

COUNCIL

AGENDA



THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

(Please note this meeting will be webcast)

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk>

Date: Wednesday 20th February 2013

Time: 7:15pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB

Membership:

Councillor J E Abbott	Councillor J S Allen	Councillor M J Banthorpe
Councillor P R Barlow	Councillor J Baugh	Councillor J C Beavis
Councillor D L Bebb	Councillor E Bishop	Councillor R J Bolton
Councillor L B Bowers – Flint (Chairman)	Councillor G Butland	Councillor C A Cadman
Councillor S Canning	Councillor T G Cunningham	Councillor J G J Elliott
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Councillor A V E Everard	Councillor J H G Finbow
Councillor M J Fincken	Councillor T J W Foster	Councillor M E Galione
Councillor C Gibson	Councillor M Green	Councillor P Horner
Councillor S A Howell	Councillor H D Johnson	Councillor S C Kirby
Councillor M C M Lager	Councillor C Louis	Councillor D J Louis
Councillor E Lynch	Councillor D Mann	Councillor J T McKee
Councillor R G S Mitchell	Councillor J M Money	Councillor Lady P Newton
Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Councillor I C F Parker	Councillor J A Pell
Councillor R P Ramage	Councillor D M Reid	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor D E A Rice	Councillor W J Rose	Councillor V Santomauro
Councillor W D Scattergood	Councillor W Schmitt	Councillor A F Shelton
Councillor L Shepherd	Councillor C Siddall	Councillor G A Spray
Councillor J S Sutton	Councillor J R Swift	Councillor P Tattersley
Councillor C M Thompson	Councillor M Thorogood	Councillor L S Walters
Councillor R G Walters	Councillor S A Wilson	Councillor B Wright

QUESTION TIME

Immediately after the Minutes of the previous meeting have been approved there will be a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak. Members of the public wishing to speak should contact the Council's Member of the public can remain to observe the whole of the public part of the meeting. The Council's question time leaflet explains the procedure and copies of this may be obtained at the Council's offices at Braintree, Witham (library) and Halstead (library).

Health and Safety. Any persons attending meetings in the Council offices are requested to take a few moments to familiarise themselves with the nearest available fire exit, indicated by the fire evacuation signs. In the event of a continuous alarm sounding during the meeting, you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by the fire evacuation officer who will identify him/herself should the alarm sound. You will be assisted to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building. Any persons unable to use the stairs will be assisted to the nearest safe refuge.

Mobile Phones. Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent or is switched off during the meeting.

Documents. Agendas, reports and minutes for all the Council's public meetings can be accessed via the internet at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk>

Braintree District Council welcomes comments from members of the public in order to make its services as efficient and effective as possible. We would appreciate any suggestions regarding the usefulness of the paperwork for this meeting, or the conduct of the meeting you have attended.

Please let us have your comments setting out the following information:

Meeting AttendedDate of Meeting.....

Comments.....

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.....
.....
.....

Contact details.....

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to Alastair Peace on 01376 551414 or email alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest:-

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest to indicate in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Such Member must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Members of the Council are requested to attend the above meeting to transact the following business: -

PUBLIC SESSION

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **To receive any announcements/statements from the Chairman and/or Leader of the Council.**
3. **Declarations of Interest.**

To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.

4. **Question Time.** (See page i).
5. **Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10th December 2012 (Copy previously circulated).
6. To consider the following **Motion** submitted by **Councillor Barlow**:

“This Council welcomes Government proposals to introduce caps on the total lending rates that can be charged for providing credit from, particularly, the so called payday loan companies. Council further acknowledges that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging and notes that unaffordable credit is extracting wealth from the most deprived in our community. Unaffordable credit is causing a myriad of unwanted problems such as poorer diets, colder homes, council tax and utility bill arrears.

Council further believes that it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit for all, and therefore pledges to use its best endeavors to promote financial literacy and affordable lending, including working with other community based organisations in providing debt, money and benefits advice as well as enhanced promotion of Holdfast credit union and others who offer access to affordable credit and saving. Finally the Council calls on Government to give local authorities the power to veto licences for high street credit agencies where they could have a negative impact on communities and to urge other Essex Councils to adopt similar policies”.

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4.2, of the Constitution. The motion has been proposed by Councillor Barlow and seconded by Councillors Bishop, Dr R Evans, Lynch and Mann.

7. To consider the following **Motion** submitted by **Councillor Banthorpe**:

“The Council notes that Essex County Council has produced a Replacement Minerals Local Plan to cover the period up to 2029. Sixteen sites have been identified as 'preferred sand and gravel sites' of which seven are within the boundary of Braintree District Council. Of these seven sites, five are extensions to existing quarries and two are new sites including a 90 hectares site at Broadfield Farm, Rayne.

The Council rejects the Replacement Minerals Local Plan believing that it is flawed for the following reasons:

- That the extraction of 24.6 million tons of the 40.82 million tons (60%) of minerals from Braintree District to supply the whole County is an unreasonable and unacceptable proportion of the total.
- The average annual use of Sand and Gravel has been 3.62 Million tons per year making 36.2 million over ten years. The plan target of 41 million is therefore excessive and should be revised down.
- The provision of a 4.28 million ton extraction site of 90 hectares at Rayne has not taken proper account of the effects that it will have on the people of Rayne.

This Council therefore urges Essex County Council to review the plan and adopt a fairer apportionment of extraction across the County taking greater account of the effects the plan will have on the people of Rayne and Braintree District”.

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4.2, of the Constitution. The motion has been proposed by Councillor Banthorpe and seconded by Councillors Foster, Mitchell, Tattersley and R Walters.

8. To consider the following **Motion** submitted by **Councillor Canning**:

“This Council commends the Chancellor of the Exchequer for cancelling the Labour Government’s fuel price escalator which would have meant that the cost of fuel would be at least 10p per litre more expensive. It also congratulates him on not increasing petrol taxes for nearly three years.

Nevertheless this Council is concerned at the cost of motor fuel in the District of Braintree in comparison with neighbouring areas. The high cost of fuel is detrimental to business and motorists, whose reliance on their own transport is essential for the fulfilment of their every day lives.

The Council is disappointed that despite a unanimous vote in Parliament calling for an investigation, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) has refused to hold a full inquiry into allegations of anti-competitive behaviour in the petrol and diesel market.

It therefore calls on the OFT to reconsider its decision not to hold a full inquiry and to step up the pressure on the oil companies and financial speculators who are pushing up prices at the pump. It also asks local Members of Parliament to support the Early Day Motion number 1000 tabled by Robert Halfon MP.”

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4.2, of the Constitution. The motion has been proposed by Councillor Canning and seconded by Councillors Cunningham, Elliott, McKee and Siddall.

9. **Council Budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and Medium – Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/2017.** Report attached (Page 1).

- (i) Recommendations from Cabinet held on 4th February – Council Budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and Medium – Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/2017 (Appendix 1).
- (ii) Amendments to the 2013/14 Budget resulting from late notification of changes in Government Support (Appendix 2).
- (iii) Council Tax Resolution for 2013/14 (Appendix 3, to follow).

(Members are requested to bring to this meeting the Cabinet Report item 6a - Council Budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and Medium – Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/2017 report, previously circulated).

10. **Other Policy Recommendations and References - Cabinet 4th February**

- (a) Disposal of Land for Affordable Housing Development. Report attached (page 5).

11. **Question Time Reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members**

- (i) **Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members.** To receive the following reports from each Portfolio Holder:

- a) Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council (Page 12);
- b) Councillor Beavis, People and Participation (Page 16);
- c) Councillor Bebb, Performance and Efficiency (Page 19);
- d) Councillor Lady Newton, Planning and Property (Page 23);
- e) Councillor Schmitt, Place (Page 25);
- f) Councillor Siddall, Prosperity and Growth (Page 28).

- (ii) **Oral questions** without notice on matters related to a particular portfolio, the powers or duties of the Council or the district. (Procedure Rules 7.1 to 7.3 apply). Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all members.

(A period of up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item).

- (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements. ***None have been received.***

- (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of **meetings that have been held in public session** since the Council meeting on 10th December 2012. (Report attached – Page 31).

12. **Statements by Members**

To receive any statements by Members of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6.
There are none.

13. To receive reports about and receive questions and answers on the **business of external organisations. *None have been received.***

14. Exclusion of Public and Press: - To give consideration to adopting the following Resolution: -

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

15. **PRIVATE SESSION**

Note: At the time of publication there are no items for Private Session.

16. **Statements by Members – Private Session**

To receive and give responses to statements by Members which contain confidential or exempt information of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6. The Chairman will invite the Leader or relevant Cabinet Member to comment on each statement.
There are no statements

17. **Question Time - Private Session**

- (i) **Leader's Statement** or statement by Cabinet Members containing exempt information on a key issue.
- (ii) **Oral questions** without notice on matters related to a particular portfolio, the powers or duties of the Council or the district. (Procedure Rules 7.1 to 7.3 apply). Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all members.

(Please note that the time set aside for item 15(ii) shall not exceed 30 minutes)

- (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements containing exempt information from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements - ***There are none.***
- (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of meetings that have been held in private session since the Council meeting on 10th December 2012.

18. **Private Session Policy Recommendations.** To consider any policy recommendations (in private session) that have arisen within the last meetings' cycle – ***There are none.***

N BEACH
Chief Executive

The last page of this agenda is numbered 31.

Council Budget and Council Tax Resolution 2013/14 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17		Agenda No: 9
Portfolio Area:		Performance and Efficiency, Councillor Bebb
Background Papers:		Public Report

Executive Summary

- 1) The Council is required to agree the budget and level of Council Tax for 2013/14 to fund this budget.
- 2) This was considered in detail by Cabinet at its meeting on 4th February and the detailed report has been previously circulated to all Members.
- 3) The key messages for 2013/14 are that despite a continuing reduction in external support, the Cabinet is proposing :-
 - (a) A 1% reduction in Council Tax reducing the Band D level to £161.19.
 - (b) Continued investment in priority areas such as Economic Development, Town Centres, Affordable Housing, Infrastructure Improvements and Leisure facilities.
 - (c) Increased support to Parish and Town Councils and Citizens Advice Bureau.
 - (d) No increase in car parking charges and the 10p after 3pm and all day Sunday initiative is to continue.
 - (e) No cuts in Services.
- 4) The detailed recommendations from Cabinet are attached at Appendix 1.
- 5) Late notification of changes to Government Grants have been received since Cabinet, these are detailed in Appendix 2.
- 6) The resulting Council Tax resolution, taking the above into consideration, is included in Appendix 3.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree:

- the Council Budget and the Council Tax for 2013/14 as detailed in Appendix 1, as amended for the changes detailed in Appendix 2;
- the Council Tax resolution as detailed in Appendix 3.

CABINET – 4TH FEBRUARY 2013**95. COUNCIL BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2013/14 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2013/14 TO 2016/17**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the Council's proposed budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17.

In discussing this item, reference was made to the Parish and Town Council Summit held on 31st January 2013 when discussion had taken place on the proposal to replace the current parish support scheme with a Localism Fund. It was noted that the payment of a grant from the Fund would be subject to local Parish and Town Councils supporting the proposal.

At the Summit, representatives of smaller Parish Councils had referred to the cost of maintaining local facilities eg. play areas. It was agreed that Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency, should investigate how the Council might be able to assist these Councils and to report back to Cabinet.

DECISION: That it be **Recommended to Council** that the following be approved:

1. The budget variations to the current base budget for: inflation (section 7 in the report), investment income (section 8.1) and the adjustments of bids and unavoidable budget changes in previous years (Appendix C);
2. The savings as detailed in Appendices E and F;
3. The Priority Areas Investment bids detailed in Appendix A;
4. The request to carry forward £34,000 of planning income from 2012/13 to 2013/14;
5. The New Burdens Grant of £74,093 to be received in 2013/14 be held in an earmarked reserve, to be utilised in respect of the Local Council Tax Support scheme and authorised by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Property;
6. The unavoidable budget changes in 2013/14 detailed at Appendix B;
7. The Council Tax Freeze grant receivable from the Government in 2013/14 be accepted;
8. The Council's discretionary fees and charges for 2013/14 as detailed in Appendix H;
9. The Council's housing rents and service charges are increased by 3.1% for 2013/14, as detailed in Appendix H, and that the service charges at Craig House, as specified in the report, be charged in addition to the rent to those occupying the guest room at Craig House;

10. That delegated authority is given to the appropriate Cabinet Member to agree variations to Trade Waste and Town Hall Centre fees and charges for commercial purposes;
11. The Council's Pay Policy for 2013/14 as detailed in Appendix J;
12. An allocation of £382,758 from the General Fund unallocated balance in 2013/14;
13. The New Homes Bonus allocation for year 3, of £605,958, is added to the New Homes Bonus earmarked reserve;
14. Transfers between earmarked reserves in 2012/13 and estimated drawdown from earmarked reserves for 2013/14 as detailed in Appendix M;

Capital

15. The General Fund Capital bids for 2013/14 listed in Appendix N;

Treasury Management

16. The Prudential Indicators and limits set out in Appendix P;
17. The Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision as recommended in Appendix P;
18. The Treasury Management Strategy, including annual investment strategy, for 2013/14 (Appendix P);

Council Tax

19. The proposed estimates (producing a budget requirement for council tax purposes of £15,489,059) as detailed in Appendix K and the Council Tax for 2013/14 of £161.19 for a Band D property, having taking into consideration:
 - The consultation feedback received;
 - The assessment of risks in the budget assumptions;
 - The Equalities Impact Assessments and
 - The Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of balances (Appendix R to the report).

That the following be noted:

20. The Efficiency Review programme as detailed in Appendix G.
21. That subject to consultation with and support from Parish and Town Councils, additional grant payment to parish and town councils in 2013/14, totalling £174,299, to mitigate the reduction in their council taxbase, agreed by the Leader of the Council on 21st December 2012.

REASON FOR DECISION: To determine the budget and council tax level proposals for 2013/14 to be submitted to Full Council for consideration, in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution.

Notifications of Final Finance Settlement for 2013/14 and additional Grant Allocations from Government

Purpose of paper is to provide members with details of changes to grants allocated by the Government for 2013/14 which are required to be reflected in the Council's Budget for 2013/14.

In summary the changes are:

- A net reduction in the Start-Up funding grant and Retained Business Rates of £369;
- An additional grant allocation of £25,820. The Government is distributing money which it had set-aside for New Homes Bonus payments which was not required for 2013/14. This grant is for 2013/14 only; and
- An allocation of £4,788, for 2013/14 only, which the Government is providing as additional support to local authorities with sparsely populated areas.

The net change is additional income for 2013/14 of £30,239.

It is recommended that the net additional income is added to the General Fund Unallocated Balance.

The effect of this will be to revise the recommendations to Council from Cabinet provided at Appendix 1, as follows:

12. An allocation of **£352,519** from the General Fund unallocated balance in 2013/14; and
19. The proposed estimates (producing a budget requirement for council tax purposes of **£15,488,690**).

Recommendation from Cabinet – 4 th February 2013		Agenda No: 10(a)
Disposal of Land for Affordable Housing Development		
Portfolio Area:	Planning and Property Councillor Lady Newton	
Background Papers:		Public Report

Minute Extract:

CABINET – 4TH FEBRUARY 2013

97. **DISPOSAL OF LAND TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS - FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the disposal of three Council-owned sites at land rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree; land off New Street, Halstead and land off Forest Road, Witham to housing associations for the development of affordable housing.

Lettings to all three sites would be made through the Council's register in accordance with normal lettings' policies, which restricted the first letting of new affordable homes to people with a strong connection to the District.

DECISION: That it be **Recommended to Council**

1. That land be disposed of at:

- the rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree to Greenfields Community Housing for the provision of new rented affordable housing;
- Forest Road, Witham to Greenfields Community Housing for the provision of new rented affordable housing;
- New Street, Halstead to a partner housing association, yet to be confirmed for the provision of new rented affordable housing.

2. That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director and Cabinet Member to agree final terms of these land disposals.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the development of affordable housing in the district.

CABINET
4th February 2013



Disposal of Land for Affordable Housing Development:- Land Rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree. Land at Forest Road, Witham. Land at New Street, Halstead.		Agenda No:
Corporate Priority: Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth Portfolio Area: Planning and Property Report presented by: Cllr Lady Newton Report prepared by: Tim Lucas, Housing Research & Development Manager		
Background Papers: None		Public Report
Options: To agree, amend or reject the proposal to dispose of land at:- 1. Land rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree 2. Land off Forest Road, Witham 3. Land off New Street, Halstead.		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: This report considers the disposal of three council owned sites to housing associations for the development of affordable housing. Land rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree (<i>map: Appendix A</i>) At the time of the stock transfer to Greenfields, a parcel of land of 0.18 hectares rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree was retained by the Council. The land is triangular in shape and adjacent to the John Bunyan junior school with Greenfields housing on two sides. Access is by a narrow road which is also in Greenfields ownership. Its use for mainstream housing development is not realistic and it is considered that an affordable housing scheme would be more appropriate. This would be subject to normal scrutiny through the planning process. It is proposed to transfer the land to Greenfields for development of new rented homes. Following guidance from planners, an indicative study by Greenfields has indicated that the site is large enough for 5 x two bedroom bungalows. It is proposed that 2 of the bungalows be fully adapted to wheelchair standards. The land value to Greenfields will depend on the specification of the homes and the level of rent to be charged. Greenfields will plan to develop the scheme without grant from either the CHIP Fund or Braintree DC and it is proposed that officers negotiate with Greenfields to secure the best balance between affordability and house specification.		

Land off New Street, Halstead (*map: Appendix A*)

This land which has an area of 0.26 hectare is the site of the closed Halstead Senior Citizens Centre. The existing buildings are due to be demolished and the site cleared. The land has been identified as being appropriate for an affordable housing scheme and following guidance from planners should be able to provide in the region of 11 new homes, with a mixture of houses and bungalows. It has been identified from the housing register that there is a need for two bedroom accommodation, especially bungalows as there is a shortage of this type of home in Halstead, particularly compared to Witham and Braintree.

One advantage of building bungalows is that they do not pose any overlooking issues for neighbours. In addition, the current building is single-storey. Local people are also likely to see the benefit of the site meeting the needs of older people, given its former use. Additionally two bedroom houses and bungalows have the potential to provide accommodation that will enable people to downsize and free up the larger family homes. These moves are given a priority in our allocations policy, so this would likely be a further positive outcome.

We are currently discussing the scheme with the development team from Family Mosaic, with whom we are working on the disposal of Craig House.

A land value will depend on the specification of the homes and the level of rent to be charged but it is not anticipated that there will be any requirement on Braintree DC to provide any financial subsidy. It is intended that officers negotiate to provide an overall outcome for the disposal of Craig House and New Street that secures best overall value.

The rear part of the site is currently allocated in the Local Plan Review as 'informal open space'. It is proposed to change the allocation through the LDF process, which if successful would mean a planning application for the site could be made in the latter part of 2013.

Land off Forest Road, Witham (*map: appendix A*)

The site comprises an area of 0.57 hectare and was formerly the site of the Forest Road Community Centre. The old building has now been demolished and the site is considered to be appropriate for new housing development.

Like the New Street site in Halstead, Forest Road has been included in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan as a potential housing site but is currently allocated as informal open space. This also means that a planning application could be made in the latter part of 2013. The value of the site is considered to be in the region of £500,000.

We would like to work in partnership with Greenfields to develop a scheme of approximately 18 affordable homes. As with the previous cases, a land value is dependant on specification and the level of rent. There is ongoing negotiation with Greenfields to determine that best value is achieved.

Since the site has a potentially significant financial value to BDC, we are exploring the site being purchased with resources from the CHIP Fund.

Lettings

Lettings to all three sites will be made through our register in accordance with our normal lettings policies. These state that all new affordable homes are restricted on first letting to people with a strong connection to the District.

Decision: Members are asked to recommend to Full Council:

- The disposal of land at:
 - the rear of Lancaster Way, Braintree to Greenfields Community Housing for provision of new rented affordable housing;
 - Forest Road, Witham to Greenfields Community Housing for provision of new rented affordable housing;
 - New Street, Halstead to a partner housing association yet to be confirmed for the provision of new rented affordable housing.
- That authority is delegated to the Corporate Director and Cabinet Member to agree final terms of these land disposals.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the development of affordable housing in the district.

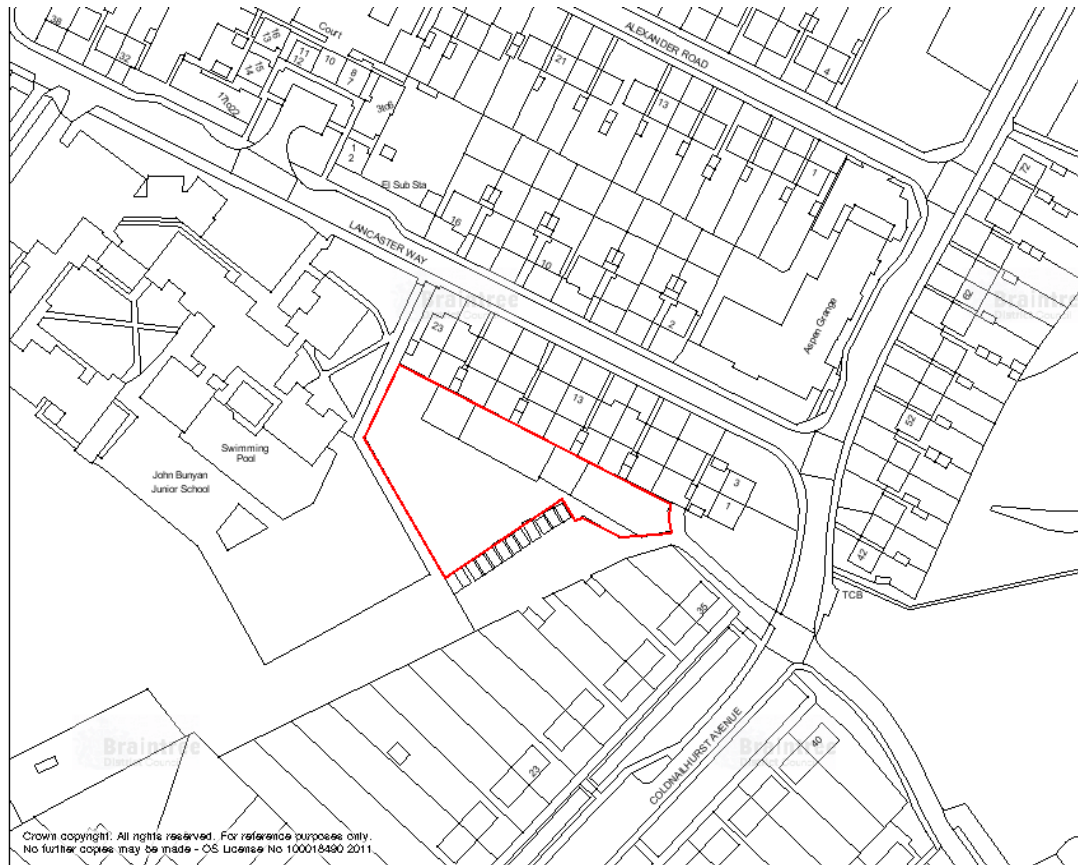
Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail

Financial:	The land transfers are all likely to be undertaken at less than market value but the Council will retain nomination rights to the properties. Transferring the land for affordable housing is good value compared to the grant funding required to enable land purchase on the open market. The final negotiated settlement for each site will be scrutinised by the Cabinet Member and Corporate Director and reported back to members.
Legal:	The legal agreements will restrict use of the land to affordable housing and give BDC nomination rights to the homes. The transfers will have regard to s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and subsequent legislation on valuing assets for disposal.
Equalities/Diversity	No specific issues
Customer Impact:	None at this stage
Environment and Climate Change:	None at this stage
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Elements of the land at New Street, Halstead and Forest Road, Witham are included in the Site Allocations and

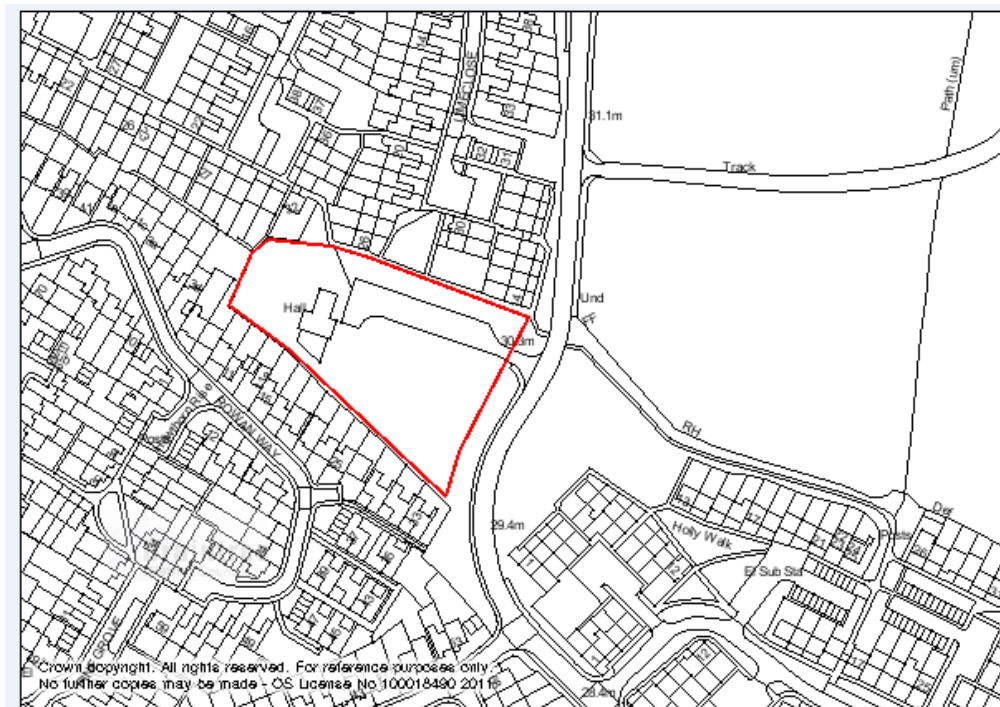
	Development Management Plan, which is currently out to public consultation. There will be further consultation opportunities on all three sites at the stage of planning application.
Risks:	<p>The land transfer will not take place until planning permission has been granted. It will be a condition of the land transfers that a scheme is developed in reasonable time. Normally this would within 2 years of the granting of planning permission.</p> <p>The main risk is therefore likely to be opposition to the planning process – particularly as both the larger sites involve a change of land use – rather than in the transfer process.</p>
Officer Contact:	Tim Lucas
Designation:	Housing Research & Development Manager
Ext. No.	2124
E-mail:	timlu@braintree.gov.uk

Appendix A

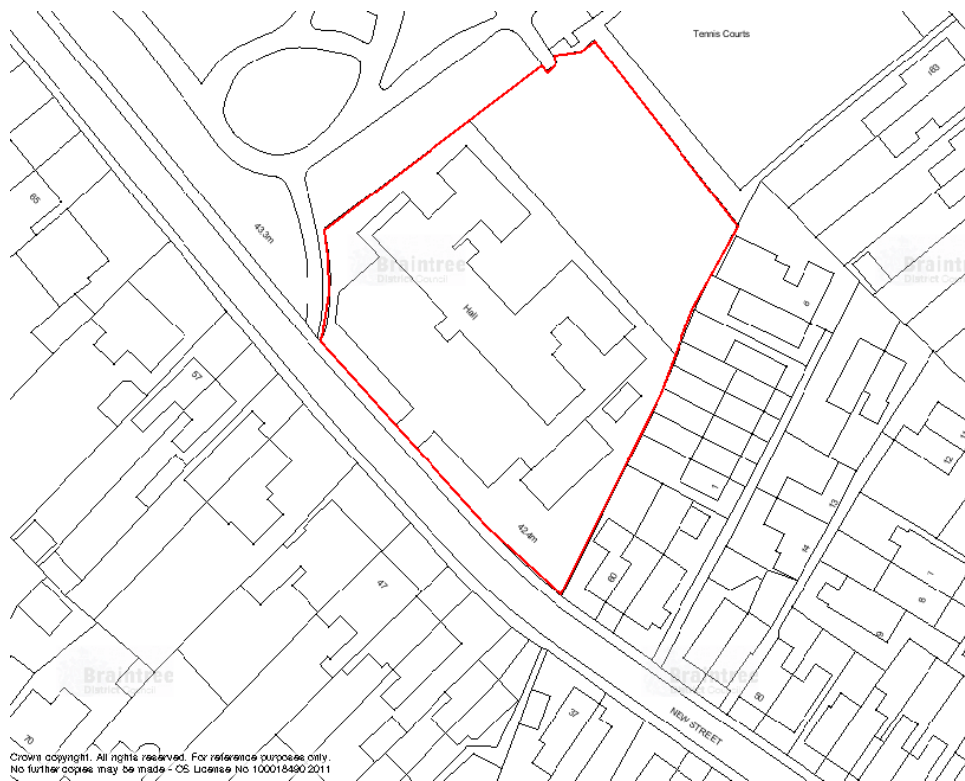
Land off Lancaster Way, Braintree



Land off Forest Road, Witham



Land off New Street, Halstead



LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL	Agenda No: 11(a)
<p>1. <u>Joint Locality Board – Thursday 13th December 2012</u></p> <p>The Joint Locality Board between The Council and Essex County Council was Held at Causeway House. The agenda included:</p> <p><u>Secondary Education Presentation:</u> Rosemary Prince gave a very clear, concise and informative presentation on secondary education. She covered the Schools, their Ofsted Gradings, Achievement Data and Governance. She also gave an overview on the Pupil Premium. Rosemary also distributed to members an update sheet on key issues and data.</p> <p>ACTION: Nicola Beach to invite Rosemary Prince to come back to the Board in six months time to update members and ask Rosemary's equivalent to present to members on the Primary Education Sector in the District.</p> <p><u>Economic Growth / Investment Priorities: Vision to 2026</u> – Jon Hayden presented a high level view of priorities for the district. Headline is Economic Growth for the District.</p> <p>Issues discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broadband going to procurement in February• Braintree, Witham and Halstead Town Centre Regeneration• Rail Loop• A120• Portas Pilot• Ignite Business Expansion <p>General discussion took place on recognising and being prepared for the funding opportunities as they came along. Consider where there is short-term funding and be clear on priorities. Also have a full understanding of the funding gap and understand where the District is now to where it is going, and plan the investment structure.</p> <p>Two key areas requiring funding were identified £300,000 for Ignite Business expansion and £900,000 for Town Centre Regeneration.</p> <p>ACTION: Jon Hayden and Helen Code to continue to further refine the priorities and present the long, medium and short-term phases with identified opportunities and resources.</p> <p>ACTION: Nicola Beach/Jon Hayden to arrange a meeting with Kevin Bentley to discuss the Ignite Business and Town Centre immediate funding needs.</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Panel: Nicola Beach outlined initial thinking on governance for the partnerships.</p>	

ACTION: Nicola Beach to further refine the thinking and bring this back to the Board for consideration.

2. Meeting with Stephen Hammond MP (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport) – Monday 7th January 2013

Together with the representatives of Essex County Council, Tendring District Council and Colchester Borough Council I attended a meeting at Harwich Port with Stephen Hammond MP. The meeting gave the authorities the opportunity to brief the Minister on the A120 and its importance to economic development across North Essex. The Minister gave us a very good hearing and indicated that he would be discussing the matters with officials.

Subsequently Priti Patel MP had a meeting with Mr Hammond and secured a debate on the issue of the A120 in Westminster Hall. In his response to the debate the Minister said,

“As I said to my hon. Friend when we met in January, a key element of the route-based strategy is the engagement and involvement of local groups, including, as we discussed, local enterprise partnerships. I very much welcome the work of the Haven Gateway group in bringing together the range of local interests. I also welcome its analysis of the potential transport benefits and, more importantly, the potential benefits for economic growth in the region, which will be useful in informing the route-based strategy for the rest of the A120. I have made it clear, and I hope she accepts my reassurances, that the Highways Agency will work closely with local groups, via the LEP and local authorities, when it undertakes the route-based strategy work for the rest of the A120.”

We will continue to work closely with the Haven Gateway, Essex County Council and neighbouring authorities to ensure that the A120 remains high on the Minister’s agenda.

3. Meeting with Officers of Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC) – Friday 18th January 2013

I met with John Clark, Tony Haywood and Angie Balcombe to discuss proposals for the future support that the District Council might be able to offer Town and Parish Councils. We discussed the report that CIPFA had produced on the options that were available. It agreed that the matter would feature on the agenda of the Parish Summit to be held at the end of January.

4. Meeting with County Cllr Kevin Bentley – Thursday 23rd January 2013

I welcomed Cllr Bentley to Braintree to share with him the District’s aspirations with regards to economic development. Cllr Bentley is the portfolio lead at Essex County Council for Economic Development. Jon Hayden did a presentation which outlined the main issues that the District Council are dealing with. We drew particular attention to the proposals to extend the business start-up units on the Springfield Industrial Estate. Additional sources of funding are required for this very worthwhile initiative and it was agreed that we would submit a business plan to Cllr Bentley for his consideration.

5. Police & Crime Panel (PCP) – Thursday 31st January 2013

I attended a meeting of the PCP to consider the Police Commissioner's proposed budget for 2013-14. The Commissioner produced a budget which requires an increase of 3.49% in the precept for the Police.

The Commissioner faced questions from representatives of all Essex local authorities. He maintained that the increase was needed as Essex was the lowest funded police service of the 35 shire counties. He made it clear that the increase would not provide any additional police officers.

I recognise that the Commissioner has had a very short time, since his election, to get to grips with the Essex Force's funding and more importantly its use of those resources. I pointed out that although it was the lowest funded it had a higher number of constables and officers per 100,000 population than many more highly funded forces. There was also no evidence that there was a direct correlation between levels of funding and levels of crime. This suggested that Essex was an efficiently run force and the Commissioner perhaps should not be aiming to climb up the ladder of precepts. It was in my opinion important to look at outputs as well as inputs.

As a result I was not convinced that such a large increase in the precept was warranted and, together with the Leader of Tendring District Council, I voted against the Commissioner's budget which was approved by 11 votes to 2.

Although in a minority I was extremely pleased with the process. Under the old system of a Police Authority there would not have been the robust discussion that took place. Under the Government's new scheme the Commissioner put forward his case, was questioned by representatives of all local authorities – as opposed to a few handpicked County Councillors – and a recorded vote was taken. It was also interesting to note that the debate transcended party lines. I felt that this was a good start for the new system.

6. Town & Parish Council Summit – Thursday 31st January 2013

There was an excellent attendance from town and parish councils for this evening meeting. I was very grateful to County Cllr Peter Martin, Leader of Essex County Council for attending and giving a brief overview of the County Council's priorities.

The main item on the agenda was the future financial assistance to third tier councils from the District Council. There was a lively debate and it was agreed that BALC would seek the views of its members on the proposals that I put forward which would increase the total discretionary funds handed to Town and Parish by the District Council from £215k to £396k for 2013-14.

I also undertook to examine whether we might be able to assist very small councils improve their play areas. I have asked Cllr David Bebb to consider the matter and report back to the Cabinet with any proposals.

7. Essex Leaders' and Chief Executives' Meeting – Thursday 7th February 2013

The Police Commissioner, Nick Alston, addressed the meeting and outlined his priorities. These would be Domestic Violence, Drug & Alcohol Abuse and Road Policing. He informed the meeting that four candidates had been short-listed for the post of Chief Constable.

There were updates on the Whole Essex Community Budget and Deal for Growth and on the Integrated County Strategy.

Margaret Lee, on behalf of the Essex Finance Directors, briefed Leaders on the situation regarding Local Government funding. Amongst some of the issues that she drew attention to was that of the risk attaching to the number of Business Rate appeals that still had to be determined.

Cllr Graham Butland
Leader

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REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF PEOPLE AND PARTICIPATION

Agenda No: 11(b)

Witham Leisure Centre.

It has pleased me to see an “Artist’s impression” of what the new Witham Leisure Centre will look like appearing again in local newspapers. Communication with local residents, clubs and interest groups is a key part of the project. A project website will be set up during the construction process, plus regular distribution of our leisure bulletin. Below, I remind you of the project scope :

A 25m ‘6 lane swimming pool – seating for 50 spectators.

A 13m learner pool with moveable floor to a maximum depth of 3.4m.

A large fitness suite with gym and weights area.

Two glass backed squash courts.

Two dance studios.

Wet and dry changing areas.

Steam room and sauna.

Treatment rooms and café area.

Cost of the project = £9.5 million – opening summer 2014.

Improved gym facilities. £1m capital investment by the Council.

1. Braintree Swim Centre - New gym facilities – Plans in progress for 13/14.
2. Braintree Leisure Centre - Additional gym facilities – Plan in progress to open autumn 2013.
3. Halstead Swim Centre – Dry side improvements for sports hall, changing rooms and second floor “spin suite” and “dance studio”. Plans in progress for completion in autumn 2013.

The Fusion Leisure Contract.

Cllr. Tattersley and I, along with the Nicola Beach, met with Fusion’s senior team in December. The meeting offered an opportunity to agree our joint outcomes and continued expectations of partnership working. We were pleased to learn that footfall since the beginning of the new contract had increased at all of our centres and that customer satisfaction, at such an early stage of the contract, was good. Fusion has created community stakeholder groups to allow for local customer input into how our services are run and delivered.

ACTIVE BRAINTREE in partnership with ACTIVE ESSEX.

I’m delighted that a new strategic stakeholder’s group has formed in partnership with Essex County Council (Active Essex). Cllr. Tattersley attended the first meeting which brought together Graham Seward, our ECC public health contact, Greenfields Community Housing, Fusion and other stakeholders. The group will consider our district’s health profile and determine if joint working around sport and leisure can deliver projects and solutions to tackle some of our key health priorities.

Health and Wellbeing Panel.

Following discussions with the Leader and our new Chief Executive and the Joint Locality Board we have considered forming a new Health and Wellbeing Panel for the Braintree District. This will allow discussions to commence in the broader context of "Public Health" with a focus on delivering better health outcomes for our residents. I will keep members up to date on developments in this area.

LOCALISM.

1. Witham Neighbourhood Pilot.

Cllr. Tattersley and I visited Haverhill (one of the 12 Neighbourhood Pilot areas). The meeting helped us to understand the opportunities and approaches to Neighbourhood Pilots. The 12 pilot areas have to produce achievable plans by April 2013.

I was invited to visit the Department for Communities and Local Government in December, along with representatives from the other 12 Neighbourhood Pilot areas. Many pilot areas are building on existing structures, knowledge and relationships at a local level, working with willing partners and, in some cases, closing down options that might present greater difficulties. New ways of resourcing services and pooling budgets is a distinctive feature of what differentiates Neighbourhood Community Budgets from previous initiatives. Outcome: Culture change is needed so that public sector organisations can devolve mainstream budgets into a neighbourhood.

The next stage of the Witham Neighbourhood Pilot is to form a Stakeholder Group. The stakeholder's have been identified and a meeting is proposed for early spring 2013.

2. Local Government Association and National Association of Local Councils.

I attended a conference jointly hosted by the LGA and NALC in January. The theme was "Localism – The future..." The main topic areas were:

1. Neighbourhood planning - New guidance is to follow.
2. Neighbourhood Pilots – An update from the 12 pilots.
3. Community Infrastructure Levy – new direct payments to town/parish councils.
4. Support for community groups in areas with no town/parish councils.
5. Joint agreements from upper tier authorities to town/parish/community groups.

Cllr. Sir Merrick Cockell – Chairman of the LGA addressed the conference by embracing the Localism Agenda. He said that a model for localism should not be bound by a "National Charter" and that localism forms different styles according to place and willingness to work together. I was delighted to see Town Clerk of Witham Town Council present at the conference.

Community Rights.

The new Service Level Agreement with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) is beginning to work well with many approaches being made from community representatives from all areas of the district. I will update members on the number of plans and types of activity in my next report to Full Council.

Gyrus Gymnastics Club Witham.

The Gyrus Gymnastics Club has relocated from Bramston Sports Centre into a new facility in Witham. The Grand Opening was in January. The opening was attended by V.I.Ps. from the Braintree District and Essex County. The club has been awarded grants which will see the club numbers and facilities expand.

Community Transport.

Cllr. Tattersley and I attended the Community Transport Volunteer Driver's Christmas Reception along with the Chairman of the Council. The reception offered an opportunity to recognise the great volunteering effort that is required to deliver our Community Transport service. The service benefits the most vulnerable and isolated people in our district. In 12/13 passenger numbers increased by 8.75%.

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting:

Cllr Joanne Beavis and Cllr Peter Tattersley.

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF
PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

Agenda No: 11(c)

Council Budget Preparation

The period has focused intensely upon reviewing the MTFS and budget scenarios for 2013/14 and subsequent years. Timescale for final budget production was reduced by nearly three weeks due to the later receipt of the Financial Settlement from DCLG just before Christmas, amid uncertainties regarding the confirmed amount of grant reductions, and amount of New Homes Bonus to be awarded.

There are significant changes afoot from 2013/14 for local government finance, including further base grant reduction (for BDC 6.1% and a further reduction of 12.8% for the following year) and introduction of the new Business Rate Retention Scheme, and Council Tax Support Scheme. The impact of these, together with the £1.695m worth of savings made through new leisure and IT contracts, increased income from recyclables, and successful letting of Mayland House, set the context of the £15,489,059 budget presented to Cabinet on February 4th. Key budget proposals include a 1% reduction in council tax and no planned increase for the following two years, no cuts to services, no increase for parking charges, double the financial support to town and parish councils, £10.5m investment in leisure facilities in Witham and Braintree, £1.25m in investment in affordable housing, and £200,000 economic development investment in town centres.

New Homes Bonus

DCLG has now issued notification of the provisional allocation of New Homes Bonus for 2013/14 and an illustrative allocation for 2014/15. The allocation for the Council for 2013/14 is £1,587,593. This total includes the year 1 – third installment, year 2 – second installment and year 3 – first installment.

The New Homes Bonus is based on the council tax of additional homes built and homes brought back into use in the preceding year (November to October). The number of additional homes to October 2012 was 527, of this number 125 were homes brought back into use. In addition a premium is received for the number of affordable units; this was 69 to October 2012.

The New Homes Bonus is an unrestricted resource and can be used for both revenue and capital purposes.

Full Council on 16th April 2012 agreed that the New Homes Bonus for years 1 and 2 of £5,731,810 (£5.89million less £158,000 agreed allocation for work on completing the Local Development Framework) would be allocated as follows:

- Investment into major infrastructure projects across the district to support current and future growth of up to £4,981,810; and

- Enable further new affordable housing in the district with an investment of at least £750,000 to deliver at least 30 affordable homes.

Since the agreement of the above, a sum of £46,000 has been allocated from the New Homes Bonus for the establishment of an Economic Development graduate trainee post.

Whilst the Government provided additional resources to fund the year 1 and 2 payments between 2011/12 and 2017/18, which will provide a total of £5.89million to the Council, the resource for year 3 (£500million national total) has been top-sliced from the overall funding available to local government. The total amount of resources planned to be top-sliced at the national level to fund the year 3 and 4 payments in 2014/15 is £800million.

With the New Homes Bonus scheme being funded from deductions from overall local authority resources, increases in the number of new homes will increase the deduction from general grant (i.e. Revenue Support Grant), benefiting those authorities with an above average increase in new homes, at the expense of those with a below average increase in new homes.

Whilst there is uncertainty over the net impact on the overall funding that the Council will receive from government in 2015/16 onwards it is clear that the Year 3 New Homes Bonus, to be received in 2013/14, is not required to support the revenue account.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the allocation for year 3, to be received in 2013/14, of £605,958 is added to the New Homes Bonus earmarked reserve.

Business Rate Retention Scheme

With the introduction of this new scheme from April 2013, Government has calculated a baseline amount of business rates which it will allow local authorities to retain as part of the Government's funding. Currently, business rates collected by the Council are paid to the Government with an allocation being paid back to the Council as determined in the annual financial settlement by the Government.

An incentive for the Council to encourage business growth is that the Council will be entitled to retain a proportion of any growth in business rates above the baseline, after paying Government and major precepting authorities shares.

The downside is, however, that a reduction in businesses and consequently business rates below the baseline will have to be met by the Council, subject to a safety net allowing a maximum reduction of 7.5%. The safety net for this Council is calculated to be £228,471 in 2013/14.

In establishing the budget for 2013/14 it is important that the Council undertakes its own assessment of the business rates that it expects to receive in the year and how this compares against the Government's baseline figure.

The Government has based its calculations of the baseline on the average of business rates collected for 2010/11 and 2011/12 together with a number of adjustments. The Council's baseline figure for 2013/14 is £3,046,279.

This is derived from £38.67m business rates aggregate collectable for the Braintree District which is shared 50;50 with the Government. Of the balance of £19.335m the District Council's share is 80% or £15.468m. However, £12.421m has to be contributed to the Government as a fixed tariff payment. If the local share had been less than the

Business Rates Baseline the Government would pay a fixed “top up” to the authority.

With this being the first year of this new funding method, a cautious approach has been adopted and no business growth in the district has been anticipated.

Our assessment shows that the Government's baseline is achievable and the amount of retained business rates should be set at £3,046,292 for 2013/14

Treasury Management

The Governance Committee at its meeting on 16th January 2013 received a summary of outline potential changes to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14 proposed following a meeting with Arlingclose, Treasury management Advisors on 21st November 2012. Arlingclose confirmed that, with improved risk horizons now prevailing in the investment climate opportunities now arise for seeking higher yielding investments, and these are currently being analysed.

Revenues and Benefits

Collection Rates have continued to be marginally ahead of those achieved for the same period last year: Council Tax 88.08% (87.79% at end of December 2011) and Business Rates 88.81% (88.43% at end of December 2011). The number of summonses issued in chasing up defaulting payers is currently around the same level as previous years (7978 in 2011/12)

Further to the issue of early direct debit collection of council tax and business rates in late August a total of 125 claims amounting to £1786 have been settled to cover out of pocket overdraft claims. A side effect of the corrective action of instructing the Council's bank to reverse direct debits the day after early collection was that the bank refunded all accounts, including those that had defaulted. All but a small handful of default payments have now been successfully retrieved except from one business which has gone into administration. Robust appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure that this episode may not be repeated, and apologies conveyed individually to all those adversely affected (less than half of one percent of all council/business tax payers).

Processing of new housing benefit claims was 19.16 days in December (1.16 days over performance target). This was due in part to higher sickness absence than average and to the inclusion of public and statutory holidays in the calculation of processing days. Performance for the period April to December 2012 is 17.9days. Financial Services staff have provided assistance, as required, to parish and town councils in understanding the number of changes which have impacted on the way they calculate their precept requirement for 2013/14.

Annual and Business Planning – With the budget set, planning is underway on resource allocation priorities for next year. This is reflected in the budget papers which now informs the production of the Annual Plan for 2013/14. Discussions are also underway to identify key performance measures and targets to measure progress against these priorities, and each service is putting together its own business plan, to support the delivery of them.

Efficiency Reviews – Services are continued to be reviewed to ensure that they provide value for money and meet our customer needs. Building Control service, Town Hall service and Procurement are currently being reviewed. Reviews of District Development and Facilities management have recently been completed, with implementation of the recommendations.

LGC award – Braintree District Council has been jointly shortlisted for an LGC (Local Government Chronicle) award with Castlepoint District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Rochford District Council for public sector partnerships. This is for our work on the Joint ICT procurement and contract, that we awarded last year. The awards ceremony is being held on 13th March 2013.

Customer Service Excellence Standard

The Council has recently achieved the Customer Service Excellence Standard for our Housing service. We now have two services (also Business Solutions) with this award which demonstrates the high level of customer service provided. We are continuing to work with each service to achieve the award, using it to drive improvements in customer service across the council.

Human Resources – Apprentices

With the new intake in November we now have 12 apprentices working at BDC, each spread across a different service from Environmental Services, Operations, and Member Services, to Planning and Communications and Marketing. One apprentice in Human Resources is shared with a private organisation.

This is the fourth year of the apprentice programme. The Council works closely with Harlow College offering a solid in-house training programme. Apprentices complete a Level 2 Apprenticeship framework within 12 months and some then move on to a Level 3 qualification - all monitored and certified by Harlow College. To date the Council has had a 0% drop out and a 100% successful completion rate.

Cllr David Bebb
Cabinet Member – Performance & Efficiency

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF
PLANNING AND PROPERTY**

Agenda No: 11(d)

Site Allocations and Development Management Plan

The Draft Plan was published on 10th January for a six week period of public consultation, between 10th January and 22nd February 2013. Exhibitions have been held in the three main towns, six key service villages and Great Yeldham. There are also exhibitions in Braintree and Witham libraries for the whole of the 6 week period. Many representations have already been received about proposed site allocations, which are available for the public to view on the Planning Policy consultation portal on the Council's website.

Mayland House

On the 16th January 2013, the Council completed the leases of Mayland House in Witham to Cofunds Limited. The leases have been granted for a term of 15 years and do not contain any break provisions.

Cofunds Limited is now fully responsible for the ongoing management and repair of the building. The proposed refurbishment works are due to commence on the 11th February 2013 and will involve extensive modernisation, upgrading and improvement works.

Cofunds Limited have programmed to complete the refurbishment works by October 2013 after which they will be relocating c.600 employees from their existing premises in Chelmsford to Mayland House.

Cofunds have recently met with local retailers and businesses to discuss how they can work together from next October. In the meantime Cofund are looking to source a number of its refurbishment works out to local contractors and trades.

Housing

The Customer Service Excellence Standard

In December 2012 the Housing Service became the second of the council's services to achieve the Customer Service Excellence Standard (CSES) which recognises excellence in customer service

In addition to meeting the required standard, the following five instances of "Compliance Plus" were identified in the service:-

1. Their work to reach hard to reach and disadvantaged groups
2. The corporate commitment to a customer focused culture
3. Observation and feedback of the teams professionalism and understanding of customer needs
4. The degree to which staff go to check customers have received and understood information
5. The range and effectiveness of the partnerships that benefit customers

Homelessness

During the recent very cold weather our severe weather emergency arrangements have been in place to help people who may otherwise sleep rough in the district.

There are very few people in this position in the district, but it is vital that we help. We normally help people to access the Colchester Night Shelter, but we are able to make other arrangements locally if this is not possible. The Housing Services aim is not just to help them overnight, but to try to help them find accommodation, this usually this means trying to help the person find a room to rent or a small flat.

Generally we are seeing an increase in people needing assistance with their housing problems. From April 2012 to December 2012, the Council has made 170 homelessness decisions and has accepted a duty to help 123 households find a home. The numbers for the same months last year between April 2011 and December 2011 were 160 homelessness decisions and a duty to help 104 households.

For those households the Council has accepted a duty to help, the loss of private rented accommodation is the main reason for them becoming homeless.

In 2012/13 the Housing Service has helped to prevent homelessness for 154 households and this is a similar number to the previous year.

The team is anticipating an increasing number of enquiries generally, in part linked to the welfare reforms that are to be implemented in 2013/14, and are in the process of recruiting an additional Housing Options Officer over the next two years so that we can help support residents through the changes.

In addition to the new post providing increased capacity in the team to help people, it will also enable the team to develop its work with private landlords. A letter has been sent to a number of landlords in the district setting out incentives we can offer if they are willing to work with the Council to help accommodate people.

Affordable Housing and Empty Homes

Between April 2012 and December 2012 there have been 55 new affordable homes and this exceeds the target for the year. We anticipate up to a further 50 completions by the end of March 2013.

In addition, by the end of December 2012 55 empty homes have been brought back into use. This meets the annual target of 55 for 2012/2013.

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting Councillor Lady Newton.

Councillor Lady Newton
Cabinet Member – Planning and Property

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REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF PLACE

Agenda No: 10(e)

GREEN HEART

I am pleased to say that on the 14th February the Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy visited the district and I was delighted to be able to show him the great work being done under the Green Heart programme to encourage people to keep our district and towns clean and tidy, plus a number of other initiatives we have promoted.

ENVIRONMENT

Bio-Mass Boilers: The key project for this year to reduce the Council's carbon emissions is the installation of biomass boilers at Braintree Swim Centre and Halstead Leisure Centre. Site studies have taken place and initial designs for both sites have now been completed. Discussions are in progress between Fusion and Eon Energy regarding detailed design and cost.

The Green Deal: Households will be offered loans to improve the energy efficiency of their properties following the launch of the Green Deal. An independent assessor will review the property, with households able to subsequently approach a number of Green Deal providers to find the best quote for their energy efficiency improvements. Charges for the installation of such improvements will be covered by loans from the Green Deal Finance Company and repaid through electricity bill payments.

Essex wide Selection of Contractors for delivering the Green Deal: The Essex Energy Partnership (group of Essex local authorities) is going out to tender for an Essex wide contract to secure Local Green Deal providers who are able to roll out the Green Deal/ECO programme. This should demonstrate value for money by achieving economies of scale, but limiting the tender selection to only local Essex-based Companies.

Housing - Landlords Accreditation Scheme: With the changes in the benefit system there is an increasing chance that some unscrupulous landlords may try to exploit the situation and reduce investment in their properties and lower the standards in the local private rented sector. Officers from Environmental Health and the Housing department have been working with colleagues from both Essex & Suffolk on a Landlords' Accreditation scheme to secure and improve living conditions in the private sector. The Landlord Accreditation Scheme will be a voluntary scheme for local Landlords and Letting Agents to join. The aims of the scheme are to improve the condition and management of the private rented sector in Braintree and across Essex.

Licensing: The Government is looking to change the licensing laws in relation to "community venues" which will mean that local communities can put on events without having to apply to the council for a licence. The change in the legislation will mean that community venues, including community centers, schools, village halls and hospitals, will be exempt from licensing restrictions on a range of entertainment and cultural events. Under current rules, organisers either have to apply for a Temporary Event Notice at least 10 days prior to putting on every event, or apply for an entertainment license, which on average costs well over £200 for new applications. It is anticipated that the move will see a lot more local community events taking place across the

district. The changes to the 2003 Licensing Act has been brought about following a public consultation, and is part of the Red Tape Challenge, which aims to remove unnecessary bureaucracy from civil society organisations, charities and businesses. Following Parliamentary approval, it is expected that the measures will come into effect in April 2013.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Recycling Performance: In the third quarter, recycling performance dipped to 54% primarily as a result of a reduction (by 300 tonnes) in green waste collected owing to the prolonged period of wet weather. This may impact on our ability to meet the annual target of 58%.

Waste: The crews worked very hard over the Christmas/New Year period to ensure that all collections were completed to schedule. They were well supported by back office staff, some of whom worked the statutory holiday days to ensure normal service delivery. The recent bout of snow caused some difficulties with collections (bin lids frozen and food waste/garden waste frozen to bottom of bins) although I am pleased to report that, unlike some Waste Collection Authorities, our staff were fully deployed and managed to complete scheduled collections, albeit a day or so later than normal. A decision was taken to suspend green bin collections for 4 days to facilitate catch up.

Cordons Farm: Contracts have been exchanged between Essex County Council and the vendor of Cordons Farm and ECC will now be submitting a planning application for the new Waste Transfer Station.

New Depot Accommodation: The Council has recently concluded negotiations to purchase land at Lakes Road Industrial Park that it currently occupies on a lease arrangement. This will be redeveloped by the Council's Vehicle Procurement & Maintenance Contractor to provide them with a workshop and co-located depot for the Council's Operations. Subject to legal and planning issues, it is intended that the new facility will be operational from January 2014.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge: I am pleased to report that we have now received the official 'Deed of Dedication' documents and memorial plaques for the three designated sites:

- Deanery Hill Sports Ground, Braintree
- Mil Chase Playing Field, Halstead
- Rickstones Sports Ground, Witham

These will name be renamed 'The Queen Elizabeth II Field' in recognition of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Seven additional playing fields were also approved by the organisers to be designated QEII fields and these will also receive memorial plaques, although their site names won't change.

HIGHWAYS

Members may be interested to know that the Council made its operational depot car park available for the football match between Braintree Town and Cambridge United on 29 December. This arrangement worked well and will be replicated for the match with Luton Town FC on 21 February.

The Braintree Local Highways Panel is well established and the process for engaging with Parish and Town Councils is working well. To date, the Panel has committed 95% of its budget to carry out improvement works within the Braintree District, with the majority of the work forming part of the work programme for delivery from April 2013 onwards. Members are reminded that local schemes for consideration by the Panel need to be endorsed by ward members and Town/Parish Council representatives.

LANDSCAPE SERVICES

Landscape Strategy: A draft document is in preparation which will provide a framework for the management of all the Council owned trees in the District. It is planned to use this document to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the present tree stock, provide a vision for the future and setting out how this can be achieved through activities in a 5 year Action Plan.

The impact of Ash dieback disease on the local landscape and trees owned by BDC has been identified as a risk in next year's business plan. Possible mitigation measures have been identified although the severity and likelihood of the impact are still yet to become clear.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Annual Strategic Assessment on Crime and Disorder has been completed and for the 7th consecutive year the district has achieved a reduction in crime by 1.8% and anti-social behaviour by 13.6%. The priorities for the Community Safety Partnership in 2013/14 (in no particular order) are Domestic Abuse, Drugs and Alcohol (and related crime) and Family issues. The approaches to be taken are: Prevention and Education, with targeted projects; Moving Targets, this enables the police to focus on emerging crime trends and Community Led Solutions, resolving concerns in the first instance with the help of local communities and partners.

The Police and Crime Commissioner accepted an invitation to meet with me, Ms Beach and Ms Goodwin; this proved to be very useful.

Cllr W Schmitt
Cabinet Member - Place

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF
PROSPERITY AND GROWTH**

Agenda No: 11(f)

TOWN CENTRES

**Backing Braintree Town Centre Improvement Strategy – Project Update
Traffic Study – URS**

A company called URS are providing transport planning services to assess the highways and transportation impact of the proposed town centre projects to regenerate Braintree Town:

Package 1: Market Place & Great Square: improved public realm and pedestrianised environment

Package 2: Fairfield Road/ South Street: junction improvement to remove existing constraints and improve 'free-flow' of two way traffic

Package 3: Streetscape Improvements: public realm improvements focusing on improving the retail in the town centre

The public engagement strategy in early March will focus on key stakeholders and specific interest groups using facilitated workshops, targeted meetings & conversations.

Backing Braintree Capital Projects

South Street & Fairfield Road Junction

- Exchange of contracts on 75 South Street
- Conservation application, consent to demolish (incorporating design and access statement and replacement scheme) - due for submission to BDC Planning department February
- Highways works to be delivered in 2013/2014 ECC Highways programme

Sandpit Lane & St. Michael's Fountain

- Designs and schedule of costs prepared for implementation being worked up
- Start on site prior to end of March

'Backing Witham' & 'Backing Halstead' Town Centre Improvement Strategies

An invitation to quote has been issued for the preparation of town centre improvement strategies and a costed and prioritised action plan for both Witham & Halstead. Return of tenders is due 11th February with planned appointment of consultants on the 12th of February. Partners in both towns were consulted in relation to the draft tender, and extensive engagement with them will be undertaken as part of the strategy preparation process.

Portas Pilot Update

Braintree Town Team Open Forum – The second meeting was held on the 6th of February and will follow with the AGM which will be held on 11th of March when nominations to the steering group will be made.

Halstead Town Team Open Forum – The second meeting (and AGM) are to be held on 25th of February when nominations to steering group will be made.

Witham Town Team (Witham Community Interest Company Ltd) – Following feedback on the stakeholder workshop held by the Town Team in December, BDC have met with them and discussed their proposals to move the market, this is now being considered in relation to the preparation of our 'Backing Witham' town centre improvement strategy.

Pop Up Shop

Planning permission for change of use at Corner House has been granted and work to change the consulting room at Corner House into a pop-up shop commences on the 11th of February.

Five people attended the Business Planning course at Ignite, which finished on Friday the 1st of February. They now have until the 15th of February to submit their business plan and application to be considered as the first tenant in the shop. Work is progressing to finalise the judging panel and assessment process.

Ignite – Springwood Drive Units

Final drawings are being prepared for the new units at Springwood Drive which will provide 12 new incubator units, meeting rooms and conference facilities. Planning permission is due to be submitted by the end of February 2013.

Loving Your High Street Awards 2013 up to 4th February

On the 22nd of January BBC Radio Essex covered the competition with a live interview between myself & Dave Monk. We have received over 2000 votes across 62 businesses in the district. To date 58 individuals have been put forward for the Customer Excellence Award. This is an encouraging response to this new category and early signs show this could be a popular competition. The closing date for voting is the 28th of February. The Awards Ceremony date is the evening of Wednesday the 27th of March. The venue will be confirmed soon.

10p after 3 - Car Parks (excluding White Horse Lane which is not part of the promotion) December 2011 to November 2012 – First full year of promotion

The figures below demonstrate the continued success of the 10p after 3pm & all day Sundays. In total there was 614,329 vends during the first 12 months of the promotion, an increase of 44,433 which is excellent given tough economic times.

Year/ Period	Promotional time vends	Non promo time vends	Total Vends	<u>Estimated Income</u>
12 months to Nov 11	106,383	463,513	569,896	£623K
12 months to Nov 12	170, 433	443,896	614,329	£556K
Change in vends	+64,050	- 19,617	+ 44,433	£-67K

There was a considerable rise in vend numbers during the promotional period of after 3pm & all day Sundays (+64,050) with some migration noted from the non promotional period (-19,617).

The end result is an increase of 44,433 vends and if each person was to spend an average of £10 in the two town centres, that's approaching half a million pounds turnover for local retailers.

Councillor Chris Siddall
Cabinet Member – Prosperity and Growth

Contact:	Councillor Chris Siddall
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LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING		Agenda No: 11(iv)
Corporate Priority: Not applicable Report presented by: Not applicable Report prepared by: Alastair Peace – Member Services Manager		
Background Papers: Published Minutes of the meetings listed within the report below.		Public Report
Options: Report for noting		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: Since the last Council meeting held on 10 th December 2012, the following minutes have been published for the meetings held in public session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Planning Committee – 4th December 2012 (2) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 5th December 2012 (3) Council – 10th December 2012 (4) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee - 13th December 2012 (5) Planning Committee – 18th December 2012 (6) Planning Committee – 8th January 2013 (7) Governance - 16th January 2013 (8) Braintree District Local Highways Panel - 17th January 2013 (9) Planning Committee – 22nd January 2013 (10) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 30th January 2013 (11) Cabinet – 4th February 2013 (copy to follow) (12) Planning Committee – 5th February 2013 (copy to follow) 		
Decision: Members are invited to note the minutes published.		
Purpose of Decision: Not applicable		
Officer Contact:	Alastair Peace	
Designation:	Member Services Manager	
Ext. No.	2602	
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