
Councillor V Santomauro	Yes	Councillor W D Scattergood	Yes
Councillor W Schmitt	Yes	Councillor A F Shelton	Yes
Councillor L Shepherd	Yes	Councillor C Siddall	Yes
Councillor G A Spray	Yes	Councillor J S Sutton	Yes
Councillor J R Swift	Apologies	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor C M Thompson	Apologies	Councillor M Thorogood	Yes (until 9.15pm)
Councillor L S Walters	Yes	Councillor R G Walters	Yes
Councillor S A Wilson	Yes (until 9.15pm)	Councillor B Wright	Yes

## 25 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman received the East of England Member Development Charter awarded to the Council by Councillor Peter Martin, Chairman of East of England Local Government Association.

Councillor Beavis, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded on behalf of the Council and thanked members and officers for their support in helping the Council achieve Charter status.

Councillor Schmitt presented the Council with Corporate Gold Membership of the Essex Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Trust.

The Chairman announcements included references to winners in the district in the Best Kept Village Competition for 2011, congratulating Halstead on their success in the Anglia in Bloom 2011, and her theme for the Civic Year of visiting sports clubs in the district.

## 26 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

- Councillors Abbott and Wright declared personal interests in Agenda Item 9(i), Inspector's Report on the Core Strategy and Proposed Adoption of the Core Strategy Incorporating Changes, as members of Rivenhall Parish Council which has made representations on the Strategy.
- Councillor Fincken declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11(i), Question Time, as Chairman of Governors of Ramsey College in respect of a question he asked.
- Councillor Mrs Spray declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11(i), Question Time, in relation to a question raised regarding Halstead Senior Citizens Centre as working for Age UK who use the Centre.
- Councillor Scattergood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7, Notice of Motion, Power Lines, Bramford to Twinstead Tee, as the power lines cross a field adjacent to her property. Councillor Scattergood left the meeting for the discussion of this item.
- Councillor Pell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7, Notice of Motion, Power Lines, Bramford to Twinstead Tee, as her husband receives a pension from UK Power Networks. Councillor Pell left the meeting for the discussion of this item.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct all Members remained in the meeting for these items and took part in the debate and decision thereon, unless stated otherwise.

## 27 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 28 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** 6 Statements were made including one by Councillor Scattergood on agenda Item 7, Notice of Motion, Power Lines, Bramford to Twinstead Tee. A list of the statements made is contained in the Appendix.

## 29 **DISTRICT OF TOMORROW DEBATE**

**INFORMATION:.** The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to open the debate. Members made the following contributions to the debate:

### **Councillor Butland**

Councillor Butland advised that the debate this year had come at a particularly important time as it would feed into the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2012-2016. It is planned that the Council will move further forward with the Strategy at its December meeting following consultation.

Many of the current priorities will continue over the next 4 years – A clean and green environment and remaining the cleanest and greenest district in Essex; our businesses are encouraged and the local economy proposers; provision of affordable housing; and people taking pride in their local areas and enjoying a healthy lifestyle.

He added that the current priorities had been achieved with no increase in Council Tax and no significant reductions in front line services.

Councillor Butland thought future challenges included:

- Council finances with some difficult decisions still to be taken;
- an objective of seeking to freeze council tax over the 4 years of the Council although the Council will first need to know the position in relation to its Government grant,
- business rates retention issues;
- Localism Agenda;
- election of Police Commissioners;
- Sustainable growth of the district whilst protecting the balance between rural and urban planning issues;
- a growing population of older people in the district and an increasing requirement to provide good services for older people;
- enabling the development of the town centres;
- encouraging and enabling business to flourish and the provision of employment for young people in the district.

The issues will result in changes in the way local government works and the relationship of the Council and its partners.

### **Councillor Bebb**

Councillor Bebb had a theme of Healthy Lifestyle and raised the following topics:

- The Braintree District Health Profile indicates that the health of adults in the district is generally better than the average for England. However, profile indicators related to a lack of physical activity and obesity in the district give rise for concern;
- a lack of physical activity and obesity have an adverse impact on health and well-being;
- against this background, the district also has an increasing population of older people;
- facilities developed by the Council over the last 5 years include for leisure, play, outdoor adult outdoor gyms and more allotments. The Council will also be opening the new Witham Leisure Centre;
- He thought more allotments, adult outdoor gyms, open spaces for walkers and cyclist could be provided with the allotment provision supported through the use of Section 106 funding.

### **Councillor Rose**

Councillor Rose had a theme of a vision for the future of the district focusing on enterprise and investment. He raised the following topics:

- To create an Enterprise and Investment Park within the district;
- this could be achieved by identifying land to release for the Park and working with investors to create the Park which would be attractive to bringing new business into the district. Consideration might be given to easing business rates for the first few years of a business establishing in the district;
- developing the Park would bring benefits in terms of employment particularly for young people in the district;
- the district is also close to a good road infrastructure and an airport to support the development;
- the Council has the expertise to take this forward.

### **Councillor Lager**

Councillor Lager had the following views on the proposed electoral boundary changes:

- He supported what he saw as removing the over representation of some areas in the country and the number of MPs and their cost;
- he thought the proposals were logical and based around communities which know each other whilst equalising voter numbers;
- he also thought that the proposed national changes are likely to result in changes for the District Council in the form of fewer members and single member wards leading a more collaborative approach with the County Council and Parishes;

- Localism will see more County and District services delivered locally by a variety of local providers. The Localism Bill will see neighbourhoods given extensive powers to shape their localities and to deliver what local residents and business want;
- he saw Witham as being well-placed through its location to prosper commercially and also having two new academies already delivering good educational results, a new leisure centre and good housing.

### **Councillor Dr Evans**

Councillor Dr Evans had a theme of supporting the Voluntary Sector. He raised the following topics:

- The voluntary sector makes a valuable contribution to improving local lives and the Council has been fortunate with many voluntary organisations operating well in the district;
- he saw advantages to building this sector further with the formation of new groups, more volunteers and the creation of social enterprises;
- financial assistance for the sector could come from the Enterprising Communities Fund;
- he thought the thresholds in the Fund might lead to some organisations being ineligible to seek funding and he asked that consideration be given to making adjustments to the thresholds for those organisation seeking lower levels of funding. He thought those organisations collectively make a significant contribution to the Big Society.

### **Councillor Beavis**

Councillor Beavis had a theme of focusing on Communities. She raised the following topics:

- The Council is working with a wide range of partners across the district. The Council is devolving, empowering, consulting and engaging;
- her vision for the District of Tomorrow is people driven with “one family” looking at those not in employment, education or training; older people issues; younger people issues; access to services; leisure and culture; the business community and growth and infrastructure, community well-being, deprivation, affordable housing, and equalities and social inclusion.

### **Councillor Pell**

Councillor Pell raised some issues related to Halstead. She wished to see a by pass for Halstead remaining on the agenda. She stated that the current road infrastructure in Halstead is causing traffic problems.

She also wished to see greater consultation on Halstead town centre improvements with Halstead Town Council and a partnership approach developed with the Town Council.

## **Councillor Cunningham**

Councillor Cunningham raised the issue of the lack of accessibility to broadband services in rural areas with the issue being a problem in his Ward. He said access to good broadband is a necessity for all in current times. He hoped that the Council could address the issue and look for opportunities to work with other authorities to remind Government of the importance of the issue for the rebuilding of the economy.

## **Councillor Abbott**

Councillor Abbott had a theme of local transport and mobility and raised the following:

- Whilst there are some excellent examples of new cycles way and good footpaths particularly in urban areas, in other areas, the provision is fragmented or poor. The provision is also increasingly poorly maintained and there are significant issues in dealing with Essex County Council on local improvement schemes more generally;
- these facilities contribute to the economic, social well-being and health of people.
- he thought the Council should have a greater focus on local transport and mobility issues and welcomed the establishment of a Task and Finish Group by the Council to consider the relationship with Essex County Council on highway matters;
- he also thought the Council should have greater aspirations and look at the development of a wide network of paths and cycle ways across the district in order that people could make sustainable transport decisions.

## **Councillor Siddall**

Councillor Siddall raised the following:

- He was pleased that the Council had supported the Enterprising Communities Fund. He thought the fund would bring district councillors closer the communities they represent. The fund will work with through traditional routes such as Parish Councils but also with many other partners including volunteers groups;
- the Council has a clear costed plan setting out how it moves forward with additional savings that need to be made in the coming years. However, the Council still has a way to go as its needs to make all its assets work harder. He wished to see the Council be the best of the best in everything it does;
- sharing services with other Councils can not only save money but can increase resilience;
- he thought the Council can be proud of its benefits system which acts a safety net in catching people when they find themselves in difficulties. However, he believes there is a need to look at a system of what he saw as ensnaring people into a state of dependency on benefits and a message where people are better off not working.

## **Councillor Barlow**

Councillor Barlow noticed the similarities in priorities of various political administrations in the Council over the last 20 years with a focus on issues such as affordable housing, cleaning and greening, and growth.

He believed there are issues for the Council to consider in terms of its consultation.

He also believed the Council should seek to build on the provision of a community hospital in Braintree and to see health services provided more widely in the district.

### **Councillor Mitchell**

Councillor Mitchell had a theme of Green Heart. He hoped members agreed that the Green Heart campaign had been very well received as well as receiving nationally recognised success. He also hoped members agreed how satisfying and rewarding volunteering to help improve the environment can be.

He was keen that the future of the district includes more regular health enhancing and community benefiting local social involvement in enhancing a maintaining the Green Heart campaign.

### **Councillor Spray**

Councillor Spray believed the district needs to make the most of the opportunities presented by the Olympics. Businesses in the district need to make the most of the opportunities, particularly those tourist related. She also expects the Olympics to lead to an increase in the number of users of sporting facilities.

### **Councillor Elliott**

Councillor Elliott spoke on the lack of infrastructure in the district not accompanying increases in housing and businesses over the years. He believed previous governments had failed to improve the transport infrastructure and cited examples on the A12.

He thought the district would struggle to attract new business until the transport infrastructure was improved and that the Council needed to work with other authorities to bring about improvements.

**Councillor Butland** closed the debate with the following comments:

- He supported Councillor Lager's views on the Council devolving services more locally;
- He agreed rural broadband is a real issue and not just in the villages;
- as regards volunteering, the Executive has left members to deal with this through the Enterprising Communities Fund;
- Councillor Elliott's message on infrastructure is strong although needed to be taken against the current financial position of the country. However, few would disagree with his analysis on the impacts on business development in the district;



- The issues raised in the debate will be taken forward and built in to the Council's plans.

### 30 **NOTICE OF MOTION – POWER LINES BRAMFORD TO TWINSTEAD TEE**

**INFORMATION:** Councillors Barlow and Mann also left the meeting room for consideration of this agenda item.

Members considered a motion in respect of power lines from Bramford to Twinstead Tee. To make the motion consistent with a previous Cabinet decisions, Councillor Butland proposed an amendment to the motion introducing that as much if not all of the line should be placed underground. The amendment was accepted by Councillor Parker.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED.

#### **DECISION:**

"The Council notes that National Grid is currently carrying out a second stage consultation on the construction of a new 400kv power line between Bramford and Twinstead Tee. The Council reaffirms its view that as much of this line if not all should be placed underground to reduce the visual impact on the countryside.

It also urges UK Power Networks to consider removing the 132kv overhead line between Twinstead Tee and any new substation to be built to the west of Twinstead and calls upon National Grid to ensure that there is meaningful consultation with local authorities and communities on the siting of any new substation."

### 31 **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PANEL, 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2011**

**INFORMATION:** The following Recommendations were considered:

#### **Minute 12. Inspector's Report on Core Strategy and Proposed Adoption of Core Strategy incorporating Changes**

Councillor Pell enquired if land identified in the Core Strategy for a school in the Halstead was be land currently owned by the Council or would be newly acquired, Councillor R Walters advised the he would arrange for an officer to respond to Councillor Pell.

#### **DECISION:**

1. That the changes to the Core Strategy set out in the Inspector's Report, which are contained in the Appendices to the report be approved.
2. That the Council adopts the Core Strategy incorporating these changes and that the Council applies for a certificate of conformity for the Core Strategy with the National Planning Policy Framework, when the Framework is approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To adopt the Core Strategy incorporating the changes.



**INFORMATION:** The following Recommendations were considered:

**Minute 37. Treasury Management Annual Report 2010/11**

**INFORMATION:** In response to a question from Councillor Dr Evans on dates for a member development session on Treasury Management, Councillor Siddall said member would be advised of the details shortly.

**DECISION:** That the Annual Treasury Management Report be supported.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To demonstrate appropriate scrutiny over the treasury management function by those charged with governance responsibilities.

**Minute 39. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 to 2014/15 Update**

**INFORMATION:** Members noted that in respect of proposed changes to employee terms and conditions, the proposal on car parking changes is to be referred to the Accommodation Project Board for consideration as a part of a broader review. Members were being asked to take a decision in respect of Casual Mileage Allowance, Lease Car Scheme, and Overtime Payments.

Councillor Fincken requested that the vote on the motion be recorded. This was seconded by Councillors Abbott and Pell.

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

**For the Motion**

Councillors: Allen, Banthorpe, Beavis, Bebb, Butland, Cunningham, Elliott, Foster, Galione, Horner, Howell, Johnson, Kirby, Lager, D Louis, Messer, Mitchell, Lady Newton, Parker, Ramage, Reid, Rose, C Sandbrook, Santomauro, Scattergood, Schmitt, Shelton, Shepherd, Siddall, Spray, Sutton, Tattersley, L Walters and R Walters **(34)**

**Against the Motion**

Councillors: Abbott, Barlow, Bishop, Everard, Fincken, Mann, Pell **(7)**

**Abstained**

Councillors: Flint, Money and Wright **(3)**

**Absent**

Councillors: Baugh, Bolton, Cadman, Canning, Dr Evans Finbow, Gibson, C Louis, McKee, O'Reilly-Cicconi, Rice, S Sandbrook, Swift, Thompson, Thorogood, and Wilson **(16)**

The motion was declared **CARRIED.**

## **DECISION:**

1. That the proposed changes to staff terms and conditions, as detailed in Appendix B to the report be approved to take effect from 1st January 2012 following all staff being given 90 days notice of the changes be agreed.
2. That a provision of £200,000 for disabled adaptations be included in the 2011/12 Capital Programme.

## **33 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

**INFORMATION:** No statements were made.

## **34 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

### **(i) Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to the written reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members.

#### Councillor Beavis, Communities

Councillor responded to questions that she was comfortable with arrangements and consultation on the Halstead Senior Citizens Centre. A statement from Councillor Pell that there had been no other offers of provision to the remaining senior citizens was wrong. Provision has been offered.

Councillor Beavis expects a good outcome for the residents of the Centre.

#### Councillor Lady Newton, Enterprise, Housing and Development

Councillor Lady Newton advised that in relation to land East of Halstead, all vendors have signed the contract and she expects contracts to be exchanged this week. As the agreement contains a confidentiality clause, she is unable to say anything further until all the parties have agreed to go public.

Once contracts have been exchanged, she expects the purchaser to be in negotiations with the Council on their plans to develop the site.

Councillor Lady Newton had some concerns with draft National Planning Policy Framework for example, no definition of sustainable development. She also saw some positive aspects in terms of giving powers to local communities although had concerns over raising their expectations. She will be responding to the consultation for the Council and invited comments from all members on the draft Framework for consideration in her response. The draft Framework is accessible through the Council's website.

### **(ii) Oral Questions to the Leader Without Notice**

**INFORMATION:** no questions were raised.

(iii) **Chairmen's Statements**

**INFORMATION:** No reports were made.

(iv) **Minutes of Meetings (Public Session)**

**INFORMATION:** No statements were made.

35 **BUSINESS OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

**INFORMATION:** There were no reports received from Council representatives on external organisations, or issues raised.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.12pm.

Mrs J M Money  
(Chairman)

**Council Meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011 - Statements Made**

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Christopher Goodey, Witham	Thanked Council for permitting a trader to continue trading.
Fred Sheldrake, Braintree	Item 9, Local Development Framework Core Strategy
Greg Howell, Braintree	Item 9, Local Development Framework Core Strategy
Ian Jackson, Braintree	Item 9, Local Development Framework Core Strategy
Parish Councillor, David Holland	Item 7, Notice of Motion
Twinstead Parish Council Councillor Scattergood	Item 7, Notice of Motion