

Minutes

Council Meeting



16th February 2009

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J E Abbott	Yes	E R Lynch	Yes
M J Banthorpe	Yes	M Lynch	Yes
Miss L Barlow	Yes	D Mann	Yes
J Baugh	Yes	T McArdle	Yes
Mrs J C Beavis	Yes	N G McCrea	Yes
D L Bebb	Apologies	J McKee	Yes
E Bishop	Yes	H J Messenger	Apologies
R J Bolton	Yes	A M Meyer	Yes
G Butland	Yes	R G S Mitchell	Yes
G Cohen	Yes	Mrs J M Money	Yes
J C Collar	Yes	Lady Newton (Chairman)	Yes
M Dunn	Yes	J P O'Reilly-Cicconi	Apologies
Mrs E Edey	Yes	Mrs J A Pell	Yes
J G J Elliott	Yes (from 7.35pm)	R Ramage	Yes
R Elliston	Yes	D M Reid	No
Dr R L Evans	Yes	D E A Rice	Yes
A V E Everard	Yes	Mrs C Sandbrook	Yes
J H G Finbow	Yes	Mrs W D Scattergood	Yes
Ms L B Flint	Yes	Mrs J W Schmitt	Yes
T J W Foster	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
Mrs B A Gage	Yes	Mrs L Shepherd	Yes
M G Gage	Apologies	C Siddall	Yes
Mrs M E Galione(Vice-Chair)	Yes	Mrs J A Smith	Yes
J E B Gyford	Yes	Mrs G A Spray	Yes
N R H O Harley	Yes	F Swallow	Yes
Mrs S A Howell	Yes	Miss M Thorogood	Yes
P J Hughes	Yes	S M Walsh	Yes
D L Hume	Yes	R G Walters	Yes
M C M Lager	Yes	R N Wilkins	No
S J Lambourne	Yes	T S Wilkinson	Yes

The Chairman welcomed all Councillors, public and press to the first meeting of Council in 2009, and drew attention to the evacuation procedure in case of an emergency, for mobile phones to be switched off, for Members to collect their mail and the need to use the microphones as the meeting was being webcast.

61 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the following issues:-

- (1) The **Chairman's Civic Reception** held at Gosfield Hall on 15th January 2009. The Reception had incorporated the Community Achievement Awards presentations that had attracted 76 nominations of a very high standard.
- (2) On 26th February and 26th March 2009 the Chairman will be hosting **tea parties at the Town Hall Centre** in Braintree. Invitations are still available for the March event and Councillors are requested to contact the Civic Office at Causeway House, with any invitees from the local community and voluntary organisations.
- (3) The **lists of engagements** carried out by herself and the Vice-Chairman since the last meeting on 15th December 2008.

62 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: There were no declarations of interest.

63 MINUTES

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 15th December 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64 QUESTION TIME

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

65 DISTRICT OF TOMORROW DEBATE

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council to open up the District of Tomorrow Debate.

Councillor Butland made comparisons to the time of the previous District of Tomorrow debate in December 2007, and reflected on changes in the economic climate, and the increasing number of unemployed. The Braintree District is not immune from this, and the Council are looking at both short and long term measures in the District. Short-term examples include supporting our communities through the economic difficulties, whilst retail outlets are closing and shops are being boarded up. The Cabinet papers contain measures the Council are adopting on the Supporting Our Communities theme, and this is at the heart of the budget making process for the challenging year ahead when many residents may lose their jobs, and have problems with debt and repayments. With regard to long-term measures, ways are to be sought as we come out of recession and, collectively, the Council has already introduced many initiatives to move forward, i.e. the new Strategy for 2008-2012; the Local Development Framework currently out for consultation, the regeneration of the three town centres, and the provision of a new swimming pool for Witham. Greater involvement will be required from Members to implement the proposals, and to embark on further projects for the authority in years to come, and to provide support directly or through officers of organisations and partners, and to look ahead on development for the District and to grasp opportunities.

Councillor Harley, referred to economic measures and short-term initiatives by the Council to support small businesses, micro-businesses, and small retailers in both urban and rural locations including approaching them to save on business rates (where £100,000 savings had been realised); for the Council to settle balances quickly; and to introduce a 12-month period for payment of Tax (instead of 10 months). The relationship will be formalised between Braintree District Council and BEAU to provide help in start-ups, and acquire small business premises. The Economic Development Officer will formulate Medium Term measures to encompass challenges and developments on skills, i.e. at Braintree College; to identify more employment sites, i.e. for regeneration, and to utilise the District's position in relation to the surrounding regional hubs.

Councillor Mrs Beavis spoke for her Ward residents of Sible Hedingham and the bad flooding experienced on Tuesday 10th February 2009. This flooding was considered to be preventable as the floodgates at Alderford Mill had been opened during the day lessening the water level, but then closed overnight causing the flooding that resulted with Great Yeldham and Castle Hedingham being cut off, the local comprehensive school was closed, and those receiving care call did not receive care. A public meeting with the Environment Agency is proposed to investigate the incident, including paperwork, and to ascertain how the flooding occurred and the watermill project ruined.

Councillor Lager advised he had represented Witham (on and off) since 1976, and referred to the town's development and expansion, the relocating of businesses from London, and the rapid growth in the population. The area has 'shifted' from manufacturing to servicing and now comprise of numerous golf clubs and various food outlets. In the next five year period both senior schools are to be rebuilt (£45m investment); Chipping Hill Infants School to be rebuilt and become a Junior School (£5m investment); opening of the Riverview sheltered housing complex (£5m investment), and the Bramston Pool replacement (£5m investment). Ambitious investment plans by businesses are proposed and opportunities exist to enhance the shopping facilities and attract alternative shops, i.e. Aldi. With Council's working on anti-social behaviour measures; the removal of shopping trolleys from the streets, and by refurbishing community halls, and having allotments under local administration it was considered the area will be a better place to live.

Councillor Mrs Spray welcomed support for the retail sector, i.e. on business rates, and continued to comment on the campaign by the Leader of the Council to save the Marks & Spencer store from closure in George Yard, Braintree. Residents and Earls Colne Parish Council had noticed the Council's actions and it was considered that if an Earls Colne store was under threat (in any village) would the District Council have made the same gesture. Retail shops in our Wards, whether those in Earls Colne, Colne Engaine or Greenstead Green should be supported.

Councillor Banthorpe stated that previous District of Tomorrow debates had called for growth in the District and more employment and recreation, but positive improvements are needed now at Galleys Corner on the Braintree bypass. Traffic queues have stretched as far as Coggeshall or Rayne, and the static vehicles are increasing pollution in the area, and compounding the traffic situation, including coming through our town and villages to avoid the queues. The delay in improvements to the A120 is a major problem for the District, and a compromise should be sought, e.g. either an underpass or an over-pass. The Council needs to encourage investment and industry coming to the District, to support our communities in retaining their identity and to protect our green spaces during any developments. A developer has identified land between Braintree and Rayne as a major

housing development opportunity – this should adhere to policies not being overruled, and make consideration for the future and the retention of open green space for residents.

Councillor Dr Evans spoke on the role and function of Local Committees including two aspects of (i) 'hope' and the Local Committee role in society and the community, and (ii) on 'gloom' and ways to address the democratic deficit – the poor turn-out to vote at elections. The aims and objectives include leadership in the community; working with partners; economic, social and environmental well being; monitoring of local services, and addressing local problems, e.g. anti-social behaviour. It was questioned if these objectives are succeeding, and if engagement by the local community with Local Committees and your local Councillor are being made – whereas the Local Committee is better known as a source of funding. The community has to be encouraged to engage with Local Committees, whether as an individual or a group, and a local Council advice 'help bureau' style was proposed. Local Committees are not always able to solve issues but should act with openness, transparency and sensitivity.

Councillor Foster requested that the Secretary of State, instead of Essex County Council (ECC) who is the waste disposal authority and the planning authority to the proposal, determine the proposed waste facility at Rivenhall. Justice has to be seen to be done, therefore even assuming impartiality by ECC Planning Committee it is better that the application is scrutinised by Public Enquiry. ECC has already granted permission for development at Rivenhall contrary to its own policies and the present application shows contempt for planning policy. An argument for a PFI bid is that it transfers the risk from the employing authority to the contractor, and Councillor Foster made reference to a recent press article regarding a 'bale out' from government. Essex County Council by rejecting the PFI bid, and funding and running the facility itself, could bring Essex jobs for Essex people.

Councillor Eric Lynch had recognised that the Wednesday market in Braintree now contains less and less stalls, and lacks the diversity of goods on offer, and continued to question if the reasons for this was the Council's charges and organisation, and whether anything can be done to rectify this. Councillor Lynch also supported earlier concerns on designated green spaces being built on, and requested that these are kept for our residents.

Councillor Ms Barlow expressed concern to the District Council focusing too heavily on provision of the pool at Bramston Sports Centre, Witham, and ignoring the dry-side facilities and sports provision. The new building would be for school requirements and for a sports centre, and the new partnership to produce the Maltings Academy was welcomed. However, the needs of the public in accessing sports facilities during school hours also have to be taken into account.

Councillor Shelton raised two issues – the needs of older people, and to look across the District's boundaries. Firstly, older people are increasing in numbers and needs, and have experienced poor income from savings but still have increased costs from energy companies etc. As a caring authority the Council should display what support is available and how it is gained, and provide advice on the Council's website and local press page. Many elderly people suffer from isolation, deprivation and loneliness, and may be housebound; and it was considered an appropriate time for the Council to appoint Community Champions on how we can address needs and target help on these issues. Secondly, Councillor Shelton referred to his Ward in the north of the District and how

residents look across the District boundary towards Suffolk for services and employment. It was hoped that this scenario is taken into account when long-term proposals are made.

Councillor Mrs Pell reminded the Council to continue to seek for support for a Halstead by pass, and that a cohesive approach was required especially as a western bypass is being discussed for Sudbury. The citizen's of Halstead and surrounding area continue to campaign for a by pass for the town.

Councillor Abbott referred to the current economic climate and the need for local economies to remain strong, and he expressed his support for the regeneration projects in the District and for small businesses. The proposals of the East of England Regional Assembly calls for a new town in the District – the same size as Braintree, Rayne, Bocking and Great Notley together - that would exacerbate congestion on the roads and impact on the A12 and A120 corridor. This type of proposal should not be made by remote planners, but left as genuine local decision making by the authorities involved. Councillor Abbott considered that the aspect of sustainability had been 'lost' by the Council on projects/local economies, and made an 'afterthought' on building after building, and if solar panels had been at Braintree swimming pool from the offset then energy bills could have been reduced, and emissions kept down. On the aspect of transport it was considered that existing routes should be worked with, and more focus given to public transport including Witham Railway Station improvements and Braintree branch line, the provision of the passing loop, and an integrated bus service.

With regard to the proposed Rivenhall waste facility, Councillor Abbott considered that our own waste should be dealt with locally, and utilise Witham Industrial Estate and create a local recycling facility instead of current derelict buildings.

Councillor Mrs Sandbrook focused on short and long term views, and stated that the District has to meet the aspirations of families moving to the area, and support local feeling on issues, i.e. the closure of M & S Simply Food store in George Yard, Braintree. The Council has to think creatively about our main High Streets, go on the offensive at some proposals, and grasp what makes a successful High Street. The long-term need also has to be ascertained for our share of the consumer spend, and make ourselves into a proposition – a new 'Shake Express' shop in Braintree town centre was quoted as an example of a successful initiative. It has to be recognised what we want in the Braintree District for those people who live and work here, and to identify the needs of shoppers, and understand the demographics of the area.

Councillor McKee also referred to Braintree High Street and an application for a high-stakes gambling establishment (not retail), and how a lap dancing premise has appeared. This type of business provides the incentive to lose money, and ways should be sought to protect the weak and vulnerable part of our society before something is created that we may be ashamed of in the future. The Planning Committee or Licensing Committee should take these aspects into account when these issues are considered.

Councillor Everard stated that the current economic climate may affect the Council's aspirations, and it was agreed for the town centre to be revamped, especially the Braintree Bus Park area – a major asset to the town. Many buildings need bringing up to modern standards and make the town more attractive, help the arts sector, and improve local community halls and the Institute.

Councillor Collar expressed concern to the 16–18 year olds leaving school in July, and facing unemployment. Applications for Universities had risen and it was considered that a group of our community are disenfranchised, and ways found to engage with local young people and give them a focus, and become an integral part of this area. Councillor Collar quoted an example of a young girl who had left school in July 2008, and had already been made redundant three times.

Councillor Mitchell was pleased for the Feering and Kelvedon areas during the recent local flooding, as they had a significant reduction in flooding compared to that suffered in 2001. This had been achieved through good liaison between the District Council, the Parish Council and the Environment Agency.

Councillor Rice requested consideration on enforcement of environmental matters as viable complaints had been received on this subject. The environmental enforcement processes should be 'tightened up', including the parking of vehicles on grassed areas. Councillor Rice also stated that in his Ward two new play areas are to be built and he requested a greater emphasis on the teenager and provision of a designated area for them to gather. To achieve this a joint initiative with Essex County Council could be taken forward.

Council was also advised that during the recent snowy period the top floor of the George Yard car park in Braintree could not be used, and ways should be taken to maximise facilities to the public.

Councillor Siddall made reference to the last recession, and made a quote 'Business is so bad, even people who have no intention of paying us are not ordering'. There may be a lack of confidence in the current economic climate, but we need to be positive and the same people who had not recognised the coming of the recession will not predict the coming out of the recession either.

The Leader thanked the 19 speakers who had taken part in the debate and during the summary advised

- that he hoped the Council would be against the closure of a main store in any village, as it is an important part of village life
- the issue of the A120 at Galleys Corner, Braintree will continually increase in cost, and would be disproportionate if paid out of a regional 'pot', and pressure should be kept on National government on this issue
- on the subject of Local Committees, a recent report to Cabinet proposes they monitor the impact of the recession on their localities and redirect funding as necessary
- that the Academies at Witham will provide the dry-side facilities currently at Bramston Sports Centre, and the Council will work closely on this
- that he did not support the Regional Development Agencies taking decisions on local economies
- with regard to gambling establishments the regulations are set nationally, and there are problems as a local authority of what we can do
- for young people we should look towards Essex County Council and apprenticeship schemes
- on enforcement of environmental matters, for the Council to be advised where problems exist, and
- that the Council should look with confidence for the medium to long-term future of the District.

COUNCIL BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX & RENTS 2009/10 – RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES – CABINET 10TH FEBRUARY 2009

INFORMATION: Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, presented the reports on Finance Proposals 2009/10 – General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA); feedback from Budget consultation, and extract from the Cabinet meeting held on 10th February 2009. Councillor Lager referred to the current economic climate, and the practical measures introduced by both Essex County Council and Braintree District Council. Following the consultation process and discussion at Cabinet the proposed changes in service provision for Public Conveniences, Concessionary Fare Tokens, and allotments at Tabor Field, Braintree will be held back from budget measures. Changes include reduced garden waste collection during winter months, the distribution of recycling sacks to an annual delivery, HRA service charges held, and housing rents to the Government formula. The proposed Capital Programme contains substantial projects, including a replacement swimming pool for Bramston Sports Centre at Witham. It was noted that negotiations for the Riverside Pool site at Braintree is currently 'on hold'. Previously, the sale of Council's surplus assets were used extensively to fund the Capital Programme but the current situation may call for the funds from the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) – sale of Council houses – to be used on the Capital Programme; with some schemes receiving support from the Community and Housing Investment Partnership Board (CHIP) fund, or the Growth Area grant from Chelmsford Borough Council.

Councillor Lager went on to move the recommendations at Minute 123, Items 1-19 of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th February 2009.

Councillor Dr Evans supported the budget proposals and changes made following the consultation process. However, the proposal to withdraw green waste collection during the months of December 2009, and January and February 2010 was not supported, and should be looked at again. The 'freezing' of fees and charges until 2010 also found favour, and the further dialogue with the Task and Finish Group. The clear commitment to the replacement of Witham swimming pool was welcomed; and the opportunity for Braintree Local Committee to address the local issue of Tabor Field allotments, following the petition received at Cabinet.

Councillor Gyford sought clarification of the imposition of charges for pest control on whether residents would be charged each visit, or one charge for the complete job that could comprise of two to four visits depending on the pest being eradicated.

Councillor Abbott expressed support for the budget proposals, including the decision being revisited regarding public conveniences, and no increase in Member Allowances for two years. The proposal for stopping green waste collection for three months over winter was not supported, as this will dislocate the service, affect performance levels, would send organic waste to landfill, and he queried if a full costing had been done on the landfill tax escalator. Many rural areas in the District receive less service than those in urban areas, and he requested the Cabinet Member to reconsider the proposal.

Councillor Meyer considered that the Council is showing 'double standards' when allocating £60,000 for consultants with £100,000 in reserve if required, to provide a frontline service when the Council employ people on good salaries. Councillor Meyer thought this was absolutely wrong.

Councillor Eric Lynch agreed with previous speakers on the budget proposals, and also welcomed that the public conveniences issue had been deferred. He continued to request that the condition of public conveniences across the District be improved, especially those sited at Braintree bus park.

Councillor Dunn supported the budget proposals and the difficult decisions that had been made, and went on to express concern for those vulnerable people affected by rent increases and the economic climate, and requested that every effort should be made to keep Council Tax as low as possible.

Councillor Mrs Spray welcomed that the public conveniences issue in Earls Colne had been deferred and stated that both herself and Councillor Siddall had been impressed by the Earls Colne campaign on this topic. Thanks were extended for this decision.

Councillor Collar raised issues relating to Members Allowances and the annual pay award, and allowances for Committee Chairmen. The figures stated in Appendix C of the report was questioned, the type of structure on this topic and the payment of special allowances to Councillors. It was considered that this issue should be investigated or looked at by a Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Lager responded to the issues raised:-

- The charge for the pest control service should be per case (not per visit)
- On green waste collection it was considered that local residents adjust well to service delivery; and costing and benefits for the scheme was made in 2008 when other changes to the waste service had been looked at
- The cost of £60,000 for the use of consultants is for when the Council require specialist advice, and on a short term basis to deliver the project or service
- The comments regarding public conveniences are noted, and the Council will look at other methods this service can be delivered, or other options considered, i.e. use of pubs, cafes and shops, and approach the Parish Council concerned
- Member's duties had considerably increased to warrant the additional allowance for special responsibilities on Member Allowances. The discrepancy in figures was considered to be the Special Responsibility Allowances not taken into account.
- That those vulnerable residents in the community are taken into consideration, and the limiting of Council Tax increases.

DECISION:

1. The changes to service provision, as detailed in Appendix C to the Cabinet report, with the exception of the proposal to close the public conveniences, be approved.
2. The proposal to close the public conveniences be deferred to allow further discussions and investigation on how they could be provided at reduced costs.
3. The revised budget shortfall, of £163,180, for 2009/10 be met from the General Fund balance.
4. The budget variations to the current base budget as summarised in the revised Appendix P to the Cabinet report be approved.
5. The budget bids detailed in Appendix B of the Cabinet report be approved.
6. No increases to existing Fees and Charges for 2009/10.

7. The introduction of new charges for the eradication of pests of public health significance, from 1st April 2009, as detailed in section A.5. of the Cabinet report, be approved.
8. The Discretionary Rate Relief scheme effective from 1st April 2009, as detailed in Appendix D of the Cabinet report, be approved.
9. The housing rent increases for 2009/10 be 5.5% per week.
10. No increases be applied to housing service charges for 2009/10.
11. The proposed Housing Revenue Account budget for 2009/10, as detailed in Appendix I to the Cabinet report, be approved.
12. It be agreed that following the receipt of a petition against the creation of 70 new allotment plots at Tabor Field, Braintree, the £35,000 identified in the capital bids should be treated as a provision and referred to the Local Committee for further consideration.
13. The General Fund Capital bids for 2009/10 at Section D.3. of the report and listed in Appendix L to the Cabinet report, be approved.
14. The Prudential Indicators and limits set out in Appendix N to the Cabinet report be approved.
15. The Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision as recommended in Appendix N to the Cabinet report be approved.
16. The Treasury Management Strategy, including annual investment strategy, for 2009/10 be approved.
17. The proposed detailed estimates, as amended during the Cabinet discussion, in Appendix P to the Cabinet report and the Council Tax increase of 2.5% be approved, having taking into consideration:
 - The consultation feedback received; and
 - The Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of balances (Appendix O of the Cabinet report).
18. Given the anticipated budget gap over the next two years, the Performance and Efficiency Programme Board be tasked with identifying a further £500,000 savings to feed into next year's budgetary process.
19. The Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated to take account of the information detailed in the report and the decisions made.

67 **COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2009/10**

INFORMATION: Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, presented the Council Tax Resolution 2009-10 and moved the recommendations.

DECISION:

- (1) That the General Fund budget of £18,367,610 and the total Budget Requirement (inclusive of the aggregate amount local precepts) of £20,004,988 for 2009/10 be approved.
- (2) That the level of Council Tax for 2009/10 is set, in accordance with the following resolution
 1. Under delegated powers the Corporate Director agreed the amount of Council Tax Base for 2009/10 as 52,889 Band D equivalents. He also agreed that the amounts calculated and set out in Column 2 of Schedule A, should be the Council Tax Base for dwellings in those parts of the District listed in Column 1 of that schedule.

2. The Council agrees a budget for 2009/10 of £18,367,610 after using £278,000 of balances (as detailed in Appendix A). After taking into account revenue support grant, redistributed business rates, and the Council's share of the Collection Fund surplus, the Council's total charge on council taxpayers is £8,401,418. This equates to a Band D tax rate of £158.85, an increase of 2.5% compared to the current year.
3. That the following amounts are calculated by the Council for the year 2009/10, in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-
 - a) £70,175,318 being the expenditure the Council estimates it will incur in 2009/10 in performing its functions and which will be charged to a revenue account. This amount includes contingencies, estimated transfers to financial reserves, and local precepts issued to the Council.
 - b) £50,170,330, being receipts estimated by the Council for 2009/10 and which will be credited to a revenue account. This amount includes specific government grants and estimated transfers from financial reserves required to meet certain sums within the amount shown at (a) above, but excludes revenue support grant, redistributed business rates, and the Council's share of the estimated collection fund surplus.
 - c) £20,004,988, being the budget requirement for the year calculated as the difference between gross expenditure and income as set out at (a) and (b) above, and including the total of local precepts.
 - d) £9,941,212, being the amount which is payable for 2009/10 into the General Fund in respect of revenue support grant and redistributed business rates.
 - e) £24,980, being the amount that has been calculated as the Council's share of the estimated Collection Fund surplus for 2008/09, which will be transferred from the collection fund in 2009/10.
 - f) £10,038,796, being the Council Tax requirement for the Council including the amount required by local precepting authorities, which will be transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund in 2009/10.
 - g) £189.81, being the basic amount of council tax for 2009/10 including the average local precept tax rate calculated by dividing (f) by the total Council Tax base for the district.
 - h) £1,637,378, being the aggregate amount of all precepts issued to the Council from local precepting authorities and taken into account in making the calculation of the budget requirement at (c) above, and shown in Column 3 of Schedule A.
 - i) £158.85, being the basic amount of council tax for dwellings in those parts of the District where no special items relate, i.e. this is the District Council's element of the total council tax rate. This equates to the following charges on council taxpayers:

<u>Valuation Band</u>	<u>Proportion of Band</u> <u>D Tax</u>	<u>Council Tax £</u>
A	6/9	£105.90
B	7/9	£123.55
C	8/9	£141.20
D	9/9	£158.85
E	11/9	£194.15
F	13/9	£229.45
G	15/9	£264.75
H	18/9	£317.70

- j) The amounts shown in Column 5 of Schedule A, calculated by adding to the amount at (i) above, the precept amount relating to each parish/ town council area, divided by the tax base for that area. This represents the basic amount of council tax for each parish/ town council area, incorporating the District and parish/ town council element of the total council tax amount. The charge for each property Band derived from this basic amount of council tax for each parish/ town council area is also shown in Schedule A.
4. That it be noted that the Essex County Council, Essex Police Authority, and Essex Fire Authority have indicated that the following precepts will be issued to the Council for 2009/10:

Essex County Council	£56,406,119
Essex Police Authority	£6,783,014
Essex Fire Authority	£3,417,687

And expressed as a tax rate for each of the categories of dwelling as shown below:

<u>Valuation Band</u>	<u>Essex County</u> <u>Council</u>	<u>Essex Police</u> <u>Authority</u>	<u>Essex Fire</u> <u>Authority</u>
A	711.00	85.50	43.08
B	829.50	99.75	50.26
C	948.00	114.00	57.44
D	1066.50	128.25	64.62
E	1303.50	156.75	78.98
F	1540.50	185.25	93.34
G	1777.50	213.75	107.70
H	2133.00	256.50	129.24

That having calculated the aggregate of the amounts stated under (i), (j), and 4 above for each area within the District, the Council hereby sets the amounts shown in Schedule B as the amount of Council Tax for 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwellings.

The Council resolves that any expenses incurred in performing in part of its area a function that is performed elsewhere in its area by a parish or town council, or a Chairman of a parish meeting, shall not be treated as Special Expenses for the purposes of Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

68 **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES (PUBLIC SESSION)**

INFORMATION: There were no other policy recommendations to be received.

69 **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS (PUBLIC SESSION)**

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

70 **QUESTION TIME (PUBLIC SESSION)**

(i) **Statements by the Leader/Cabinet Members and Deputy Cabinet Members**

INFORMATION: The following statements were made: -

Closure of Marks & Spencer 'Simply Food' in Braintree. The Leader advised that, although the District Council, local press and residents, had held a campaign against the closure of the 'Simply Food' store in George Yard, Braintree, Marks & Spencer had decided to close 27 shops, including Braintree. The petition had accrued over 3,000 signatures. Councillor Butland expressed his thanks to all those involved in the campaign, and reported that himself, with Ken Game (the Chairman of the Braintree Town Centre Strategy Group); the local MP Brooks Newmark; and the Council's Chief Executive had met with Marks & Spencer on 13th February 2009 and discussed the local feeling for the store, and the reasons behind the closure. The importance of Marks & Spencer, a major retailer, being in Braintree had been recognised and the meeting had provided some useful feedback for the future.

(ii) **Oral Questions**

INFORMATION: Members were invited to ask any questions of the Leader on non-operational matters and the following question was asked: -

Councillor Collar referred to properties being flooded in the Bumpstead area in June 2007, and following the work of the Environment Agency and the local Parish Council, no properties had been affected in the recent period of flooding. The Leader was pleased that no properties had been affected in Steeple Bumpstead, and continued to express thanks, on behalf of Council, to all Braintree District Council staff involved in delivery of 600 sandbags across the area, and on working with other agencies in assisting the community during the recent floods.

(iii) **Chairmen's Statements**

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

(iv) **Meetings in Public Session**

INFORMATION: Members were invited to raise any matters arising from meetings that had been held in public session since the last Council meeting on 15th December 2008. No issues were raised.

71 **BUSINESS OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

INFORMATION: There were no reports received from Council representatives on external organisations.

As there were no items in private session, the Chairman closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.08pm.

Lady Newton
(Chairman)

(ii)

For further information regarding these minutes, please contact Eileen Self, Law & Governance, on 01376 551414 or e-mail eileen.self@braintree.gov.uk