

Council AGENDA

Monday, 25th March 2019 at 7:15pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

(Please note this meeting will be webcast and audio recorded)

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Members of the Council are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Membership:-

Councillor J Abbott	Councillor T Everard	Councillor Mrs J Pell
Councillor Mrs J Allen	Councillor Mrs D Garrod	Councillor R Ramage
Councillor M Banthorpe	Councillor J Goodman	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor P Barlow	Councillor A Hensman	Councillor B Rose
Councillor J Baugh	Councillor P Horner	Councillor Miss V Santomauro
Councillor D Bebb	Councillor D Hume	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood
Councillor K Bowers	Councillor H Johnson	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt
Councillor Mrs L Bowers-Flint	Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin	Councillor P Schwier
Councillor G Butland	Councillor S Kirby	Councillor C Siddall
Councillor S Canning	Councillor G Maclure	Councillor Mrs G Spray
Councillor J Coleridge	Councillor D Mann	Councillor P Tattersley
Councillor J Cunningham	Councillor J McKee	Councillor Miss M Thorogood
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Councillor R Mitchell	Councillor R van Dulken
Councillor T Cunningham	Councillor Mrs J Money	Councillor Mrs L Walters
Councillor M Dunn	Councillor Lady Newton	Councillor Mrs S Wilson
Councillor J Elliott	Councillor J O'Reilly-Cicconi	Vacancy
	Councillor Mrs I Parker	

Invitees

Mrs F Coulson, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Agenda Item 8.

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

A WRIGHT
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members 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.

Question Time

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak. Members of the public wishing to speak are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by midday on the working day before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee Meeting is due to be held on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Monday, (where there is a bank holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Friday).

The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time. Members of the public can remain to observe the public session of the meeting.

Please note that there is public Wi-Fi in the Council Chamber, users are required to register in order to access this. There is limited availability of printed agendas.

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Documents

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PUBLIC SESSION	Page
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 Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 25th February 2019 (copy previously circulated).	
5 Public Question Time	
(See paragraph above)	
6 Presentation of Chairman's Charities for 2018/19	
The Chairman to present cheques to representatives of her nominated charities for the Civic Year 2018/19:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braintree and Bocking Gardens • Active Braintree Foundation 	
7 Presentation by Local Council Awards to Halstead Town Council	
To host a presentation from the Chairman of the Essex County Accreditation Panel of the Local Council Award Scheme, to Halstead Town Council.	
8 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowance Scheme	5 - 19
9 Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th March 2019 - Task & Finish Group Scrutiny Review Social Isolation and Loneliness	20 - 32
10 Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th March 2019 - Task & Finish Group Scrutiny Review Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce	33 - 47
11 Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 6th March 2019 - Scrutiny of the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District	48 - 65

12 Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members

To receive the following reports from each Portfolio Holder.

Oral Questions to the Cabinet:

Members are reminded that following the presentation of each Cabinet Member's report, Members may put questions to the Cabinet Member on matters relating to their portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council or the District. Questions are not restricted to the contents of the Cabinet Member's report.

Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all Members. (Council Procedure Rules 29.1 to 29.4 apply).

A period of up to 1 hour is allowed for this item.

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12c	Councillor Mrs L Bowers-Flint - Planning and Housing	71 - 74
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Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowance Scheme		Agenda No: 8
Portfolio	Overall Corporate Strategy and Direction	
Corporate Outcome:	A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services	
Report presented by:	Mrs F Coulson, Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel	
Report prepared by:	Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council Ian Hunt, Head of Governance	
Background Papers:		Public Report
None		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>Following a review of the Member Allowance Scheme by the Independent Remuneration Panel, their report as attached, it is submitted for consideration by Members.</p> <p>The key recommendations of the review are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main structure of the Allowances Scheme remains unchanged. • That the Basic Allowance is increased in line with the officer pay award by 2% from the 1st April, and that this is reflected in Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payments. This means that the Basic Allowance will be £4,926. • From the start of the new Council following the elections that the following changes are made to the allowance framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Member Development Allowance is no longer to be a withholding from the Basic Allowance, but will be up to £400 depending on Members meeting attendance thresholds in line with the current arrangements. ○ The Communication Allowance be increased to £40 per month. ○ To increase the SRA payments in respect of Planning Committee. The Chairman to increase to a 2 times multiplier of the Basic Allowance or £9,852, a new SRA for the Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee set at 1.5 times the Basic Allowance or £7,389 and that the Minor SRA for all committee Members be increased to 0.25 of the Basic Allowance or £1233, the thresholds for receiving this should be adjusted to mirror the process for the Member Development Allowance. ○ That the SRA of the Chairman of the Licensing Committee be increased to 1.5 times the Basic Allowance or £7,389 and a new SRA for the Vice-Chairman of the committee be introduced at 1 times the Basic Allowance or £4,926. 		

- That the SRA for the Chairman of the Grants Panel be removed given the change in the responsibilities of the Panel.
- That the SRA for the Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel should only be payable in years in which the Panel holds full meetings and reports.
- That the current restrictions in respect to recovery of costs for Dependents Care should no longer be restricted to two formal meetings a week but be based on attendance only.
- The travel and subsistence arrangements should remain as they currently are, with discretion for reasonable costs of a meal at a hotel booked by the Council for a Member to be paid.

Recommended Decisions:

1. To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Members Allowances Scheme.
2. To authorise the Head of Governance to incorporate relevant changes to the scheme within the Constitution and make such typographic amendments as are necessary to do this.

Purpose of Decision:

To approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

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

Financial:	<p>As part of the budget setting process the Council has already budgeted for the 2% officer pay award increase for Members. This element of the proposals is within budget.</p> <p>The change to the Member Development Allowance and the Communications Allowance would be an increase of up to £31,360.</p> <p>The proposed changes to SRA's could at its maximum be an increase of £18,942.</p> <p>Particularly with respect to SRA's given the restriction on multiple SRA's being claimed by a Member the impact of this will only be fully known once the new Council has met and determined its appointments.</p> <p>The additional costs as realised have not been budgeted for in the 2019/20 budget, and accordingly would need to be met from the General Fund balance if they are unable to be met within the budget.</p>
Legal:	In setting the Councils Members Allowance Scheme the Council has to have regard to the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel.
Safeguarding:	No matters arising out of this report.
Equalities/Diversity:	<p>In undertaking its work the Independent Remuneration panel considered the need to enable all residents to hold office should they be elected. The scheme as proposed does not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics.</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is published on the Council's website</p>
Customer Impact:	No matters arising out of this report.
Environment and Climate Change:	No matters arising out of this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Independent Remuneration Panel is an independent panel drawn from the residents of the District, in formulating its recommendations it sought the views of Members as well as obtaining comparator information to support its comments and recommendations.
Risks:	No matters arising out of this report.
Officer Contact:	Ian Hunt
Designation:	Head of Governance
Ext. No:	2629
E-mail:	ian.hunt@braintree.gov.uk

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

March 2019

1. Background:

- 1.1. The Council has the power to set allowances for Councillors. In setting the allowances, the Council must have regard to the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel and must comply with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003.
- 1.2. The legislation sets out that the Scheme can provide for a basic allowance which supports Members in delivering their functions, Special Responsibility Allowances, provision to support Dependents, and reclaiming of expenses.
- 1.3. Members are elected representatives, performing a key public service. They are not employees and as such the Allowance framework should not be seen in the context of a wage. In considering the level of allowances, the relevant guidance states that it is important that some element of the work of Members continues to be voluntary - that some hours are not remunerated. This must be balanced against the need to ensure that financial loss is not suffered by elected Members, and further to ensure that, despite the input required, people from all areas of society are encouraged to come forward as elected Members and that their service to the community is retained. The Panel was also concerned to ensure that due regard was given to supporting diversity and inclusivity in Member representation.

2. The Panel:

- 2.1. The Panel Members are independently appointed and are:
 - Frances Coulson (Chairman)
 - David Johnson
 - Paul Mitchell
 - Olive Porter.
- 2.2. For this report the Panel met on 19th February 2019 and received a presentation on the Council and its work, together with detailed information on the current Scheme, comparable Authorities, as well as the results of the Member Survey undertaken in December/January 2018/19. The Panel also met on 8th March 2019 to undertake a number of Member interviews and discuss and agree their conclusions. This report has been considered by the Panel and represents their recommendations to the Council.
- 2.3. Members currently delegate the appointment of Panel members to the Head of Governance in consultation with the existing Members of the Panel. It is proposed that this continues in order to appoint to vacant positions.
- 2.4. The Panel thanks those Members who took the time to provide them with information and evidence both in person and through the survey.

3. Basic Allowance:

- 3.1. The Panel recommended that the basic allowance should remain unchanged at its main review in May 2015, as well as its subsequent review in December 2015. At that time the Council's basic allowance was slightly lower than its comparator authorities, but this was not seen as a compelling reason to

increase the basic allowance. At the time, the Panel considered that although boundary changes had impacted some Members' workload, there were wider trends which were contributing to this and at the time it was considered that these were not sufficient to warrant an increase. At the time, the Council was subject to significant budgetary pressures and general pay restraint for Officers, and this was a wider factor which was considered.

- 3.2. The Council remains in a restricted financial position, with careful control of budgets. That said, there has been a shift in approach to being more commercially focused, in terms of ensuring that the Council's resources are used in the most effective way, either by increasing returns on investment, or minimising the costs of delivery. The Council has engaged in significant projects to ensure that it can meet the needs of a changing funding picture, with significant investment in its communities, this is typified in the work on the £100m Investment Programme focusing on the key priorities of Health, Homes, Journeys and Jobs. The Panel recognised that this was part of a wider programme across the Council to meet the challenging pressures in managing the phasing out of the government grant whilst maintaining and, where possible, enhancing services to the community. The Panel recognised that the change in pace of the Council's activities has an impact on Members and that this is at all levels.
- 3.3. The Panel also bore in mind that since the last reviews the basic allowance has been increased in line with the Officer pay increases which are agreed at a national level. Over the period the Basic Allowance has increased by £192 or 4.14%. This reflects the cost of living.
- 3.4. From the evidence seen by the Panel, there has been an increasing push from residents to contact Members; issues such as planning developments were highlighted but a wide range of issues are being encountered. A notable shift has been increasing electronic communication, particularly email, but also a rise in social media. This has given some Members opportunities to work more effectively with residents, but also has some significant challenges where expectations around response times and accessibility are sometimes unrealistic. Whilst there was recognition of this trend in the last reviews, the scale of this has been more pronounced over the intervening period leading to pressures for all Members to spend more time on their duties.
- 3.5. In undertaking the comparison with other district level authorities in the County, the current Member Allowance in comparison with the Essex average is £473 below, and against national similar authority comparators it is £325 below the average.
- 3.6. The Panel noted that the current Officer pay increase for 2019/20 is set at 2% as the second part of a two year arrangement. This increase would usually be expected to be applied to the Member allowances and is considered by the Panel to be appropriate. This would raise the Basic Allowance to £4926 and this should be implemented at the first of April.

- 3.7. The Panel noted that there are rounding adjustments for all figures, this relates to standard payroll conventions enabling the payment of figures which are readily divisible into even monthly instalments.
- 3.8. The Panel considered whether it was appropriate to further consider the allowance above this direct increase. Although having regard to the increase in the time Members are spending on their role, and the additional challenges presented to them in relation to the shift in the Council's approach towards a more investment based, and commercial outlook, Members of the Panel considered that there was no need to directly increase the Basic Allowance, given the other proposals which are being made in this report in relation to the Member Development Programme, which will give Members certainty over the basic Allowance and an expectation of additional allowance.
- 3.9. The Panel considered that it was appropriate to maintain the link to the staff pay awards for Members in future years for the Basic Allowance.

4. Member Development Allowance:

- 4.1. The current Scheme operates by withholding a proportion of the Councillors' Basic Allowance each month, and then paying this at the end of the year based on the proportion of the Council's core Member Development Programme which is attended.
- 4.2. There was broad agreement from Members that the core programme is a valuable part of Members' development and that there should be a strong link to the Allowance Scheme. However, there was equally a feeling from a number of Members that the way the link was made created a negative feeling towards attendance, in that attendance was simply clawing back something that they should already have.
- 4.3. The Panel carefully considered the representations which were made and negative responses which arose from the Schemes' operation. The Panel was clear that there should be a recognition of attendance, and that the way attendance was monitored and measured was broadly a proportionate approach and one which they wished to continue to support.
- 4.4. There was a discussion about the impact of conflicting meetings, some Members raised concerns that they could be penalised by needing to attend meetings of other organisations with which they are involved, or Parish Councils. The Scheme allows for attendance at meetings of outside bodies to be disregarded where the Member has been appointed by the Council, as well as disregarding long term sickness absence.
- 4.5. Members had previously considered the position with other commitments and particularly attendance at Parish Councils in 2015. At that time, they felt strongly that the core programme was a key part of the Member Development and ensuring that Members were well informed to perform their duties as a Councillor, and therefore did not consider that additional grounds for excusing attendance was a reasonable approach. Having considered the issue again, the Panel remained of the view that whilst appreciating the

conflicting demands on some Members they did not consider it appropriate to widen the exceptions to attendance.

- 4.6. They did however, recognise that the way the framework operated was not seen as positive by a number of Members. Equally they noted that there is a potential (and that this had been realised in each of the years the Scheme has operated) that not all Members would receive the full basic allowance. Given that although the Panel considered the basic allowance was broadly appropriate, they recognised that a reduction to this would not now be appropriate, given the increased demands that the changing nature of being a Councillor is imposing on Members.
- 4.7. The Panel therefore considers that the negative link to the Basic Allowance should be removed, meaning that all Members should be guaranteed to receive the full Basic Allowance in recognition of the needs which that meets. However, the Panel considers that there should be a strong incentive and reward for Members to undertake the core training within the Member Development Programme, which will include the Member Induction.
- 4.8. Therefore, the Panel recommends that there should be a single Member Development allowance of £400, payable at the end of the year based on the attendance of the Member. The current framework for calculating the percentage thresholds for attendance and linked proportions was considered to be proportionate and is recommended to be retained. This means attendance would obtain the following allowance:

Percentage annual attendance	Less than 10%	Over 10%	Over 25%	Over 50%	Over 75%
Percentage of allowance	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Paid Allowance	£0	£100	£200	£300	£400

- 4.9. The Panel recommends that this change is implemented from the start of the new Council following the elections.
- 4.10. The Panel recognised that the Core Member Development Programme was not the only training and support offered to Members. The core skills and committee-specific training offers, as well as wider opportunities, were welcomed by the Panel as being of benefit to Members, but were not considered to be universal enough in application and scope to warrant inclusion in the allowance framework.

5. Communications Allowance:

- 5.1. The Communications Allowance was introduced in the 2015 review to support Members with the transition to electronic working within the Council. There was recognition that this transition had become embedded within the organisation and Members were working with this effectively.

- 5.2. This allowance is paid to all Members with the exception of the Cabinet, it does not require a separate claim.
- 5.3. The Panel received a number of comments in the Member survey which related the level of the allowance to that of the cost of broadband. The Panel recognised that historically the Council had made payments for broadband connections. The Panel also recognised that this direct link had been removed in 2015 as, at that time, they recognised that home broadband was seen as a usual and normal part of household life for most, the view was that if anything this was even more the case now. The Panel was of the view that, given the normality of internet use, to describe a home broadband connection as a separate expense of being a Member was not tenable for the vast majority of people, and that the marginal cost of the usage of an overall package is part of the overall consideration within the Basic Allowance.
- 5.4. The function of the Communications Allowance is to support Members to acquire equipment or specific communications support or meet the costs of any consumables they may choose to use. This Allowance can be drawn down in advance, to enable capital purchases to be made (such as a laptop or tablet). A number of Members highlighted that they have equipment which is nearing the end of its useful life and if returned at the forthcoming elections would need to replace this. In addition, it was acknowledged that new Members may need to acquire suitable equipment. Other considerations such as the potential for some Members to have a greater use of printer cartridges and paper and this was also taken into account.
- 5.5. In recognition of these factors, the Committee recommends that the allowance is increased to £40 per month. The principle that up to 24 months of the allowance can be drawn down in advance would remain, enabling a Member to draw down up to £960. Where Members choose to draw down the allowance in advance, this would replace payment of this allowance until such time as the draw down is completed.
- 5.6. The Panel was of the view that any drawdown should be limited within the ordinary term of a Member's appointment. Therefore, whilst the full 24 months could be drawn down within the first two years of a four year term, this should decrease in line with the remainder of a term after that point. Whilst the Panel recognised that this could mean that a Member may not be able to draw down a substantial figure should they need to undertake an upgrade in the latter part of their term, this was balanced against the need for certainty and the protection of public funds, given that no Member can be certain of being returned at the ordinary elections.
- 5.7. When the allowance was first introduced, there was a restriction on Cabinet Members receiving the allowance and this reflected the fact that Cabinet Members were provided with tablet computers and a mobile data allowance by the Council. This approach may not always serve the best interests of a Cabinet Member, this is particularly the case where a Member is promoted to Cabinet having already equipped themselves with appropriate hardware, potentially through a draw down. Therefore, it is recommended that the absolute prohibition is removed and Cabinet Members can either receive the

allowance, or alternatively receive direct support from the Council (as with the existing arrangement).

- 5.8. The Panel recommends that this change is implemented from the start of the new Council following the elections.

6. Special Responsibility Allowances:

- 6.1. The Council has a number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA), the Panel has reviewed all of these, both in terms of the work undertaken, as well as the levels of responsibility. In undertaking this review, although the Panel were aware of a number of those Members holding specific roles, they considered the role, rather than any particular personal circumstances of the current incumbents, given the forthcoming elections and the possibility of incoming new Members. No comments therefore should be taken as a comment on the current incumbents of any given role.
- 6.2. The Panel recommends that in line with the view taken on the Basic Allowance the current multipliers should be updated from the 1st April to increase these in line with the cost of living increase. However all other changes to the SRA's should be incorporated into the scheme from the start of the new Council following the elections.

The Executive

- 6.3. In looking at the Leader and Cabinet SRA, the Panel noted the significant responsibility that rests on the executive of the Council and the work that is undertaken.
- 6.4. It is clear that the executive undertake a significantly different role to that of the non-Cabinet Member, however there were a number of comments from Members made to the Panel which reflected the importance of the non-executive Members in holding the executive to account and scrutinising their work.
- 6.5. In reviewing the comparator data which the Panel had for other Essex Authorities, it was notable that there were some anomalies between the relative multipliers from the Basic Allowance to the Special Responsibility Allowance.
- 6.6. Whilst recognising the time commitment which is necessary for the performance of the Leader and Cabinet functions, the Panel felt that the existing multipliers were appropriate overall, and reasonable for the work of the executive. The Panel noted that some portfolios could appear at times to have different levels of workload and public prominence. Given that portfolios are at the discretion of the Leader of the Council, and that post-election there is the possibility of changes in portfolios, the Panel did not consider it appropriate to look at creating variations between portfolios at this time.

The Planning Committee

- 6.7. The Panel received significant representations relating to the work of the Planning Committee and to a lesser extent, of the Licensing Committee. The Planning Committee has a significant role in the delivery of the Council's growth agenda, together with managing a substantial number of applications, often for sizeable developments.
- 6.8. The Panel had recognised that the Planning Committee and its Members were subject to a significant workload through the granting of a minor SRA set at 0.185 of a Basic Allowance, and is payable where a Member attends at least 75% of called meetings.
- 6.9. Given the number of meetings and the increasing complexity of the work - both in terms of the size and detail of applications as well as the substantial public interest in applications - the Panel recommends that the minor SRA be increased to 0.25 of a Basic Allowance, or £1233.
- 6.10. In respect of the threshold for receiving this, it was recognised that a single threshold of 75% was not appropriate. The Panel recognised that work can be done away from Committee but they were mindful of the public perception that Members' attendance at Committee is critical to the discharge of the role, accordingly they considered a graduated attendance scale in the same form as for the Member Development Allowance is appropriate. This means that the allowance will be paid in arrears at the end of the year in the following levels based on actual attendance at the meetings of the committee:

Percentage annual attendance	Less than 10%	Over 10%	Over 25%	Over 50%	Over 75%
Percentage of allowance	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
Paid Allowance	£0	£308.25	£616.50	£924.75	£1,233.00

- 6.11. The Panel recognises that this allowance should continue to be payable notwithstanding any other SRA which is otherwise payable, and this exception to the usual rule that only one SRA is payable should be maintained.
- 6.12. In considering the role of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee; it was noted that notwithstanding the minor allowance for being a member of Committee, the role carries additional responsibilities in terms of attendance at regular Officer briefings to manage the applications which will be on forthcoming Committees, as well as being a focal point for considerable public correspondence. Accordingly, it was considered that the Chairman of the Planning Committee should receive a SRA of 2 times the Basic Allowance (£9,852.00) and the Vice Chairman 1.5 times the Basic Allowance (£7,389.00).

Licensing Committee

- 6.13. The Panel also considered the role of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee. Whilst there are considerably fewer meetings of the full Committee than for the Planning Committee, the Committee routinely meets in hearing form with Panels. The Committee is the other regulatory Committee making determinations and managing decisions on individual applications. Since the last review of the Allowances Scheme there have been a number of changes in legislation which will influence the profile and complexity of some of the Committee's work. The Chairman and Vice Chairman are engaged in some officer decision making as consultees. Accordingly, whilst not according the same weight to the roles as for the Planning Committee, the Panel considered that the Chairman should receive a SRA of 1.5 times the Basic Allowance (£7,389.00) with the Vice Chairman receiving a 1 times Basic Allowance (£4,926.00) SRA.
- 6.14. The Panel considered whether or not there should be an additional minor SRA for the Licensing Committee, given that Members may have very different attendance at Panels depending on availability and a number of other factors, it was considered that this was not appropriate at this point in time, although the Panel will keep this under review.

The Grants Panel

- 6.15. The Panel carefully considered the position of the Chairman of the Grants Panel. The allowance was originally given when the Panel was called the Mi-Community Panel and it was that Panel which determined grant applications. At that time it met frequently and was a decision-making body. With the transition to the making of individual grants by Councillors, It had a stronger role in the initial period in helping to support Members, however as the Scheme has become more embedded, this role has reduced and the Panel has become a more advisory body, meeting infrequently and with limited powers. The Panel is aware that it has increased a number of other allowances and accordingly recommends that this SRA should be removed as no longer meeting the threshold for warranting an allowance.

Other Committees

- 6.16. The Panel reviewed the position with respect to the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny (main Committee and Task and Finish Groups) as well as the Governance Committee. Although there were representations that these should receive differential or potentially lower SRA payments especially given the number of meetings involved, the panel felt that the importance of these Committees in holding the executive to account and providing assurance to the public was such that the existing SRA's were appropriate. Consideration was given to the roles of vice chairmen but it was considered that there was insufficient evidence to warrant any specific SRA.

Opposition Allowances

- 6.17. There was significant debate around the position of SRA for leading opposition groups. The Panel recognised the fact that small groups may well

represent specific viewpoints and indeed attract a disproportionate level of contact from residents across the District given that they represent a certain viewpoint if not a particular geography. That said, the Panel was firmly of the view that a group ought to be of a material size before an allowance was attributable to them, the Panel considered that for other opposition groups this should remain at the current minimum of 5 members before a SRA is payable, although two Members can be a group for political proportionality purposes.

- 6.18. The Panel noted the situation which had previously arisen of no largest opposition party, the two largest opposition parties having an equality of Members. In this case, the Panel considered that there should be no payment of the Largest Party SRA, relying instead on the other group's provisions.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

- 6.19. The Panel considered the SRA for its own Chairman, whilst not wishing to make comment on the direct level of the SRA, the panel notes that it does not have an automatic and regular schedule of meetings, rather meeting on those occasions where there is a need. In recognition of this the Panel recommends that the SRA is only payable in the years where the Panel actively meets to consider allowances and make formal reports.

7. Dependants' Carers' Provisions:

- 7.1. The Scheme currently provides that childcare can be recovered at a rate of up to £10 per hour, and that other dependent care (for example adult social care) can be recovered at reasonable rates dependant on need, recognising that in some cases more specialist care may cost more than straightforward childcare.
- 7.2. The Panel considered that the arrangements are flexible enough to meet most Member needs. The Scheme contains a restriction however, at present for only 2 meetings a week. Although not likely to be an issue for the majority of occasions, to enable flexibility, it is considered that this arbitrary restriction should be lifted.

8. Travelling and Subsistence Allowances:

- 8.1. The Panel having reviewed these considers that there is limited merit in changing the provisions.
- 8.2. There were representations made that the categories of allowable mileage claims should be reviewed and extended to enable ordinary ward work to be included. The Panel considered this, in light of the legislation and guidance on these claims from HM Revenue and Customs. This would not be permissible under the legislation and therefore whilst the Panel understands Members' desire to see this included cannot recommend that it is. The Panel also noted that this would be potentially open to abuse and would be difficult (if not impossible) to credibly audit.

- 8.3. Members were content that the subsistence arrangements should remain in line with that of Officers and that the levels are appropriate. Where a Member has been booked to stay at a hotel by the Council, the evening meal allowance may not be sufficient to pay for a standard meal at the hotel. The Panel therefore recommends that discretion is given to the Head of Governance to approve the full cost of a meal from the standard menu of that hotel. For the avoidance of doubt this will not include any claim for alcoholic beverages. Members should be treated no differently to Officers in this regard.

9. Appeals:

- 9.1. There has been some suggestion from Members that the Scheme should allow for a direct appeal process where a Member feels that the working of the Scheme does not give a result which appears equitable to them.
- 9.2. The statutory framework and HM Revenue guidance does not provide for this, and in the majority of circumstances the operation of the Scheme should be clear, even if the Member feels that this disadvantages them.
- 9.3. It is however recognised that there are a limited number of occasions where there is discretion to the Head of Governance. In the case that a Member does not agree with the initial decision of the Head of Governance, the Panel recommends that the Head of Governance should consult the Chairman of the Panel in reaching a final decision, however recognising that the Panel have no power to formally determine any allowance claim.

Summary of Paid Allowances:

	From 1st April 2019		From 6th May 2019	
Basic Allowance		£4,926.00		£4,926.00
Member Development Allowance ¹		-		£400.00
Communications Allowance		£240.00		£480.00
Special Responsibility Allowances:				
Special Responsibility	Multiplier		Multiplier	
Chairman of the Council	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Leader of the Council	3	£14,778.00	3	£14,778.00
Deputy Leader of the Council	2.5	£12,315.00	2.5	£12,315.00
Member of the Cabinet	2	£9,852.00	2	£9,852.00
Deputy Cabinet Members	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of the Governance Committee	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of the Planning Committee	1	£4,926.00	2	£9,852.00
Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee	-	-	1.5	£7,389.00
Minor SRA to all Members of the Planning Committee ²	0.185	£912.00	0.25	£1,233.00
Chairman of the Local Plan Sub-Committee	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of the Licensing Committee	1	£4,926.00	1.5	£7,389.00
Vice Chairman of the Licensing Committee	-	-	1	£4,926.00
Chairman of the Grants Panel	1	£4,926.00	-	-
Leader of the Largest Opposition Group	1	£4,926.00	1	£4,926.00
Leader of Other Opposition Groups of more than 5 members	0.25	£1,233.00	0.25	£1,233.00
Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel ³	0.125	£618.00	0.125	£618.00

¹ Subject to attendance qualification.

² Subject to attendance qualification.

³ In those years the Panel meets and reports.

Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6th March 2019 – Report of the Task and Finish Group – Scrutiny Review into Social Isolation and Loneliness		Agenda No: 9
Portfolio Health and Communities Corporate Outcome: Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported Report presented by: Councillor Phil Barlow, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group Report prepared by: Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer		
Background Papers:		Public Report
Minutes of the Task and Finish Group (20 th June, 16 th July, 13 th August, 7 th September, 1 st & 29 th November, 21 st January 2019)		Key Decision: No
DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 6th March 2019 51 <u>TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS</u> <p>INFORMATION: Members considered the final draft of the report for the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Social Isolation and Loneliness. The Chairman also introduced Tracey Parry, Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Review, to the Members of the Committee. Councillor David Mann, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, was invited to present the report. During the presentation of the report, reference was made to the abundance and variety of triggers associated with social isolation and feelings of loneliness, which included bereavement, moving away, being a carer and so forth, and the fact that the issue could affect any individual at any stage in their life. It was also likely that with evolving modern lifestyles and communication methods, cases of social isolation and loneliness would escalate across the country over upcoming years. However, it was also important to stress that with the advent of new technologies, new opportunities were also emerging as well for addressing the issue (e.g. mosaic profiling, services and activities advertised via social media, etc).</p> <p>Further to the report, the following points were raised:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members expressed their appreciation to all involved with the Task and Finish Group, including Members and Officers alike, for the hard work produced. 		

- In response to a query raised about the implementation of a “scoping exercise” and how this would be achieved, Members were advised that the exercise was intended to identify the services and activities available to residents to help combat social isolation and loneliness in local areas. It was inferred that Parish Councils and District Councillors were ideally situated in terms of their ability to infiltrate local communities and raise awareness of both the issues and opportunities accessible to individuals with different needs.
- It was noted that a number of Parish and Town Councils across the District, such as Witham Town Council, already identified the available activities and services in their own areas (e.g. Silver Cinema events) on a regular basis for residents. A potential suggestion for the future was that Parish and Town Councils categorized the activities and services identified in their own areas in order to allow them to be broadcasted more widely across the District.
- The Church of England had reportedly agreed that the services provided under the church would now start to decrease, and this was especially so in some rural areas. In conjunction with this, churches were also experiencing a notable decline in the number of attendants at Sunday church services. As services provided under the church had traditionally supported local communities in terms of church services and as a hub for clubs and activities, the report of the Task and Finish Group was very timely and welcome as it acknowledged the value of churches as key community assets.
- Further to the comment regarding the decrease in church services, it was reported that the Church of England had also altered the rules in relation to Sunday services in that it was no longer mandatory for churches to provide a weekly Sunday service.
- Encouraging residents to work with their neighbours in their localities was of key importance (e.g. through Age UK avenues). Such support networks often served to benefit both those in need of help, and those seeking to provide it.
- It was reiterated that social isolation and loneliness was not limited to particular age groups.
- The role and value of community workers such as health visitors to the homes of mums with young children and facilities such as village halls for the provisions of social clubs and activities was not to be underestimated.
- A query was raised in relation to data protection regulations in respect of mosaic profiling exercises. In response, Members were advised that under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, access to data such as single-occupancy homes for the purposes of assisting with profiling exercises required there to be a more substantial process in place before this could be done. There was potential for statistical data to be utilised, but the Council would ultimately need to demonstrate that there was a need to process such data in order for the organization to continue with the delivery of its services for a provision to be determined under GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

DECISION: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

1. Approved the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group into Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District.
2. Referred the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review to Full Council on 25th March 2019.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To enable the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny Reviews.

Recommended Decision: That Council agrees:

1. To approve the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group into Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District.
2. To refer the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review to Cabinet on 8th July 2019.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Committee's report to be referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

Report of the Task and Finish Group – Scrutiny Review into Social Isolation and Loneliness		Agenda No:
Portfolio	Health and Communities	
Corporate Outcome:	Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported	
Report presented by:	Councillor David Mann – Chairman of the Task and Finish Group	
Report prepared by:	Tracey Parry – Community Services Manager	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Minutes of the Task and Finish Group (20 th June, 16 th July, 13 th August, 7 th September, 1 st & 29 th November, 21 st January 2019).	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>A Task and Finish Group consisting of the following Members was formed to explore Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District and make recommendations to Cabinet going forward.</p> <p>Councillors: David Mann (Chairman), Tony Everard, Diana Garrod, Andrew Hensman, Hylton Johnson, Jackie Pell, Sue Wilson.</p> <p>During the Scrutiny Review the Group met with representatives from Essex County Council, the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Community360 and Braintree Area Churches Together to gather evidence in order to understand key issues and the projects/initiatives happening across the District.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the Group were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To understand the prevalence of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the Braintree District.2. To identify what is already being done in the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.3. To understand how people that are at risk of Social Isolation and Loneliness are identified.4. To identify future work/projects that could be undertaken to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.		

Following its Scrutiny Review and considering its evidence, the Task and Finish Group have made the following recommendations:

1. The Council should, with partners, raise awareness of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the District.
2. District, Town and Parish Councillors should carry out a scoping exercise to identify what services and community assets are available across the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.
3. The Council should support the work streams within the systems based approach of the Essex Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum facilitated by Essex County Council (identification, access and capacity).
4. The Council, with partners, should identify the best method of social prescribing and promotion of activities and services available to those who may be socially isolated or lonely.
5. The Council should support the implementation of a local level forum to help combat Social Isolation and Loneliness.
6. The Council should continue to support and work with the faith community to develop and promote their work to the wider community.
7. The Council should raise awareness of the issues surrounding Social Isolation and Loneliness to all Councillors and provide them with the opportunity to offer their contributions and ideas for local level interventions.
8. The Council, with partners, should explore the use of digital technology in tackling the issue of Social Isolation and Loneliness.
9. The Council should provide training for frontline staff and volunteers to identify individuals that are socially isolated or lonely and signpost/socially prescribe to relevant organisations.
10. The Council should use mosaic profiling to identify potential hotspot areas of high risk or vulnerable groups with a view to developing future targeted work.
11. The Council to measure the impact of the Social Isolation and Loneliness interventions and services available to residents through the commissioning of university graduates.

Recommended Decision:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

1. Consider the Scrutiny Report and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group into Social Isolation and Loneliness in the Braintree District.

2. Refer the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review to Full Council on 25th March 2019.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny Reviews.

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

Financial:	None arising out of this report.
Legal:	None arising out of this report.
Safeguarding:	None arising out of this report.
Equalities/Diversity:	None arising out of this report.
Customer Impact:	Enhance the information and services to the public.
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising out of this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	As set out in the report. Following consultation by Full Council on 25 th March 2019, the Scrutiny Review will be referred to the Cabinet to receive and respond to in the new Administration.
Risks:	None arising out of this report.
Officer Contact:	Tracey Parry
Designation:	Community Services Manager
Ext. No:	2334
E-mail:	trapa@braintree.gov.uk

TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Task and Finish Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct a Scrutiny Review into social isolation and loneliness in the Braintree District and to consider the following:

- To understand the prevalence of social isolation and loneliness across the Braintree District.
- To identify what is already being done in the Braintree District to address social isolation and loneliness.
- To understand how people at risk of social isolation and loneliness are identified.
- To identify future work/projects that could be undertaken to address social isolation and loneliness.

The Task and Finish Group consisting of the following Members:

Councillors: David Mann (Chairman), Tony Everard, Diana Garrod, Andrew Hensman, Hylton Johnson, Jackie Pell and Sue Wilson.

The Task and Finish Group met with representatives from Essex County Council, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Community360 and Braintree Area Churches Together.

This report sets out the work undertaken and the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group as a result of the Scrutiny Review.

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Social isolation and loneliness are locally and nationally recognised as important issues that impact on health and well-being.

Loneliness is a subjective feeling about the gap between a person's desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person's relationships.

Social isolation is an objective measure of the number of contacts that people have. It is about the quantity, not the quality, of relationships.

Social isolation and loneliness are different but related concepts; one can lead to the other and vice versa. People can experience different levels of social isolation and loneliness over their lifetime, moving in and out of these states as their personal circumstances change.

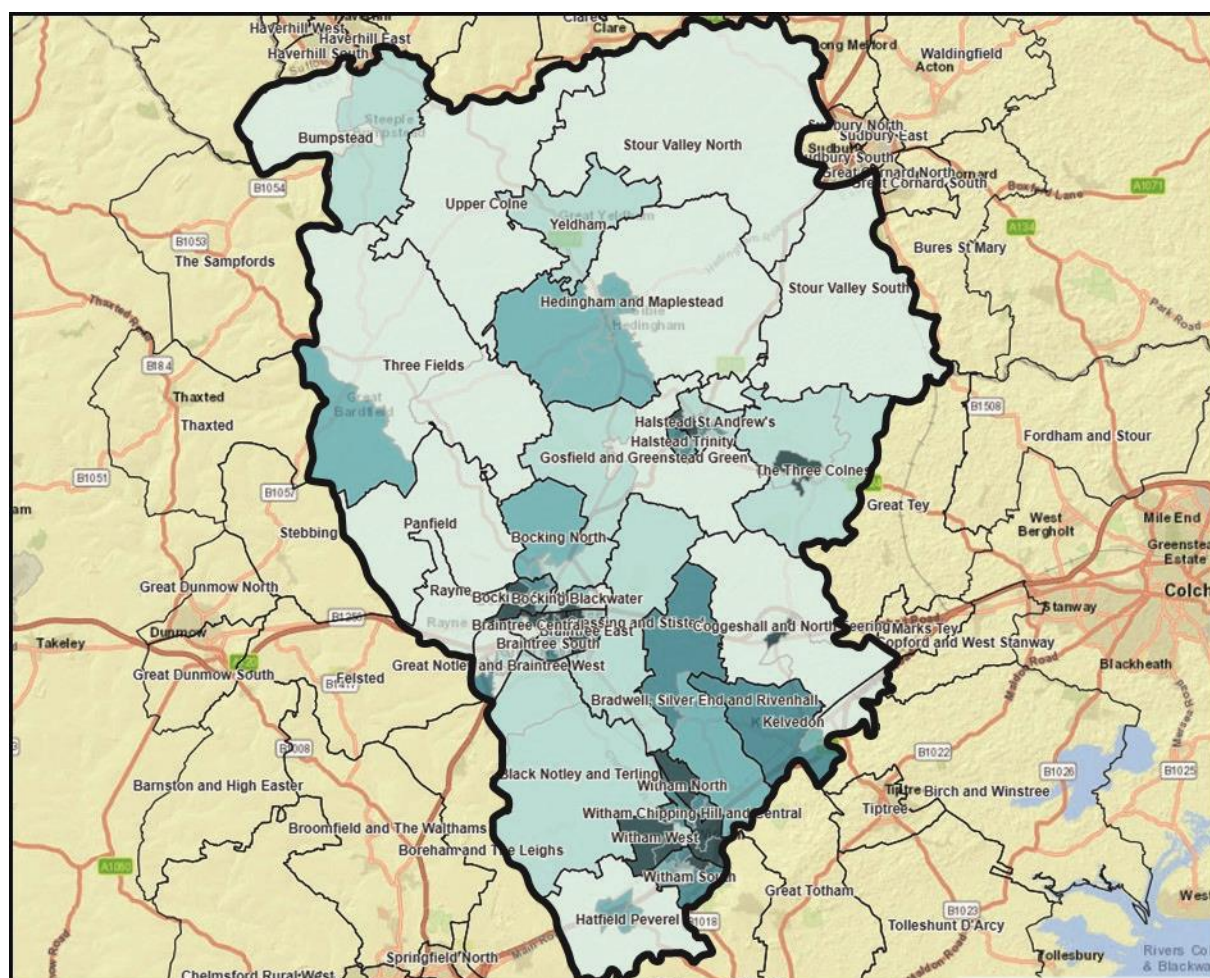
Local Picture

The following information is to put social isolation and loneliness in the Braintree District in a national context.

Data from the Office for National Statistics estimates the Braintree Districts mid 2017 population as:

AGE GROUP	ESTIMATED TOTAL
0 – 17 years	32,514
18 – 59 years	80,137
60 years and over	39,026

The heat map below is data from Age UK, Census 2011 indicating the relative risk of older residents experiencing loneliness.



We know from figures taken from [Essex Insight](#) in 2017 that Essex has an increasing older population and nationally up to 14% of older people report feeling lonely all the time, with loneliness increasing the risk of dementia by up to 50% and those that are socially isolated more likely to enter residential or nursing care early.

An Early Years review and ethnographic research conducted by Essex County Council in 2014 identified that many younger parents in Essex had limited positive relationships and were lonely, and this could link to poor outcomes for young parents and their children.¹

¹ Latest data available to the Task & Finish Group

The issue of social isolation and loneliness sits within our Corporate Strategy under Health and Communities and supports all the priorities under the outcome of residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported.

In 2018, the District was selected by Essex County Council to be involved in a research action project. The Community Services Team worked alongside the Young Foundation to co-design and co-deliver this project, which took a strengths-based approach to understanding social isolation and loneliness in Halstead.

We have since been instrumental in establishing Meet Up Mondays in the District, an initiative which gives hospitality businesses the opportunity to encourage those in their local areas who are fed up with their own company, or new to an area and may be starting to feel isolated, to attend their premises for a free cuppa and a friendly chat. Anecdotal feedback from these is that new friendships have been formed which in turn has encouraged individuals to attend new activities and meet up socially at other times.

PARTNER INPUT/PERSPECTIVE

During the Scrutiny Review, Essex County Council, the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, the faith community and Community360 (community and voluntary sector) were invited to participate and a summary of their contributions are set out below:

Essex County Council

Dr Mike Gogarty, Director of Public Health, advised that there were four key priority areas of the new joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Mental Health, Obesity and Physical Activity, Social Inequalities and Ageing Well, and that three of these priorities were largely influenced by social isolation and loneliness.

Essex County Council is increasing investment in addressing social isolation and loneliness and working with partners to develop a whole system approach to tackling the issue. The approach will be a community driven model supported by formal care and support and has four ambitions:

- Communities have a better understanding of the impact of social isolation and loneliness and how to help each other.
- People who are or are at risk of social isolation and loneliness are identified and are able to access local information and support to live well.
- There is a range of community led support to reduce social isolation and loneliness and build capacity to support people to live well.
- People with complex needs are able to access support to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group

Alison Connelly, Head of Transformation and Community, provided information about the notable impacts of social isolation and loneliness on the health and wellbeing of individuals, including:

- Increases in mortality rates which are comparable to the impacts of commonly known health issues such as obesity and cigarette smoking.
- Increase the risk of mental health issues amongst individuals.

- Dependency on the GP system by groups including the elderly.
- Early entry into residential or nursing homes and on A & E.

Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group have a number of schemes currently in place to help address some of the issues relating to social isolation and loneliness, including:

- Tele-coaching, whereby individuals receive a series of phone calls over a 6 month period which would hopefully mitigate the need for patients to attend GP's or attend hospital.
- Social Prescribing through ConnectWell, which is a directory of services that patients in primary care could be linked to.
- IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service, which aims to reduce waiting times for patients to be referred to the correct service and SilverCloud, which is a digital platform used for IAPT.

Community360

Tristan Easey, Senior Engagement Officer, advised that one of the purposes of Community360 is to connect members of the community with the community and voluntary services and the activities available to them within their own areas. Social Isolation and Loneliness is a specific area of work for Community360 and projects have included i-Tea and Tree-mendous walks. Previous collaborative work has also been carried out with Anglia Ruskin University as to how social isolation and loneliness could be quantifiably measured, the conclusion from this being that it was difficult as there was not an exact measure for wellbeing and emotions.

Braintree Area Churches Together

Representatives from St Paul's, St Mary's, St Peter's and Braintree Evangelical Church shared their experiences with regard to social isolation and loneliness, both within their congregation and the wider community.

Key points included:

- The correlation between deprivation and social isolation and loneliness identified through the use of foodbanks and access to transport.
- Social groups and classes had been implemented by faith groups for the purpose of combating social isolation and loneliness.
- A growing issue with regard to social isolation and single parent families.
- Recognition that faith groups need to work with one another and other partners.
- The need to work with faith groups as part of the community wide approaches to tackling social isolation and loneliness.

Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group

Recommendation 1

The Council should, with partners raise awareness of Social Isolation and Loneliness across the District.

Social Isolation and Loneliness can affect any age group and is recognised as an issue impacting on health and well-being. Essex County Council Public Health were supportive of raising awareness at a local level to partners but also

members of the public who could also play a key role in identifying and combating the issue.

Recommendation 2

District, Town and Parish Councillors should carry out a scoping exercise to identify what services and community assets are available across the Braintree District to address Social Isolation and Loneliness.

Dr Mike Gogarty, Essex County Council Public Health advised that intervention at a local level was considered the most effective option with regard to tackling social isolation and loneliness; and that District and Parish Councils were ideally situated to assist with identification and to raise awareness.

Recommendation 3

The Council should support the work streams within the systems based approach of the Essex Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum facilitated by Essex County Council (identification, access and capacity).

Essex County Council presented an initial report to the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2017 setting out the current provision in Essex regarding social isolation and loneliness giving details of specific services commissioned and to propose a set of principles to underpin a strategic approach to Social Isolation and Loneliness.

A further report was presented in May 2018 that provided an update to the board on the system approach to reducing social isolation and loneliness, including the work of the Loneliness and Isolation Forum and plans to deliver a comprehensive local solution for people across Essex. Council Officers have been part of this forum shaping the whole system approach and have recently supported a collaborative bid from the voluntary sector to Essex County Council. This will see Community Resilience Coaches out in the community creating and developing an infrastructure that enables people at high risk of social isolation or loneliness to improve their social engagement.

Recommendation 4

The Council, with partners, should identify the best method of social prescribing and promotion of activities and services available to those who may be socially isolated or lonely.

Social prescribing involves helping patients to improve their health, wellbeing and social welfare by connecting them to community services which might be run by local councils or local community groups/charities. There are various social prescribing systems in place across the Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group area including ConnectWell, tele-coaching, Silver Cloud and IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) which in itself can prove difficult for both users and organisations looking to refer. On 1st April 2019 the Mid Essex Care Navigation plan will be launched; this will take all non-clinical referrals and provide a holistic assessment to determine needs.

Recommendation 5

The Council should support the implementation of a local level forum to help combat Social Isolation and Loneliness.

Essex County Council suggested that a local level conference could be held whereby members of the public attended and awareness of the issues surrounding social isolation and loneliness were raised. Community issues that remained unrealised at a county level could be more successfully identified using a local approach. A conference could also be used to showcase local activities and social groups that currently exist to share good practices.

Recommendation 6

The Council should continue to support and work with the faith community to develop and promote their work to the wider community.

The Believing in Communities event held in November 2018 highlighted the breadth of activities and services hosted or delivered by the faith community across the Braintree District. There is a need for us to continue supporting this work but also to work with them to identify our most vulnerable residents within the community.

Recommendation 7

The Council should raise awareness of the issues surrounding social isolation and loneliness to all Councillors and provide them with the opportunity to offer contributions and ideas for local level interventions.

Local level activities are more effective in terms of combating cases of social isolation and loneliness. There is a need to identify what community based assets are already available, where the gaps are, how we can assist in promoting these and how we can support new activities moving forward. Meet up Mondays is an initiative that is already proving a huge success, with cafes and pubs in Braintree, Witham, Cornish Hall End and Castle Hedingham already on board.

Recommendation 8

The Council, with partners, should explore the use of digital technology in tackling the issues of social isolation and loneliness.

Social media is an effective method through which awareness of local activities and services could be raised and attendance encouraged. There is a need for us to remember that social isolation and loneliness can have an impact on any age group, not just the older generation. Technology can play a crucial role in enabling people to make social connections and we need to explore how this can be taken forward at a local level.

Recommendation 9

The Council should provide training for frontline staff and volunteers to identify individuals that are socially isolated or lonely and signpost/socially prescribe to relevant organisations.

The District Council workforce, including front desk staff are appropriately situated to identify local residents who are socially isolated or lonely and are aware of the referrals routes available to them.

Recommendation 10

The Council should use mosaic profiling to identify potential hotspot areas of high risk or vulnerable groups with a view to developing future targeted work.

Mosaic profiling was utilised to select the St Andrew Ward in Halstead for the research action pilot 'Halstead Connected'. The profiling allows us to gain a deeper insight into consumer lifestyles and behaviour to assist us in making more informed marketing decisions.

Recommendation 11

The Council to measure the impact of the social isolation and loneliness interventions and services available to residents through the commissioning of university graduates.

Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group advised that the more notable impacts of social isolation and loneliness on the health and wellbeing of individuals included increased mortality rates, the rates of which were comparable to the impacts of commonly known health issues such as obesity and cigarette smoking. Loneliness is also known to increase the risk of mental health issues amongst individuals and the dependency of groups like that of the elderly on the GP system.

Whilst officers are able to measure outputs, it has been difficult to measure the impact/outcomes of any activities/services. Commissioning a research and evaluation piece will enable us to understand the cost benefit of providing and supporting local services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the work of this review.

- Dr Mike Gogarty – Essex County Council
- Alison Connelly – Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- Tristan Easey – Community360
- Rev Colin Fairweather – St Paul's Church, Braintree
- Rev Rod Reid – St Mary's Church, Bocking
- Rev Keith Ives, Braintree Evangelical Church
- Rev Tim Barnes – St Peter's Church, Bocking
- Tracey Parry – Community Services Manager

Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6th March 2019 – Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review: Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce		Agenda No: 10
Portfolio Corporate Outcome:	Environment and Place A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers	
Report presented by:	Councillor Phil Barlow, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer	
Background Papers:		Public Report
Reports and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7th March 2018 and Task and Finish Group: recycling, Re-Use and Reduce 2018/19.		Key Decision: No
DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT		
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 6 th March 2019		
50	<u>TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – RECYCLING, RE-USE AND REDUCE</u>	
<p>INFORMATION: Members considered the final draft of the report for the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce. Councillor Chris Siddall, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, was invited to present the report. During the report, reference was made to the Waste Hierarchy and the growing importance of waste prevention as opposed to recycling alone. It was added that a key priority of BDC was the need to avoid the use of single-use plastics as such items were unable to be reused.</p> <p>Further to the report, the following points were raised:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- In response to a query about the schemes available for the promotion of “re-use” practices, Members were advised that TREE (Tendring Re-use Employment Enterprise) was a collection service available to Braintree District residents for bulky waste (e.g. such as furniture and waste electrical equipment) for the purposes of re-use, some of which was re-sold. In addition to this, it was reported that the Resources and Waste Strategy (which included prominent re-use practices) was due to be sent out for consultation by the Government and would affect all sectors. Other local re-use schemes also		

included Freegle and the increasing usage of the app, as well as electrical goods collections in libraries.

- Members were advised that there was no plastic that could not be recycled and that it was often the sheer volume of plastics that hindered the success of recycling practices in this area. It was also considered that the implementation of a more common recycling system throughout the country would help to generate increased capacity for a wider range of plastics, such as hard plastics.
- The Chairman reminded Members that as part of the Task and Finish Group review, local schools were contacted on the subject of recycling in order to help increase awareness of associated issues and correct recycling and waste minimization practices amongst younger children. National awareness of the issues associated with recycling was also increasing as a result of televised programmes such as the BBC's Blue Planet.
- Members expressed their appreciation for the external visitors who attended meetings of the Task and Finish Group as part of its evidence gathering, and specific reference in this respect was made by one Member to David Bowman, Commercial Development Manager at the Viridor Waste Management site, who provided a comprehensive presentation and detailed information to the Group further to questions posed by Members.

DECISION: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Review Report into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce and agreed to refer it to Full Council on 25th March 2019 and Cabinet in the new Administration.

The Task and Finish Group makes the following recommendations:

That Braintree District Council:-

1. Supports and promotes the work of the Corporate Working Group for Waste Minimisation and Recycling and continues to work with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and other Essex Councils on waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.
2. Promotes and encourages best practice and schemes amongst schools within the District in respect of waste minimisation and recycling, with a particular focus around secondary schools (e.g. letters to school governors, workshops, assemblies, etc.).
3. Helps to promote national and local events and various schemes that support Recycling, Re-use and Reduce initiatives and raises awareness of apps such as *Freegle for Braintree* which will help meet the Council's objectives.
4. Asks the Marketing and Communications Team to consider how they can enhance communication of the key messages around waste minimisation and recycling using social media, with greater emphasis placed on the waste hierarchy.

5. Supports active participation in schemes promoted by the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) e.g. “Campaign at Shop” schemes to help combat issues surrounding marketing and packaging of products, and uniform colours and sizes for waste bins across different local authorities.
6. Adopts more robust enforcement in relation to side waste (excess grey bin waste) and approves a protocol to address this. Schemes such as “Pay to Throw” would be potential deterrents to householders who produce excessive waste.
7. Takes a holistic approach as part of the planning process when considering design features of estates, particularly for mixed hereditaments and flats, and includes within the planning policy framework a requirement for developers to design and incorporate facilities for the segregation and storage of recyclables, food waste, etc. that are aesthetically pleasing, with easy access to facilitate loading, storage and pick-ups of both residual and recyclable waste.
8. Maintains an overview of advancements in new technologies in the waste industry, particularly those that seek to minimise waste whilst maximising recycling and adapts its service accordingly.
9. Considers introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste. This would help to offset some of the cost of the recycling service and may encourage more householders to home-compost their waste.
10. Approves the installation of a continuous video ‘loop’ in the reception areas of the Council’s offices and other locations within the District that affirm household recycling and waste minimisation best practices. This can include raising awareness of the Council’s bulky household waste collection service and the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Braintree and Witham.
11. Supports the new Waste and Resources Strategy and, where appropriate, aligns its future service delivery, work programmes and initiatives around the principles outlined in this document. This includes working with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on initiatives that seek to drive greater efficiency of energy from waste.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee’s report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council’s Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

Recommended Decision: That Council agrees:

The approval of the recommendations within the report for referral to Cabinet on 8th July 2019.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Committee’s report to be referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Council’s Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review: Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce		Agenda No:
Portfolio	Environment and Place	
Corporate Outcome:	A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers	
Report presented by:	Councillor Chris Siddall, Chairman of Task and Finish Group into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce	
Report prepared by:	Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager	
Background Papers:		Public Report
Reports and Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7 March 2018 and Task and Finish Group: Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce 2018/19.		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>As part of the Committee's annual programme of work, a Task and Finish Group was established to look at Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce in line with the Terms of Reference outlined within the attached report.</p> <p>The Group was comprised of the following Members:</p> <p>Chris Siddall (Chairman), Phil Barlow (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Julia Allen, Andrew Hensman, Peter Schwier, Bill Rose, Patrick Horner, and John Elliott.</p> <p>The attached report outlines the key findings of the Group and the recommendations arising from this Scrutiny Review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.</p>		
Recommended Decision:		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to consider the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Review Report into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce and refer it to Full Council on 25th March 2019 and Cabinet in the new Administration.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group makes the following recommendations:</p> <p>That Braintree District Council:-</p>		

1. Supports and promotes the work of the Corporate Working Group for Waste Minimisation and Recycling and continues to work with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and other Essex Councils on waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.
2. Promotes and encourages best practice and schemes amongst schools within the District in respect of waste minimisation and recycling, with a particular focus around secondary schools (e.g. letters to school governors, workshops, assemblies, etc.).
3. Helps to promote national and local events and various schemes that support Recycling, Re-use and Reduce initiatives and raises awareness of apps such as *Freegle for Braintree* which will help meet the Council's objectives.
4. Asks the Marketing and Communications Team to consider how they can enhance communication of the key messages around waste minimisation and recycling using social media, with greater emphasis placed on the waste hierarchy.
5. Supports active participation in schemes promoted by the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) e.g. "Campaign at Shop" schemes to help combat issues surrounding marketing and packaging of products, and uniform colours and sizes for waste bins across different local authorities.
6. Adopts more robust enforcement in relation to side waste (excess grey bin waste) and approves a protocol to address this. Schemes such as "Pay to Throw" would be potential deterrents to householders who produce excessive waste.
7. Takes a holistic approach as part of the planning process when considering design features of estates, particularly for mixed hereditaments and flats, and includes within the planning policy framework a requirement for developers to design and incorporate facilities for the segregation and storage of recyclables, food waste, etc. that are aesthetically pleasing, with easy access to facilitate loading, storage and pick-ups of both residual and recyclable waste.
8. Maintains an overview of advancements in new technologies in the waste industry, particularly those that seek to minimise waste whilst maximising recycling and adapts its service accordingly.
9. Considers introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste. This would help to offset some of the cost of the recycling service and may encourage more householders to home-compost their waste.
10. Approves the installation of a continuous video 'loop' in the reception areas of the Council's offices and other locations within the District that affirm household recycling and waste minimisation best practices. This can include raising awareness of the Council's bulky household waste collection service and the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Braintree and Witham.
11. Supports the new Waste and Resources Strategy and, where appropriate, aligns its future service delivery, work programmes and initiatives around the principles outlined in this document. This includes working with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on initiatives that seek to drive greater efficiency of energy from waste.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Committee's report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

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

Financial:	<p>Some of the recommendations will have a financial impact, but these will be considered as part of a business case with any recommendations taken forward.</p> <p>In respect of the new Resource and Waste Strategy, there will be financial implications for the Council, depending on any changes to service delivery that are imposed by the Government or adopted by the Council. These are subject to consultation and the Government has indicated that it may assist with funding based on costs identified by local authorities. A separate report on this issue will be provided to Cabinet.</p>
Legal:	<p>The recommendations within this report are in line with current legislation on waste management practices, although this may change as a result of the Government's new Resource and Waste Strategy.</p>
Safeguarding:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Equalities/Diversity:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Customer Impact:	<p>Potential charge for garden waste. More robust enforcement of side waste. Potential major change in how the waste service is delivered, depending on outcome of the Government's consultation on the new Resource and Waste Strategy.</p>
Environment and Climate Change:	<p>Reduction in overall amount of household waste generated, improved recycling performance and more sustainable use of valuable resources.</p>
Consultation/Community Engagement:	<p>Feedback was sought from local schools on their experiences of waste and recycling. Advice was also sought from industry experts and Council officers with relevant knowledge/experience.</p> <p>Following consultation by Full Council on 25th March 2019, the Scrutiny Review will be referred to the Cabinet to receive and respond to in the new Administration.</p>

Risks:	None arising from this report.
Officer Contact:	Samir Pandya
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**TASK AND FINISH GROUP SCRUTINY REVIEW
RECYCLING, RE-USE AND REDUCE**

28th JANUARY 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's annual programme of work, a Task and Finish Group was established to look at Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce using the following Terms of Reference:-

1. To examine and review the Council's key methods and tools that are used to communicate waste minimisation messages and recycling initiatives to residents and businesses so that we help users to:
 - a) Fully understand what products are recyclable within the Braintree District *at the point of purchase* so that they can make informed shopping choices; and
 - b) Use this knowledge to understand what can be included in the Council's recycling collections to minimise contamination and increase the amounts recycled.
2. To identify examples of best practice at a national level that could be adopted by the Council to meet its aims and objectives.
3. To consider how the Council can engender positive behaviours at an early age (grass roots level) e.g. school children.
4. To look at how the Council's digital strategy can be used more widely to promote waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.
5. To consider opportunities to include recycling infrastructure in new housing developments paid for by the developers.
6. To explore how we can influence waste policy at a national level to reduce waste at source (manufacturing).

The following items were specifically excluded from the review:-

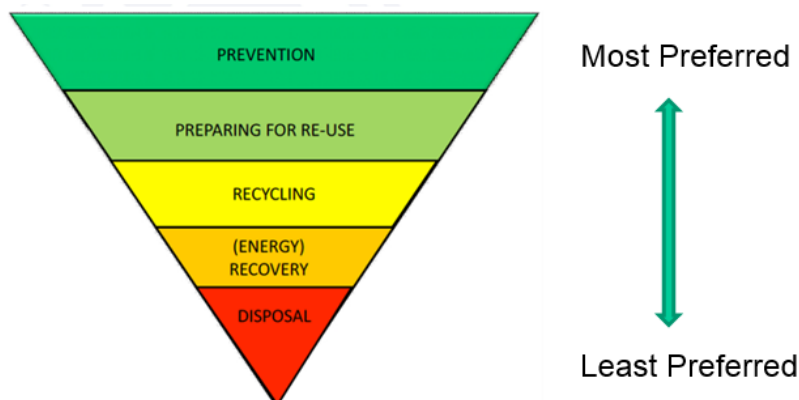
- a. Tovi Eco Park
- b. Existing contracts and Service Level Agreements.
- c. Operational resources used to deliver front-line services.

Membership of the Group was comprised of Councillors Chris Siddall (Chairman), Phil Barlow (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Julia Allen, Andrew Hensman, Peter Schwier, Bill Rose, Patrick Horner, and John Elliott, supported by Samir Pandya, Operations Strategy and Policy Manager, and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer.

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Group and sets out the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Review.

1 BACKGROUND

The Council's waste management services are delivered in accordance with legislative frameworks set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Waste (England & Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (TEEP) and the EU Waste Framework Directive 2008 (50% recycling target by 2020) which sets out the principles of a Waste Hierarchy in terms of managing waste, as follows:-



Over the past two decades, there has been great emphasis on recycling as a means of reducing waste by diverting as much as possible from the residual waste stream. However, whilst the Council has seen a vast improvement in its recycling performance over that time, the volume of residual waste generated by each household is increasing every year. This is a trend that is reflected nationally and there is now a renewed focus on waste *prevention* alongside re-use and recycling, in an effort to reduce the overall amount of waste generated.

Furthermore, there has been much in the media about the global impact of waste plastics and a growing desire to dispense with unnecessary packaging and single use plastics and we are already beginning to see changes taking place at a national level to address some of these concerns. The publication of the Government's Waste and Resources Strategy for England in December 2018 will undoubtedly present further challenges in how we manage our waste.

We welcome this new long awaited Strategy, as it will help deliver some fundamental changes to incentivise businesses, local government generally, and residents to protect the environment, address stagnating recycling rates, and tackle the environmental impacts of food and plastic. It will also place greater emphasis on manufacturers and producers to take more responsibility for the cost of recycling and disposing of their waste, as well as the cost of items that are harder to recycle. The Panel felt a more common waste handling system shared by councils throughout the country will enable a more cost-effective recycling plant to be developed.

3. EVIDENCE GATHERING

It was agreed that Members would work in pairs on four separate work streams:

- (1) Performance and Efficiency;
- (2) Communication and Education;

- (3) Policy and Strategy; and
- (4) Community Interaction/Engagement.

Under each work stream, Members in their pairs undertook their own research in addition to formal evidence gathering sessions which took place on 11 June 2018, 9 August 2018, 17 September 2018, 15 October 2018, 19 November 2018 and 17 December 2018.

Key stakeholders invited to give evidence included:-

- Emily Martin, Sustainability and Resilience Manager at Essex County Council who gave presentation entitled '*Waste Reduction Communications*'.
- Gabriella Asara, Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer, and Ros Alam, Marketing Officer and Account Manager, who gave a presentation on the recycling initiatives undertaken by the Council including education and promotion in schools and via social media.
- David Bowman, Commercial Development Manager at Viridor, who offered a perspective from the recycling processor's point of view and information about the Council's recycling performance.
- Alan Massow, Senior Planning Policy Officer, who gave a synopsis of the role of the Council as a Planning Authority and how it can encourage developers to provide recycling facilities in new developments. Gabriella Asara also provided an update on the work of the Corporate Recycling Group.

In addition, on 25 October 2018, four Members of the Task and Finish Group, accompanied by Samir Pandya, visited Viridor's recycling plant at Great Blakenham in Suffolk to see first-hand how dry recyclable materials collected from households within the District are processed.

Feedback was also sought from local schools, via a short questionnaire, to learn from their experiences of waste and recycling.

Details of the presentations and other evidence gathered can be found using the links below to the Member's Hub:-

Presentation by Emily Martin: Waste Reduction Communications. Link
Presentation by Gabriella Asara/Ros Alam: Recycling initiatives, education and promotion. Link
Presentation by David Bowman, Viridor: A Recycling Processor's perspective. Link
Presentation by Alan Massow: Role of the Planning Authority in relation to recycling infrastructure on new developments. Link
Gabriella Asara: Update on work of Corporate Recycling Group. Link
Report from Performance & Efficiency work stream. Link

Report from Policy & Strategy work stream. Link
Report from Communication & Education work stream including feedback from schools. Link

4. KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 The Braintree District's recycling performance has remained within the top quartile in Essex for many years now, with a recycling rate of over 50%. This has largely been achieved through restricting bin capacity for residual waste and offering a user-friendly recycling collection scheme. However, it is acknowledged that there is scope to improve the District's performance, particularly in relation to waste prevention and food waste.
- 4.2 There are already some good established methods employed to communicate waste minimisation messages to residents and businesses. These are supplemented by the Marketing and Communications Team at Braintree District Council who use social media to convey key messages to residents and businesses via e-newsletters and text. This is an area which is developing as part of the Council's Digital Strategy. A specific focus should be on simplifying our key messages about which materials can be recycled. In addition, the Council has established a corporate working group to review its own internal waste practices and has published an action plan for staff to help reduce waste.
- 4.3 Members of the Group were particularly pleased to see that the Council has been very proactive in rolling out recycling collections to schools. The Council's Waste Minimisation and Recycling Team engages with all primary schools in the District to promote positive behaviours at an early age. However, it has been more challenging to gain access to secondary schools to reinforce the key messages (e.g. at assemblies).
- 4.4 The Council works closely with the Essex Waste Partnership Board (EWPB), and industry experts to incorporate best practice into the management and delivery of its waste collection service. The service is designed to reflect the principles of the waste hierarchy, the importance of which is reinforced in the Government's new Resources and Waste Strategy, including weekly food waste collections.
- 4.5 The Council's Planning and Operations Departments are working jointly to develop a detailed Waste and Recycling Management Guidance document for developers to incorporate best practice for recycling as part of their infrastructure works.
- 4.6 The Council works with the EWPB, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) to influence national policy around Waste Minimisation and Recycling.
- 4.7 The Government has recently published '*Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England*' and will be consulting with local authorities on some sections of this document. The Council will liaise with its industry partners and town and parish councils in order to shape and influence areas of concern and highlight new

opportunities. In addition, the Council should seek to work with and influence Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on both existing and new initiatives including those to deliver greater efficiency of energy from waste plants.

- 4.8 The Panel were mindful of the fact that the Council annually delivers c.6m single-use plastic sacks (annual of £200k). Whilst they recognised the rationale for this system of collection being the most cost efficient and effective at diverting waste from the residual waste stream, the single-use plastic sack is not the most sustainable or environmentally friendly method of collection. The Government's new ambitious Resources and Waste Strategy will seek to reduce reliance on single use plastics.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on feedback received and observations made as part of this review, Members of the Task and Finish Group make the following recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED that Braintree District Council:-

- 5.1 Supports and promotes the work of the Corporate Working Group for Waste Minimisation and Recycling and continues to work with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority and other Essex Councils on waste minimisation and recycling initiatives.**

Purpose: To promote and encourage best practices within the organisation and amongst Members.

- 5.2 Promotes and encourages best practice and schemes amongst schools within the District in respect of waste minimisation and recycling, with a particular focus around secondary schools (e.g. letters to school governors, workshops, assemblies, etc.).**

Purpose: To encourage the sustainable implementation of best practices within schools in respect of Waste Minimisation and Recycling, and to improve the education of younger people in this area.

- 5.3 Helps to promote national and local events and various schemes that support Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce initiatives and raises awareness of apps such as *Freegle for Braintree* which will help meet the Council's objectives.**

Purpose: To help the Council influence Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices at a national level and increase residents' awareness of new online facilities that they can utilise to increase their knowledge of best practices, such as the Re-Use initiative through the *Freegle for Braintree* app.

- 5.4 Asks the Marketing and Communications Team to consider how they can enhance communication of the key messages around waste minimisation and recycling using social media, with greater emphasis placed on the waste hierarchy.**

Purpose: To help improve the communication channels through which the Council delivers its key messages around Waste Minimisation and Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce to different groups of residents across the District.

- 5.5 Supports active participation in schemes promoted by the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) (e.g. “Campaign at Shop” schemes”) to help combat issues surrounding marketing and packaging of products, and uniform colours and sizes for waste bins across different local authorities.**

Purpose: To help Members at the Council to influence Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices on a more national scale.

- 5.6 Adopts more robust enforcement in relation to side waste (excess grey bin waste) and approves a protocol to address this. Schemes such as “Pay to Throw” would be potential deterrents to householders who produce excessive waste.**

Purpose: To reduce the amount of contaminated waste throughout the Braintree District, particularly within residential locations such as flatted dwellings.

- 5.7 Takes a holistic approach as part of the planning process when considering design features of estates, particularly for mixed hereditaments and flats, and includes within the planning policy framework a requirement for developers to design and incorporate facilities for the segregation and storage of recyclables, food waste, etc., that are aesthetically pleasing, with easy access to facilitate loading, storage and pick-ups of both residual and recyclable waste.**

Purpose: To ensure that Waste Minimisation and Recycling infrastructure and practices are innate in new housing developments, thus increasing the sustainability of those developments.

- 5.8 Maintains an overview of advancements in new technologies in the waste industry, particularly those that seek to minimise waste whilst maximising recycling and adapts its service accordingly.**

Purpose: To help increase rates of Waste Minimisation and Recycling throughout the District by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of waste practices with the use of new technologies.

- 5.9 Considers introducing a charge for the collection of garden waste. This would help to offset some of the cost of the recycling service and may encourage more householders to home-compost their waste.**

Purpose: To encourage more householders within the District to implement home-composting methods which would ultimately help to offset some of the associated costs of the recycling service, such as that incurred through the maintenance and repair of recycling collection vehicles.

- 5.10 Approves the installation of a continuous video ‘loop’ in the reception areas of the Council’s offices and other locations within the District that affirm**

household recycling and waste minimisation best practices. This can include raising awareness of the Council's bulky household waste collection service and the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Braintree and Witham.

Purpose: To improve clarity for residents as to correct Waste Minimisation and Recycling practices and thus reduce the risk of miscommunication.

5.11 Supports the new Waste and Resources Strategy and, where appropriate, aligns its future service delivery, work programmes and initiatives around the principles outlined in this document. This includes working with Essex County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority on initiatives that seek to drive greater efficiency of energy from waste.

Purpose: To ensure that the Council is compliant with the latest Government initiatives and continues to explore new methods for facilitating new practices around Waste and Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the work of this Scrutiny Review:-

- Emily Martin – Sustainability and Resilience Manager (Essex County Council)
- Gabriella Asara – Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer (Braintree District Council)
- Ros Alam – Marketing Officer and Account Manager (Braintree District Council)
- Alan Massow – Acting Principal Planning Policy Officer (Braintree District Council)
- David Bowman – Commercial Development Manager (Viridor Waste Management)

Members would also like to thank the schools that took part in the consultation and provided feedback to the Group.

Finally, we would like to thank Council officers Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer, for the support and advice they provided throughout the process.

Councillor Chris Siddall - Chairman
Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review into Recycling, Re-Use and Reduce

Recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6th March 2019 – Scrutiny of the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District		Agenda No: 11
Portfolio	Environment and Place	
Corporate Outcome:	A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services	
Report presented by:	Councillor Phil Barlow, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer	
Background Papers:		Public Report
Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19		Key Decision: Yes
DRAFT MINUTE EXTRACT		
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – 6 th March 2019		
49	<u>ROLE OF THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY – FINAL DRAFT OF SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT</u>	
<p>INFORMATION: Members were asked to consider the final draft of the report for the Scrutiny Review into the Role of the Highway Authority, presented by the Chairman.</p> <p>The Chairman identified a typographical error within the report under Recommendation 5 (Page 6 of the Agenda), whereby the letter ‘a’ had been mistakenly included after the word “Develops” at the start of the paragraph. The sentence was therefore amended to instead state “Develops more flexible intervention criteria” to indicate that there was multiple intervention criteria. The Chairman made reference to Recommendation 9 of the report and sought the views of Members as to whether the recommendation to Essex County Council (ECC) should be made more specific, as the current Highways Liaison Officer for the Local Highways Panel was available to Braintree District Council (BDC) on a trial basis only. A “...named permanent officer” nominated to work with District Members would have the ability to provide a greater frequency of visits to BDC and to examine the details of highways matters more thoroughly. There followed a brief discussion, the main points of which were as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It was suggested by a Member that the condition of the recommendation should be that ECC did not withdraw the support of the current Highways Liaison Officer, of whom had gained invaluable insight and knowledge of local		

highways matters in the Braintree District. In response to this, the Chairman advised that the recommendation could be amended to recommend the provision of a named permanent officer for BDC, either in addition to the current Highways Liaison Officer or in the form of a separate individual.

- A further suggestion was made that the role of the nominated officer from ECC be extended to encompass highway improvements and repairs as well as Local Highways Panel issues.
- Members stated that they would like to see the role of the Highways Liaison Officer made a permanent fixture and the scope of the link increased to enable all highways matters to be referred to ECC in this fashion.

Further to the discussion and the points raised, several revisions arose as to the appropriate wording to be inserted under recommendation 9:-

- Members agreed that the word “all” be included in front of “local highways issues” to enable the scope of the nominated officer’s role to be increased.
- Members also agreed with the Chairman that in addition to the current paragraph under recommendation 9, the following wording should be included: “We acknowledge the value of the current Local Highways Panel Highways Liaison Officer in providing liaison, and would wish that this became a permanent position but would seek further liaison outside of purely Local Highways Panel issues.”

The Chairman then invited Members to submit any other observations they had in relation to the report. A query was raised in relation to ECC’s Cabinet Member’s decline of the invitation to attend an evidence gathering session of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at BDC and the reasons behind this. In response, Members were advised that although there was no formal indication as to why ECC had endeavoured not to engage with BDC on this matter, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the lawful right to submit their finalised report directly to the Highway Authority and to request that they consider and respond accordingly.

Further explanation was provided for Members as to the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as per the Local Government Act 2000 with a focus around the referral of reports to the appropriate County Council. In taking this into account, it was proposed that a further recommendation be included under the heading of “Decision” within the report, as follows: “As the recommendations relate to ECC as the Highway Authority, we agree to serve notice on ECC as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We ask officers to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.”

DECISION:

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report and approved the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.
2. As the recommendations related to Essex County Council as the Highway Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of

the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers were asked to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION:

1. To enable the Committee's report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.
2. To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Committee.

Recommended Decision: That Council agrees:

1. The approval of the recommendations within the report for referral to Cabinet on 8th July 2019.
2. To note that as the recommendations related to Essex County Council as the Highway Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers were asked to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.

Purpose of Decision:

1. To enable the Committees' report to be referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny as set out in the Constitution.
2. To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Committee.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6th MARCH 2019



Scrutiny of the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District		Agenda No: 5
Portfolio	Environment and Place	
Corporate Priority:	A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services	
Report presented by:	Councillor Phil Barlow, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager	
Background Papers:		Public Report
<u>Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2018/19</u>		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has considered the role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District in line with the terms of reference set out in the attached report.</p> <p>The Committee gathered evidence from a variety of sources, from which they have drawn their conclusions and make the following recommendations:-</p> <p>Improvements to the Essex County Council Highways customer service system are needed. Multiple reporting of the same issues is frustrating, a waste of public resources and an unnecessary inconvenience to customers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Makes revisions to the reference number system to make it simpler and more intuitive; (2) Builds on the highways interactive website to provide customers with an on-line tracking facility to monitor progress on maintenance issues (to be widely advertised when in place). Furthermore, Essex Highways should extend the period of time during which responses to queries remain on its website after the determination of the outcome, such as for a six-month period to avoid the same defect being reported again and to help clarify for those reporting issues when exactly the outcome of the issue was determined. The system should also state on what specific date reported defects were inspected to enable website users to monitor the time taken for this and the subsequent repair to occur. (3) Publishes up to date service standards on its website and communicates these to Braintree District Council and Parish and Town Councils. (4) Refers where appropriate on the website to the clear criteria where, for instance, potholes and other obstructions, such as raised parking slabs, are in need of 		

repair.

The Essex County Council intervention criteria for maintenance issues are too rigid and this, combined with the inefficient customer services system, can lead to long delays in basic maintenance issues being addressed.

- (5) Develops more flexible intervention criteria, especially in responding to issues reported by Parish Councils who have a useful role to play as the 'eyes and ears' of their local communities;
- (6) Considers extending the principle of the existing Highways Ranger service to Parish and Town Councils that are willing to carry out minor works at a local level. This should be considered together with the development of the devolution initiative that was promoted during the evidence gathering sessions.
- (7) Reviews and extends the role of the existing Highway Ranger service to cover as many of the locally reported issues as possible to facilitate the speedy completion of minor works.
- (8) Conducts an assessment of the effectiveness of speeding deterrents within Parishes (e.g. Vehicle Activated Signs) and whether value for money was being achieved in their implementation. The assessment findings could then be made available to Parish Councils for their consideration before any large-scale future potential investments in new speed deterrents took place. The assessment conducted by Essex County Council could also encompass the level of road accidents in areas where speed deterrents signs were situated.

Under the previous Essex County Council highway structure that covered the Braintree District, a designated team of officers with local knowledge was accessible by Elected Members. The removal of this vital link has had a perceived detrimental effect on the service. Therefore, there needs to be a named Essex County Officer, preferably working for at least part of the month, based in the Braintree District who could be a point of contact for Parish and Town Councils and Braintree District Council Officers and Members on local highways issues, including for local site meetings.

- (9) Nominates a named permanent officer (who could be based at Causeway House) to work with District Members, officers and town/parish councils on all local highways issues, including attending site meeting. We acknowledge the value of the current Local Highways Panel Highways Liaison Officer in providing liaison, and would wish that this became a permanent position but would seek further liaison outside of purely Local Highways Panel issues.
- (10) Publishes the expected protocols for escalating local highways issues.

The new arrangement for Local Highway Panels based on the Braintree model is welcome. However, the lack of financial transparency and evidence of value for money remain concerns for the Committee.

- (11) Provides independent scrutiny and evidence of Value for Money achieved from the contract with Ringway Jacobs.
- (12) Provides reassurance that a structured audit process is in place to monitor and challenge the services provided by the contractor and make the audit findings publically available.

- (13) Provides scrutiny on outsourced contracts, such as that with Ringway Jacobs. The performance of contractors should be monitored on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness and whether value for money is being achieved, thus increasing their accountability.
- (14) Considers whether there is scope for introducing some form of competition into the contract for the whole of the county, and whether this would entail separate contracts for different areas of Essex.

There needs to be greater clarity in public information as to “who does what” in highways roles to remove confusion currently experienced by service users.

- (15) Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and Highways England ensure that clear and concise information is made available on their websites and in relevant publications, as to which organisation is responsible for the various elements of the highway service, with contact details to access the correct service provider.
- (16) Closer communication should be made between Essex Highways and the Planning Department at Braintree District Council in respect of commercial planning applications and large schemes being considered by the Local Highways Panel.
- (17) Essex County Council Highways together with the District Council to consider at an early stage the community gains that Section 106 agreements that could be negotiated with developers and to share these appropriately with local Members to get some localised input.

Decision:

- 1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and approve the recommendations for referral to Full Council and Cabinet.
- 2. As the recommendations related to Essex County Council as the Highway Authority, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Officers were asked to undertake this work on behalf of the Committee.

Purpose of Decision:

- 1. To enable the Committee’s report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.
- 2. To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to serve notice on Essex County Council as the relevant partner Authority under Section 9FF of the Local Government Act 2000 to consider the recommendations and respond to the Committee.

Corporate implications	
Financial:	None arising from this report.
Legal:	None arising from this report.
Equalities/Diversity	None arising from this report.
Customer Impact:	The recommendations contained within this report are intended to bring about improved service delivery within the Braintree District and create improved accessibility and lines of communication between Essex County Council (the Highway Authority) and officers, Councillors and residents of the District in respect of highway related issues.
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising from this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	<p>Evidence was sought from Councillor R Mitchell and Councillor J Abbott in their capacity as Essex County Councillors, as well as from representatives of Essex Highways, Braintree District Council and the Braintree Association of Local Councils.</p> <p>Consultation also took place with Parish and Town Councils about their experiences of the service provided by the Highway Authority.</p>
Risks:	None arising from this report.
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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO THE ROLE OF THE HIGHWAY AUTHORITY IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

C O N T E N T S

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1. INTRODUCTION

At its meeting on 7 March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to look at the role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District as part of its annual programme of work.

The review was prompted by concerns from District Members about the highways service provided by Essex Highways (EH) which is part of Essex County Council (ECC), the Highway Authority. A particular concern was that the lines of communication with EH had deteriorated following their major reorganisation in 2010/11 and that routine repair requests were taking longer to deal with.

EH are responsible for all non-trunked public roads and associated land (e.g. pavements and verges) in the Braintree District, whereas Highways England are responsible for trunked roads and associated land. In the Braintree District, these are the A12 and A120.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCOPE OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

2.1 Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1): To explore the functions of the Highway Authority to give:-

- A broad understanding of the functions and the role of the Highway Authority.
- An understanding of the relationship between the Highway Authority and the District Council.
- The functions of the Braintree District Highways Panel and how that fits in to the relationship between the Highway Authority and Braintree District Council.
- The management of highway functions including:
 - Highway maintenance including Public Rights of Way (PROW).
 - Management and maintenance including cutting of grass verges.
 - North Essex Parking Partnership.

2.2 Scope of the Scrutiny Review: To broadly encompass the following highway related areas:-

- The functions that the highway authority undertakes within the Braintree District.
- The process/conduit for raising local highway issues with the relevant authority.
- How maintenance issues are prioritised.
- How highway enforcement is pursued (e.g. PROW infringements).
- How the Highway Authority defines a 'local issue' and how they consult with the local community including Parish and Town Councils.
- The relationship between statutory highway functions and the Braintree Local Highway Panel.
- The highway input to planning decisions.

3. HOW WORK WAS PROGRESSED

The Committee set out with the aim of completing the Scrutiny Review by the end of the 2018/19 Civic Year, although it was acknowledged that this would depend to some extent on the Council's committee timetable and the

availability of key stakeholders.

It was agreed that there would be monthly meetings, and that it would be key to work around the availability of officers from the highways services as without their full evidence, the review could be undermined.

The Committee met on seven occasions from April to December 2018. Evidence gathering included presentations from officers from both Braintree District Council and Essex County Council and these were followed by Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions.

The Committee felt it important to gather evidence both from the service providers and from service users, so letters were sent to Parish and Town Councils inviting them to participate in the review by sharing their experiences of highways issues. The consultation ran for four weeks during October 2018 and a total of 14 responses were received including comments from both Parish and Town Councils.

4. WITNESS EVIDENCE

4.1 First Session for the Scrutiny Review into the Highway Authority – A presentation was given by Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, who provided an overview of the main Highway Function. A link to the presentation slides is included in **Appendix 2**.

4.2 First Evidence Gathering Session – A presentation was given by Neil Jones, Principal Planning Officer at Braintree District Council (the Council) and by Matt Bradley and Martin Mason of Essex Highways (EH) Strategic Development team. The salient points from the meeting are summarised below:

- Responsibility for the management of roads and open spaces within new developments has changed greatly in recent years. The Council no longer adopts areas of open space. The criteria for the adoption of roads by EH had also changed to reduce the number of roads that are adopted as public highways. Developers are required to establish management companies to oversee the ownership and maintenance of open space and in some cases private roads.
- Transport Assessments and Transport Statements submitted with planning applications are assessed by EH Officers who may obtain specialist technical support from third parties e.g. Ringway Jacobs has assisted with transport modelling.
- It can be difficult for the Planning and Highway Authorities to ascertain the exact impact of new planning proposals due to factors such as new residents shifting their mode of transport (relying more on walking and cycling) and peak spreading (traveling outside the traditional peak hours to avoid congestion). Impartiality upon receipt of any representations was stressed; however, members of the public often had differing views on what constitutes a severe impact. Therefore, the process of assessing representations could be made more transparent to the public to enhance their understanding.

- The issue of heavy goods vehicles on inappropriate local roads was raised. Officers explained that there were limited routes available for lorries accessing major roads such as the A120 and A12; as a result, this can add to congestion and create pressures for vehicle weight restrictions.
- The Strategic Development Team Officers who provide the Council with advice on planning applications have an expedient overview of issues across the highway spectrum. The Highway Authority comprises a number of different teams who carry out various functions, but in terms of enforcement (i.e. encroachment), the Highways Authority does not have a substantial resource.
- Members felt it important to understand the process behind issues reported to EH through the online portal. A general concern was the lack of response on whether issues reported via the portal had been received and actioned. It was suggested that an officer from Essex County Council (ECC) attend the next meeting to provide an insight into the field of highways maintenance and answer any questions posed by Members regarding Public Rights of Way and signage.
- Members were reminded to watch the webcast of the Highways presentation given at the Member's Evening on 14 March 2018 (available on the Members' Hub), and pose any further questions to relevant officers at future meetings.

A link to the presentation and details of the Q&A session are included in **Appendix 3**.

4.3 Second Evidence Gathering Session – It had been hoped that a representative of Essex Highways (EH) would attend this meeting to give a presentation, but the County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways made it clear, via the Director of Highways, that EH officers would not be attending any Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings as part of its evidence gathering process. Whilst disappointed with the news, Members used the opportunity to seek clarification on a number of points which were answered by the Samir Pandya, Policy and Strategy Manager (Braintree District Council) – see **Appendix 4** for details. In summary:

- Section 106 funds cannot be used for highway maintenance works.
- EH are not obliged to adopt roads where developers have gone in to liquidation.
- EH employ inspectors who record highway defects including damaged signs and potholes.
- Parking restrictions including outside schools are managed by the North Essex Parking Partnership on behalf of EH.

4.4 Third Evidence Gathering Session – Members heard from Essex County Councillor Robert Mitchell (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways) who offered his personal perspective on highways issues. Details of the Q&A session are set out at **Appendix 5** but the key issues highlighted were as

follows:-

- Over several years, Essex Highways (EH) has had significant reductions in its funding for both capital schemes and revenue funded maintenance programme which has had an impact on the prioritisation of highway defects.
- All maintenance issues are managed by EH from a risk-based approach (e.g. use of an impact and probability matrix) and defects are attended to in a consistent manner.
- Committee Members (and residents/stakeholders) are able to access all of the EH policies and procedures via Essex County Council's [website](#).
- Highway defects and issues should be reported via the EH online portal in the first instance, or the dedicated Highway Liaison Officer or the Essex County Councillor.
- EH manage 127,000 street lights across Essex; a loan from the government has helped fund the conversion of approximately 40,000 street lights to LEDs (37%), 32,000 of which had been completed (including 17,000 all-night lights and 15,000 high wattage lights) and a further 8,000 were to be completed by the end of 2018.

4.5 Fourth Evidence Gathering Session – Essex County Councillor James Abbott attended a meeting on 19 September 2018 to provide an account of his experience of the Highway Service, especially in his constituency. Pre-prepared questions were sent to Councillor Abbott and the Committee was impressed by the extent and depth of the information given in response. The Committee was equally impressed by the depth and honesty of the replies during the question and answer session – **see Appendix 6**.

4.6 Fifth Evidence Gathering Session - During this session on 21 November 2018, Members considered a report which contained the responses of Parish Clerks on behalf of Parish and Town Councils in respect of the Scrutiny Review. The enquiry sought the views of Parish and Town Councils as to their knowledge of the Highways Authority and the services provided, their experiences when engaging with the Highways Authority and how accessible they found the services provided to be, as well as any suggestions they had for improved liaison with the Highway Authority - **see Section 5 and Appendix 7**.

4.7 Sixth Evidence Gathering Session – The final evidence gathering session took place on 5 December 2018 when Councillor Don Smith (Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC)) attended as a witness. As with previous witnesses, Councillor Smith, who is also a member of the Braintree Local Highways Panel, was sent pre-prepared questions and again, the Committee was impressed with the depth of information provided and appreciated the candidness with which it was conveyed. **Appendix 8** shows the report provided by Councillor Smith.

5. CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

By the third evidence gathering meeting (on 6 June 2018) it was clear that the Cabinet Member for Highways was not prepared to allow Essex Highways (EH)

officers to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to take questions from Members. After several failed attempts to influence a change in the County's position throughout the summer, following discussions the Chairman agreed three specific actions to ensure the widest sources of evidence were available for the final report.

- i. Invite comments/observations of the Highway Service from Parish and Town Councils.
- ii. Write to the Director of Highways requesting answers to specific questions raised by the Committee.
- iii. Observe the workings (processes, procedures, etc.) of the Braintree Local Highway Panel to gain an insight into its remit and how it affects the highway service in the District.

The letter (email) to the Parish and Town Councils was agreed by the Chairman and sent on 8 October 2018 – **See Appendix 7**. The consultation period ran for four weeks, ending on 5 November 2018, although a late representation was accepted from Halstead Town Council knowing that their meeting cycles might not match the consultation period.

6. OUR FINDINGS

- All budgets at Essex County Council (ECC) are under pressure and Essex Highways (EH) has had to make significant cuts both in its Capital and Revenue funding. An example of this is the 50% (approx.) reduction of the Local Highway Panel budget in 2016, from £800k to £407,789.
- Overall, it was felt that the EH website had improved greatly over the past few years; it is informative and relatively easy to navigate. However, the most common complaint from Members (Parish, Town and District) was the frustration in trying to track progress with reported defects on the EH website, and the inaccessibility of a Highway Officer who understands the local issues and can follow up a complaint.
- A lack of transparency regarding the cost of highway schemes is evident from the Local Highway Panel. This issue has been raised by panel members several times over the years but with very little tangible evidence provided on Value for Money.
- There is little or no evidence to show how the Highway Contractor (Ringway Jacobs) is held accountable for 'above-inflation' costs of minor repairs e.g. replacement of signs as well as medium (£10k-£50k) sized schemes.
- There is inconsistency in the way some highway defects are dealt with in different areas of the District.
- Member participation and interaction with the Local Highway Panel has greatly improved in the last two years with a more inclusive approach from the Chairman and a very effective Highway Liaison Officer.
- The long turnaround of Local Highway Panel Schemes remains frustrating, especially with a 50% cut in budget meaning that the scheme list gets longer and the output lower.

- An underfunded maintenance programme has led to an unacceptable quality of the carriageways, footways and verges in some parts of the District (e.g. Braintree High Street).
- Lack of Public Rights of Way enforcement; the response time of ECC Officers when infractions are reported on the website is insufficient, and there is a lack of clarity as to the definitive time scale for maintenance and enforcement actions.
- Poor customer service owing to lack of access to officers with local knowledge and understanding of highway issues.
- The overwhelming view that, based on witnesses and the evidence gathered, Essex County Council's (ECC) willingness to engage and provide effective actions or responses has deteriorated substantially over the last few years. Furthermore, as a consequence of this, the District Members and public who try to contact Essex Highways (EH) often become disappointed as they don't feel they get any meaningful response, especially when issues reported on the website are seemingly extinguished from the website. The impression gained throughout is that the culture of EH is autocratic and there is almost a positive unwillingness to engage with its various partners. EH seemingly fails to understand the need to facilitate Local Government Scrutiny, and it is perceived that EH is focused purely on its own internal matters and is not interested in engaging with or learning from others. It is acknowledged that there is a degree of improved liaison between the Highway Authority and Braintree District Council in the form of the Assistant Highways Liaison Officer and a limited number of other examples. Financial issues were a possible contributor to ECC's unwillingness to engage with the Council, although this did not assist the Council as a District or Members attempting to hold the Highways Authority to account, as it is the public who hold the Council to account.

7. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvements to the Essex County Council Highways customer service system are needed. Multiple reporting of the same issues is frustrating, a waste of public resources and an unnecessary inconvenience to customers.

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (1) Makes revisions to the reference number system to make it simpler and more intuitive;
- (2) Builds on the highways interactive website to provide customers with an on-line tracking facility to monitor progress on maintenance issues (to be widely advertised when in place). Furthermore, Essex Highways should extend the period of time during which responses to queries remain on its website after the determination of the outcome, such as for a six-month period to avoid the same defect being reported again and to help clarify for those reporting issues when exactly the outcome of the issue was determined. The system should also state on what specific date reported defects were inspected to enable website users to monitor the time taken for this and the subsequent repair to occur;

- (3) Publishes up to date service standards on its website and communicates these to Braintree District Council and Parish and Town Councils;
- (4) Refers where appropriate on the website to the clear criteria where, for instance, potholes and other obstructions, such as raised parking slabs, are in need of repair.

The Essex County Council intervention criteria for maintenance issues are too rigid and this, combined with the inefficient customer services system, can lead to long delays in basic maintenance issues being addressed.

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (5) Develops more flexible intervention criteria, especially in responding to issues reported by Parish Councils who have a useful role to play as the 'eyes and ears' of their local communities;
- (6) Considers extending the principle of the existing Highways Ranger service to town/parish councils that are willing to carry out minor works at a local level. This should be considered together with the development of the devolution initiative that was promoted during the evidence gathering sessions;
- (7) Reviews and extends the role of the existing Highway Ranger service to cover as many of the locally reported issues as possible to facilitate the speedy completion of minor works.
- (8) Conducts an assessment of the effectiveness of speeding deterrents within Parishes (e.g. Vehicle Activated Signs) and whether value for money was being achieved in their implementation. The assessment findings could then be made available to Parish Councils for their consideration before any large-scale future potential investments in new speed deterrents took place. The assessment conducted by Essex County Council could also encompass the level of road accidents in areas where speed deterrents signs were situated.

Under the previous Essex County Council highway structure that covered the Braintree District, a designated team of officers with local knowledge was accessible by elected members. The removal of this vital link has had a perceived detrimental effect on the service. Therefore there needs to be a named County Officer, preferably working for at least part of the month, based in the Braintree District, who could be a point of contact for town and parish councils and Braintree District Council officers and Members on local highways issues, including for local site meetings.

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (9) Nominates a named permanent officer (who could be based at Causeway House) to work with District Members, officers and town/parish councils on all local highways issues, including attending site meetings. We acknowledge the value of the current Local Highways Panel Highways Liaison Officer in providing liaison, and

would wish that this became a more permanent position but would seek further liaison outside of purely Local Highways Panel issues;

- (10) Publishes the expected protocols for escalating local highways issues.

The new arrangement for Local Highway Panels based on the Braintree model is welcome. However, the lack of financial transparency and evidence of value for money remain concerns for the Committee.

It is recommended that Essex Highways:-

- (11) Provides independent scrutiny and evidence of Value for Money achieved from the contract with Ringway Jacobs;
- (12) Provides reassurance that a structured audit process is in place to monitor and challenge the services provided by the contractor and make the audit findings publically available;
- (13) Provides scrutiny on outsourced contracts, such as that with Ringway Jacobs. The performance of contractors should be monitored on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness and whether value for money is being achieved, thus increasing their accountability;
- (14) Considers whether there is scope for introducing some form of competition into the contract for the whole of the county, and whether this would entail separate contracts for different areas of Essex.

There needs to be greater clarity in public information as to “who does what” in highways roles to remove confusion currently experienced by service users.

It is recommended that:-

- (15) Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and Highways England ensure that clear and concise information is made available on their websites and in relevant publications, as to which organisation is responsible for the various elements of the highway service, with contact details to access the correct service provider;
- (16) Closer communication should be made between Essex Highways and the Planning Department at Braintree District Council in respect of commercial planning applications and large schemes being considered by the Local Highways Panel;
- (17) Essex County Council Highways together with the District Council to consider at an early stage the community gains that Section 106 agreements that could be negotiated with developers and to share these appropriately with local Members to get some localised input.

APPENDICES

Appendix	Description	Section of report where referenced
1	Terms of Reference: Link	2
2	First Session for Scrutiny Review into the Role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District - Samir Pandya's Presentation Slides: Link to Presentation Slides and Minutes - 11 April 2018	4
3	Q&A from First Evidence Gathering Session and Presentation Slides by Neil Jones, Braintree District Council and Matt Bradley, Essex Highways Link to Minutes and Presentation Slides – 10 May 2018	4
4	Q&A from Second Evidence Gathering Session: Link to Minutes – 6 June 2018	4
5	Q&A from Third Evidence Gathering Session: Link to Minutes – 11 July 2018	4
6	Q&A from Fourth Evidence Gathering Session: Link to Minutes – 19 September 2018	4
7	Q&A from Fifth Evidence Gathering Session and Consultation Letter to Parish and Town Councils Link to Minutes and Consultation Letter – 21 November 2018	4 & 5
8	Sixth Evidence Gathering Session - Report from Cllr. D Smith, Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils – 5 Dec 2018 Link to Minutes	4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to record its thanks to all those who took part in the scrutiny review and in particular, expresses its appreciation and thanks to the under mentioned individuals who contributed their time and expertise during the information gathering stage of the process:-

Mr Neil Jones, Principal Planner at Braintree District Council

Mr Matt Bradley and Mr Martin Mason, Essex Highways

Councillor Robert Mitchell, Essex County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways

Councillor James Abbott, Essex County Council Elected Member

Councillor Don Smith, Chairman of the Braintree Association of Local Councils

We would also like to thank Samir Pandya, Strategy and Policy Manager, Emma Wisbey, Governance and Members Manager and Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer for their valued support and advice throughout the process.

Councillor Phil Barlow

Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL – OVERALL
STRATEGY AND DIRECTION**

Agenda No: 12a

1. Transport East Forum – 8th March 2019

On behalf of the City, Borough and District Councils in Essex I attended a meeting of Transport East Forum at Bury St Edmunds.

The main items on the agenda were:

- (i) The A14 Campaign
- (ii) East/West Rail: Eastern section
- (iii) Developing the Transport East Evidence Base
- (iv) Engagement with Young People
- (v) Developing the Role of Transport East

Transport East now has a dedicated website at which Members can find agendas and papers. The link is www.transporteast.org.uk.

2. North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) Board Meeting – 13th March 2019

The Board met at the Weston Homes Stadium, Colchester. Amongst the agenda items were:

- (i) An update on the Rapid Transit System
- (ii) An update on the HIF bids process
- (iii) Adoption of NEGC Policies
- (iv) Consideration of progress on the 2018/19 Programme Plan and Budget Update

3. Essex Leaders Meeting -14th March 2019

I attended the Essex Leaders meeting which was held at Chelmsford City Council offices.

The Chief Constable of Essex, B.J. Harrington, in his capacity as Chair of the Essex Resilience Forum gave members a presentation on preparations that had been carried out in the County for an exit from the EU. This covered a wide variety of issues that might be affected in the event of a No Deal Exit.

Leaders received a paper on the responses received to their joint letter sent to the Mayor of London and the Leaders of all the London Boroughs regarding the placement of individuals and families outside of London.

The current position is as follows:-

- The main Boroughs found to be moving homeless families into Essex were Redbridge, Enfield, Newham, Lewisham, Havering, and Barking and Dagenham.
- The main Essex Districts / Boroughs that these homeless families were being placed into were Harlow, Basildon and Epping.
- There is a specific issue in Harlow with regard to a number of office blocks that have undergone conversion to dwelling units and as such have attracted a lower cost. This attracted housing migration from London Boroughs and as a result Harlow Council has been working with the government regarding an order to stop this practice.
- Whilst the number of homeless people rehoused in Essex from London Boroughs feels high, if looked at as a proportion of the population, it is not incongruous with the proportion we are aware of that are placed out of Essex by Essex Authorities.
- Whilst work to date has focused on homelessness, this is also being looked at from a Social care/education angle. Through the education database we are able to identify those children in education in Essex who originally started their education elsewhere.
- This can then be cross-referenced with SEN and free school meals records. Initial findings indicate that the volume of pupils moving into Essex with these needs is proportionate to those moving into Essex without them. Such findings indicate that many who move into Essex are likely to be working and proactively choosing to relocate to a cheaper area to live, and either commute or find alternative employment outside of London, as opposed to being placed here by other authorities.

It was agreed that the way forward would be:-

- To take up the offer of a meeting with London Council Officers;
- To agree that this be arranged through the Housing Growth Lead (Homelessness and Rough Sleeping) at Essex County Council or Leaders and Chief Executives to identify an alternative lead;
- To agree which Authorities would represent Essex at an Essex/London Councils Officer meeting (from the case studies submitted it is suggested that Harlow, Epping Forest, Basildon and Tendring be involved);
- Tendring to follow up with Councillor Darren Rodwell's office regarding an Essex/London Members' meeting, and
- To consider the role that the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA) might play – ideally in advance of any of the above meetings – in developing a richer data picture around the issue of inward migration into Essex from London and other areas.

Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of the Council

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Designation:	Leader of the Council
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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF
FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE**

Agenda No: 12b

Council Tax and Business Rates:

Tax Collection rates as at end of February

- **Council Tax** collected was 97.19% compared to 97.2% for the previous year and the target for the year is 98.3%. Amount collected £86million.
- **Business Rates** collected was 97.07% compared to 96.5% for the previous year and the target for the year is 98.6%. Amount collected £42.1million

The number of dwellings charged 50% council tax premium (empty for two years+) is 199.

Performance

Projects: As at the end of the third quarter, the Council is continuing to perform well in the achievement of its priorities with 18 projects having been completed, a further 40 projects are on track and progressing well, seven projects are experiencing delays which will push back the end dates of the projects due to a number of issues that have impacted on the timescales for delivery of the projects. These projects will be amended through the change control process once the issues are better understood and revised timescales can be agreed.

Performance Indicators

Ten performance indicators have achieved or exceeded target, three have missed target by less than 5% and two have missed target by more than 5%. The performance indicators that have missed target by less than 5% relate to the percentage of household waste recycled, collection rates for Council Tax and the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days. All of these indicators have missed target by less than half a percent and it is expected that the majority of the amber performance indicators will meet target at the end of the year. The performance indicators that have missed target by more than 5% are in relation to the tonnage of residual household waste not recycled, and the average waiting time for applicants on the disabled facilities grant.

Financial Performance.

An overall positive variance for the year of £703,000 (-4.8%) is projected against the budget. One of the main reasons is that the planning application fees budget of £1.29million was achieved by the end of December: it is expected that a further £200,000 will be received in the final quarter. In addition, a larger underspend on the salaries budget is now predicted as it has taken time to fill the agreed additional posts in Sustainable Development and spend on planning appeals is lower than anticipated due to delay on a couple appeals which are now expected to be heard in 2019/20.

Business Rates Relief

Council agreed to utilise its discretionary powers to implement a new Retail Relief scheme for 2019/20 and 2020/21, announced in the Autumn Budget 2018. Under this relief scheme eligible retailers with a rateable value below £51,000 will receive a one third discount on their net business rates bills i.e. after other mandatory and discretionary reliefs have been applied as appropriate. The Government will reimburse councils for the amount of relief granted under this discretionary scheme.

Council Tax – Premium charged on long-term empty properties

Council agreed to implement changes to the current premium charge of 50% following amendment to the legislation in November 2018, under the Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018, allowing authorities to use their discretionary powers to increase the Empty Homes premium as follows:

With effect from **1st April 2019**, an Empty Homes Premium of **100%** will be applied, in addition to the full (100%) charge, for all properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for a period of two years or more.

With effect from **1st April 2020**, an Empty Homes Premium of **100%** will be applied, in addition to the full (100%) charge, for all properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for a period of between two and five years and increasing to **200%** for properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for a period of five years or more.

With effect from **1st April 2021**, an Empty Homes Premium of **100%** will be applied, in addition to the full (100%) charge, for all properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for a period of between two and five years; **200%** for properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for period of between five and ten years and **300%** for properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (empty) for a period of more than 10 years.

Response to government consultations

Responses to the two consultations, Business Rates Retention Reform and Review of Local Authorities Relative Needs and Resources, were submitted prior to the closing date of 21st February. Further consultations on these two important areas are expected over the coming months as the Government develops its proposals for the new Local Government funding arrangements which are to be introduced from 1st April 2020.

External Audit

The Council's new external auditors, BDO LLP, presented their Audit Plan for the 2018/19 financial year to the Governance Committee on 23rd January 2019. The timetable for the audit has been agreed with officers in Finance: interim audit work commenced on 25th February for two weeks and the final audit fieldwork on the Statement of Accounts will commence on 3rd June. The external auditor's Audit Completion Report will be presented to the Governance Committee in July.

Commercialisation

The Commercialisation agenda is developing well and the Commercial Manager has been assisting service managers with a number of projects including payroll shared service, housing and homelessness service redesign, vehicle maintenance (transition to in-house provision) and materials recycling facility (inter-authority agreement with Suffolk authorities). Other areas of work in progress include reviews of third party spend, contract management and increasing income. In addition the new Commercial Sales Executive post was filled in

February on a two-year fixed term. The value of cost reductions and additional income identified to-date through this agenda is £93,000 per annum.

Councillor David Bebb
Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF
PLANNING AND HOUSING**

Agenda No: 12c

INFRASTRUCTURE

A131

Following Councillor Butland's update at Council in February 2019 month we have continued to discuss the scheme with senior officers at Essex. I will continue to keep Members informed of any progress.

HIF Bids

We have been working with colleagues at Essex County Council to put forward a bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund to support realignment and a new junction on the A12. We have also worked with colleagues in Chelmsford to support a bid for road and rail improvements. The bids were submitted on 21st March 2019 and I will keep Members informed on the outcomes.

Public Transport

Officers have submitted a response to the latest consultations from Essex County Council on the Chelmsford Park and Ride and Supported Bus Services Consultation which will highlight the potential impacts that withdrawal of services may have on District residents.

A120 Millennium Way Slips

In February 2019, a project update meeting was held, involving ECC Highways, Highways England and consultants. During the meeting, it was confirmed that the planning application is expected to be submitted in near future, with enabling works scheduled to commence in October 2019 and main contract works to begin in March 2020. Construction is expected to take 18 months.

PLANNING POLICY

Local Plan

The Local Plan examination is currently paused as work is undertaken on the additional evidence required by the Planning Inspector. Monthly progress updates on the evidence are sent to the Inspector and published on our website https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200643/section_1/1065/section_1_examination_publication_local_plan/4 and I am pleased to report that work continues on schedule.

Neighbourhood Planning

Earls Colne Parish Council has submitted a request to be designated a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of producing a Neighbourhood Plan which I approved at the beginning of March 2019. The group will now be offered support from the RCCE (paid for by Braintree District Council) and from officers in the Planning Policy Team to start the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Subject to the completion of an SEA/HRA screening report, Cressing Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a public consultation by the District Council in the summer, with the examination expected to take place later in the year.

Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan has been out for its first stage public consultation in February and March and the local authority has submitted its comments. The Neighbourhood Plan group will now need to consider all comments received and make any amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, before submitting it to the Council.

The Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan is completing an additional round of consultation on 25th March 2019. Once completed it will be the examiner's decision as to the next steps.

There is a separate report on the agenda in relation to Bradwell with Pattiswick Neighbourhood Plan.

Wethersfield

On 1st March 2019 the government announced updated plans for the Defence Estates Optimisation Programme. A link to the article can be found below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-announces-five-year-plan-for-key-military-sites>

The programme confirms that the date for the vacation of the base at Wethersfield has been moved back from 2020 to 2025 "*following detailed work to assess the optimum laydown required to support operational capability*".

Housing Land Supply

As I reported verbally at Council in February 2019, the government made several announcements during that month which changed the Housing Land Supply position in the District. The revised figure is now **5.42 years**.

However, it should be noted that the inputs into the formula are subject to at least annual updates and so the number of homes the District needs to provide will not be consistent.

I circulated a briefing to all Members following the February Council meeting and I would encourage Members to get in touch with myself or officers in Planning Policy if they have any questions.

Statement of Community Involvement

The consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement closed on 11th March 2019. The Council will now consider the responses received before presenting a final draft of the report to Members in the summer.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Planning Permissions for New Residential Development

The current Quarter 4 2018/19 position (January to March) as at 1st March 2019 is that planning permissions (this includes outline and full planning applications, but excludes reserved matters approvals and variation applications) have been granted for a total of

173 dwellings which can be summarised as follows:-

	Market Housing	Affordable Housing	TOTAL
Granted by BDC on Allocated site and/or within Development Boundary	7	0	7
Granted by BDC on Unallocated site and/or outside Development Boundary	109	53	162
Allowed at Appeal on Allocated site / within Development Boundary	1	0	1
Allowed at Appeal on Unallocated site / outside Development Boundary	3	0	3
TOTAL			173

HOUSING

New Affordable Housing

Our figures for housing completions are recorded when we have confirmation of handover from the builder to the housing association. Our completions to the end of February 2019 showed that there were 155 new homes completed to that point in the 2018/19 financial year.

122 of the homes were for rent and 33 for shared ownership. The homes are on sites in:-

- Braintree;
- Witham;
- Halstead;
- Kelvedon; *and*
- Hatfield Peverel

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

During the winter months, the Council operates the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP). SWEP arrangements are initiated when the night time temperature is predicted to be zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights. The SWEP may also apply in the event of other exceptional adverse weather conditions.

New Direction, the supported housing scheme in Braintree managed by the Salvation Army, opened its lounge under the SWEP arrangements and accommodated 2 single males on 3 occasions. In total, the arrangement has been in use for 6 nights.

Housing Register

With a month still to go in the financial year, the Housing Assessment Team reported that 642 households have been housed from our Housing Register, compared to 584 in the whole of 2017/18. Much of the increase is directly related to increased new homes.

Councillor Mrs Lynette Bowers-Flint
Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Agenda No: 12d

Skills

We were very pleased with the attendance at our fourth annual Job Fair on Saturday 9th March 2019 which we ran to coincide with National Careers Week. For the first time we were able to leverage private sponsorship from Freeport Braintree to help fund the event. Over 30 businesses with roles to fill attended on the day. Feedback from residents and employers was positive and an evaluation process is being conducted. The Job Fair provides us with an excellent opportunity to showcase the diverse range of career and job opportunities within the District and surrounding areas and help young people or those in long-term unemployment into a rewarding career.

In conjunction with Braintree Information, Advice and Guidance Cluster Group we supported the delivery of the second Braintree District Apprenticeship event at the STEM Innovation Centre. The event was timed to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week. Over 1,000 year 10 students attended from schools across the District, meeting over 30 employers and providers to learn more about apprenticeships. The event raised students aspirations and gave them a clear understanding as to how an apprenticeship can enable them to gain qualifications right through to degree level while working. The Braintree District Education and Skills Board kindly provided funding to assist with the costs of the event.

Our own apprentices also helped celebrate National Apprenticeship Week by promoting the opportunities within the Council and showcasing their work through social media releases. In combination with this the Council launched its apprenticeship recruitment programme for the coming year.

I was delighted to hear that four teachers in the District were recognised for their excellent work at the 2019 Essex Teaching Awards. These are;

Primary School Headteacher of the Year Award

Highly Commended: Ceri Jones - Chipping Hill Primary School, Witham

Secondary School Headteacher of the Year Award

Winner: Rob James – The Ramsey Academy, Halstead

New Teacher of the Year Award

Highly Commended: Georgia Kehoe – The Ramsey Academy, Halstead

Teaching Assistant of the Year Award

Highly Commended: Jamie Fyfe - Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Witham

I have personally written to each of them to thank them for their dedication and hard work.

Regeneration – Town Centres

Manor Street, Braintree

On 4th January 2019 the Council exchanged contracts, subject to planning, with Travelodge in respect of the leasehold disposal of the proposed new hotel at Manor Street. This means that, subject to securing planning permission, the Council will deliver a 70 room hotel, let on a 25-year full repairing lease with no break clauses.

It is extremely pleasing to have secured this vital part of the Manor Street project. Not only will it provide the Council with income >£250,000 annually, it also imports a national brand into Braintree Town Centre, increases the stock of quality hotel accommodation in the District and contributes to the Council's business and tourism ambitions.

The project is scheduled to be considered by Planning Committee on 12th March 2019. Subject to securing detailed consent, the subsequent programme milestones are as follows:-

- 25th March 2019: Issue of tender documents to five shortlisted contractors;
- 27th August 2019: Letting of building contract;
- 21st October 2019: Construction works start;
- October 2021: Practical completion.

Town Centres

The revamped Saturday markets launched in Witham from 2nd March 2019, with existing and new traders coming together to reinvigorate market day and attract new visitors and residents to the town centre. Preparation is also underway for the 2019 programme of our very popular Street Markets which will take place monthly in Braintree from 30th March 2019 and over the summer in Witham.

The Council will be submitting a bid to the Future High Street Fund at the end of the month. This is a £675m fund to improve High Streets across the Country and is expected to be extremely popular. As such, officers are considering which projects can best meet the fund criteria and therefore have the greatest chance of being successful.

Tourism

Officers are now working to deliver the action plan identified within the Tourism Plan for the Braintree District. Progress so far includes initial discussions with potential web designers for the Visit Braintree District platform and a new Trail taking in the more rural areas of our District. Officers also continue to work with neighbouring authorities to support the Grape and Grain Trail.

Business Engagement and Support

Alongside The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, I attended the Witham Industrial Watch Business Improvement District launch on 1st March 2019. The Business Improvement District (BID) currently has over 350 member businesses and will be subject to a 5-year renewal vote in July 2019. At the launch a short film, funded by Braintree District

Council, was shown which showcases the excellent work Witham Industrial Watch has achieved. The video is one of the first of new set of video case studies which will feature on the Council website and will showcase how BDC can help businesses to grow.

On 19th February 2019, a fully booked social media training course was delivered in partnership with Invest Essex, where 12 district businesses received advice and guidance on how to generate brand awareness and increase sales through social media and targeted campaigns. Due to the popularity of this course, a repeat training session is being considered for those who were put on a waiting list. A two-day workshop on finance for non-finance directors is also scheduled in September 2019, in partnership with Invest Essex.

A [business support roadshow](#) for Springwood Industrial Estate businesses has been scheduled for 4th April 2019, which will have traffic and the Braintree Integrated Transport Package updates from Essex Highways and advice from Essex County Council's Sustainable Travel Team. There are also [30 minute free pre-bookable clinics](#) to meet with business experts to explore funding and support opportunities bespoke to their business needs. Following an email campaign, 10 businesses have signed up to date and letters will be sent out next week to encourage further sign-ups.

A [taster session](#) for businesses interested in using drones as an introduction to qualified courses has been scheduled for 27th March 2019 in partnership with Colchester Institute Braintree Campus. BDC is sponsoring 10 places for businesses (worth £10 per place) and to date have 7 signed up including those in the construction industry; one of our core high growth sectors.

Officers and Members visited two businesses in Witham and Braintree in February 2019 as part of the business tours, exploring key successes of the businesses and routes to further support.

Superfast Broadband

Gigaclear has advised that there will be a slight delay to the Cornish Hall End, Great Saling and Ridgewell cabinet areas going live due to an infrastructure connection issue. They have a plan to resolve this and it will not impact the overall delivery timescale for the project. It is estimated that these will be completed by June 2019.

The first Superfast Essex Steering Board meeting scheduled for 2019 is planned for March. No further communications or updates have been provided since last reported.

Employment

On 21st December 2018 the Council completed the unconditional purchase of a 64 acre site at Great Notley (Horizon 120), for development for employment purposes. The Council now has both the opportunity and the responsibility to realise the site's potential, achieving what the private sector, working alone, failed to deliver over the preceding 10 years.

The Business Plan was approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2019, providing the necessary approvals and budget to allow the Council to deliver the first 10 acres of the site.

Numerous workstreams connected to the delivery of Horizon 120 are currently underway, with a suitably qualified professional team appointed. The key activities can be summarised as follows:-

- Production of the Local Development Order, including a revised masterplan and design code, has commenced;
- Technical due diligence, including highways, drainage and utilities is underway;
- Branding has been produced by an external specialist. Several concepts were considered by the Member Reference Group and agreement was reached on a final design. This has created a strong, consistent Horizon 120 brand;
- Soft marketing of the site via an appropriate local agent. This has demonstrated strong demand from businesses currently operating both inside and outside the District. If this interest is converted into sales/lettings, the potential exists to enable existing businesses to grow in-District and secure inward investment, whilst increasing the provision of quality jobs;
- The legal process has begun regarding the exchange of contracts with an experienced commercial developer on 10 to 20 acres of land.

Councillor Tom Cunningham
Cabinet Member for Economic Development

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF
CORPORATE SERVICES AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Agenda No: 12e

GOVERNANCE & LEGAL

The Governance and Legal Teams continue to support the work within Business Development and Asset Management including many of the projects in the Strategic Investment Programme

Elections

Continued support for the Voter ID Pilot for the District Council Elections in May including working with Communications team on the Comms Plan, Election Delivery planning, Polling Stations bookings and Staffing. As members are aware this Pilot is subject to a High Court review which was underway at time of writing the report.

BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

ICT and Digital

Work continues on implementing the Digital Strategy projects for 2018/19 including: customer on-line booking systems, on-line payment system, Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery procedures, improved on-line services for staff including collaboration on-line and enhancements to the phone system.

The first On Line Booking service is the Pest Control Service which is currently on line internally only as a pilot and then will be opened up to a fully online service for customer access by end of summer 2019. This will then be rolled out to other services progressively. The good news is that BDC will be able to retire the Seibel System by the end of March thus removing an old system that is expensive to maintain and will provide a more robust service, and provide cost savings.

Cyber Security

The ICT team continues to maintain its vigilance on all aspects of Cyber security

Contract Reviews

Business Solutions are implementing a Structured programme embedded across the Authority covering four pillars with the expressed target of reducing the costs and increasing income wherever possible

- Increasing Income
- Service Efficiencies
- Getting maximum value from third party spend eg Vehicle Maintenance, Agency Spend, Finance, banking and insurance, Leisure
- Contract and Supplier Management

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset Management continued to be very active and have made significant progress with many investments that form part of our overall investment strategy and recent approved schemes are all on track:

Premdor Business Hub (Osier House)

As previously reported the construction of Osier House transfer to BDC ownership is now completed. Marketing the 7 offices has resulted in all offices now being under offer with lease agreements being negotiated. This is a strong indicator of the need for local small office space across the district and the demand for further similar office space.

Premdor Healthcare Land

The Council is still waiting for developer to provide a full contamination report to establish whether there are any contamination issues associated with this site. If a report is not forthcoming, then the Council will seek an undertaking from Bloor Homes to remediate the site. It has been agreed that the Strategic Investment Service will arrange to meet Bloor Homes to agree a way forward, and a detailed fixed design cost is being prepared to allow detailed planning consent to be achieved as soon as possible, thus allowing the S106 agreement terms to be met. The Council will not complete the transfer of this land until the contamination issue has been resolved.

Disposal of the Bramston Sports Centre Site, Witham

Asset Management team have been working with two interested parties to dispose of the Bramston Sports Centre site since May 2016 the first disposal contract has completed with the sale of part of the Bramston Site in Witham to Lidl on 7th March 2019 for the sum of **£2,520,000 + VAT**.

The second interested party that the Asset Management team are in negotiations with for the disposal of the other part of the site is to Churchill Retirement Living who have submitted a revised planning application which is currently being processed by the Development Management Service.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING

Due to heightened commercial activity, the Marketing Team has been busy with a significant increase in press releases and social media campaigns across the full range of BDC activities including:

- **Local Plan** PR and comms
- **Health & Communities** Livewell Campaign
- **Grow on Units** Continued marketing
- **Town Centres** Continuing with 2019 street market communications plan for both Braintree and Witham Street markets
- **Manor Street** Hotel Announcement working with Travelodge
- **Car Litter campaign** in conjunction with KFC and McDonalds

HUMAN RESOURCES

The key performance indicators of the authority show a healthy and motivated organisation with a low level of days lost due to sickness per employee, still in line with achieving the annual target.

People: Indicators of Performance	17/18 Year End	Q1 18/19	Q2 18/19	Q3 18/19	Q4 18/19	18/19 Cumulative
Total headcount	466	469	473	478		
Number of temporary staff	33	33	32	30		
Total staff FTE	421.45	425.08	427.45	431.97		
Level of employee turnover	9.01%	2.13%	2.96%	1.67%		6.76%
Number of leavers	42	10	14	8		32
Number of starters	47	13	18	13		44
Working days lost to sickness per employee	7.8 days	2.07 days	1.71 days	2.21 days		
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	37.1%	78.68%	64.9%	53.97%		
Number of learning hours	31952	7747	8131	10427		26305
Number of delegates	1248	602	381	305		1288
Number of apprentices	16	15	24	22		

EMPLOYEE of MONTH AWARD

Anita Emery – Town Hall - Winner:

“Since Autumn last year there has been a gentleman rough sleeping behind the THC. Over this period Anita has been checking on him and taking him warm drinks and even a full Christmas dinner! In January he opened up to Anita and said he needed support and would like to find permanent housing (he had always declined until now) As he had built some trust with Anita, she investigated with our homeless support officer, arranged a meeting at the THC (as he was too nervous to attend Causeway House) Anita offered to sit in on as he was very nervous. There were some really positive outcomes from the meeting and the man is now on the housing register and a number of options are being explored and offered to him how he may be housed long-term and not just temporary night shelter. She has supported him with clothing and bedding especially during the colder weather recently. Without Anita's kind intervention I don't feel this man would have progressed. This is going above and beyond her role at the THC and shows how much of a kind hearted and caring member of staff we have on the team at the THC.”

Nominated by Joby Humm

Hannah Stoneman – Environment – Highly Commended:

“Hannah has provided excellent customer service for the team and regularly goes the extra mile to resolve complaints and enquiries alike. She has extended her role beyond the work of the team and routinely assists other departments in completing their tasks. She has often worked in the evening at home and whilst on leave to produce numerous work instructions for the benefit of her colleagues and customised them to their specific needs. She has been extremely patient and thorough in training up her new colleague, changing her leave arrangements to fit around a bespoke training programme. Her commitment to the role should be recognised for going beyond the call of duty to ensure that the work is covered in her absence”

Nominated by Colin Batchelor

Rob Hills – Operations – Highly Commended

“Rob Hills has demonstrated the Council’s Values and Behaviours by going above and beyond his job role, showing a positive and flexible approach with enthusiasm, focussing on a solution and delivering excellent customer service whilst producing a positive outcome.

A safeguarding issue was brought to my attention this morning from one of our Waste Operatives who was out on route collecting dry recycling. Mrs X came out of her Greenfields’s property asking Rob Hills to help her. She appeared very frail, distressed and elderly. She confirmed to Rob she had no heating and that she was blind in one eye with poor vision in the other. She’d managed to retrieve a telephone no. for Greenfields and wanted help from Rob to type in the phone no. from her home phone, so that she could register the heating fault. Rob kindly assisted the lady in making the call and registering the heating fault for her home address. The response given by Greenfields was that they would send an engineer out today before 5.30pm. Rob contacted me by phone immediately after he’d left the address to report this as a Safeguarding issue. He has had to carry on with his work. Rob managed to establish that the elderly lady had a daughter who lived approx. 20 miles away. There didn’t appear to be any other relative living close by.”

Nominated by Jane Dolphin

Councillor John McKee
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Asset Management

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF
ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE**

Agenda Item: 12f

OPERATIONS – CAR PARKS

Lighting Upgrade

I previously reported that the Council is upgrading the lighting units in the following car parks to more energy efficient LED lights.

- Silks Way, Braintree
- Station Approach, Braintree
- George Yard Multi Storey Car Park (top floor only)
- Braintree Road (Residents Only) Car Park, Witham
- Lockrams Lane Car Park, Witham
- Mill Lane Car Park, Witham
- Newlands Drive Car Park, Witham

The upgrade at the Braintree car parks has been completed and those in Witham will be finished by mid-March 2019.

With regard to the Witham sites, Cllr. Abbott raised concerns about the adverse impact that overspill from the new lights will have on resident bat populations around the river at Mill Lane and the churchyard near Newlands Drive. At these areas, the lighting levels will be lowered (graduated throughout the evening/night), to minimise the ‘light spillage’.

Park Mark Awards

I was delighted to receive again on behalf of the Council and its staff, the National Safer Parking Schemes ‘Park Mark’ award for all of its car parks. This was following an independent assessment by the British Parking Association and Police trained assessors. This shows that our car parks met challenging criteria that includes good lighting, clear signage and cleanliness. The award recognises our investment in maintaining the car parks to a high standard to ensure the safety of customers and their vehicles and to help to reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

OPERATIONS - STREET SCENE & PARKS

Trial of Alternative Method of Weed Control

Last year, in response to a question raised by Cllr. Abbott, I gave a commitment that the Council would carry out a trial of weed control using more environmentally friendly organic herbicides as an alternative to products that contain Glyphosate. Two products have been identified and these will be trialled in 3 locations (as shown below) over a 12-month period commencing 1 April 2019.

- Rose Hill Braintree Allotments

- Station Field Braintree Allotments
- Cemetery, Church Lane, Bocking

On conclusion of the trial, the results will be evaluated and a decision taken based on the efficacy of the products.

As part of the Council's integrated weed control programme, it has over the past few years reduced reliance on the use of chemicals in favour of organic mulching, strimming, hand weeding, good soil management and power washing hardened surfaces, as well as leaving some areas to naturalise.

Flood Alleviation Schemes

The Council has been working in partnership with Essex County Council on two Flood Alleviation Schemes in the District.

The first is located to the rear of Wentworth Crescent in Braintree and the second is in Forest Road, Witham; works commenced at the end of January and February respectively. In each case, a balancing pond is being created using earth bunds built from soil excavated from the site. The earthworks will be planted up with Spring bulbs and wild flower mixes to improve the aesthetics of these two areas and they will be maintained by the Council once works have been completed.

Enforcement

I thought it would be useful to provide some information regarding the work undertaken by our Street Scene Protection Team. This covers a 10-month period from 1 April 2018 to 31 January 2019.

Activity	No. / %
Number of dog barking complaints investigated	182
Number of dog fouling complaints investigated	25
Number of stray dogs detained	75
Number of statutory notices issued [includes fly-tipping, failure to micro-chip, Duty of Care, ASB, accumulations of waste, vehicle on private land, noise/odour nuisance, excessive dog barking, dangerous dogs (x 2) and S.108 Notices served requesting information]	55
Number of prosecutions taken	12
% prosecutions found in the Council's favour	100%
Number of fixed penalty notices served	78

Littering from vehicles

In April 2018 an amendment to Section 88 Environmental Protection Act 1990 Part IV was made under the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. This allows an authorised officer to issue a Penalty Charge Notice (civil penalty) under Section 88A Environmental Protection Act 1990 on the registered keeper of a vehicle from which litter has been discharged, if the person who discarded the litter cannot be identified. Staff have been developing a procedure to enforce this legislation and are working closely with our internal legal and ICT teams and also the Traffic Penalty Tribunal (England and

Wales), who is the independent adjudicator who will hear any appeals if they are rejected by the Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Food Safety Agency Audit

Braintree District Council has undergone an audit by the Food Standards Agency on the Official Controls on Food Hygiene Complaint Investigations and the Control and Investigation of Foodborne Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Disease Notifications. The audit took place over two days earlier this month and included an assessment of:

- Organisation and Management of the Food Team
- Reviewing documented Policies and Procedures
- Officer Training and authorisation of officers
- Facilities and equipment
- Food Complaints
- Food Sampling
- Control and investigations of outbreaks and food related disease notifications
- Enforcement
- Records
- Liaison arrangements
- Internal service monitoring arrangements

I am pleased to say that the food team passed with flying colours.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Prolific Offender Caseworker

We are delighted to have received notification that we have been successful in our bid to DWP's flexible support grant for a Prolific Offender Caseworker.

The funding agreed is £43,404 and will be used to fund a caseworker employed by Phoenix/Full Circle for one year and will engage, motivate and compel residents who are further from the labour market to take a path to employment. They will work with a cohort of 10 individuals who meet one or more of the criteria of being homeless, offending with substance misuse issues, poor mental health and poverty.

We are really looking forward to getting this off the ground as the outcomes from similar projects run elsewhere in the country have been extremely positive both for the individuals involved and on resource implications for a variety of organisations.

Spot It, Stop It

As members will recall the Spot It, Stop It initiative was launched last year and successfully trained a range of local businesses in the identification of child exploitation. At the beginning of the month the same training was provided to representatives from 24 sports and youth clubs across the District. The scheme has been adopted by Basildon, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Councils.

LANDSCAPES AND COUNTRYSIDE

Hoppit Mead Local Nature Reserve

The clearance of the back channel was completed on march 1st. Additional work including the installation of a dipping platform and planting will be completed with the support of the local volunteer group later in the spring.

Councillor Mrs Wendy Schmitt
Cabinet Member for Environment and Place

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL – PORTFOLIO AREA OF HEALTH
AND COMMUNITIES**

Agenda No: 12g

HEALTH AND LEISURE

The Impacts of Livewell Child

Livewell Child initiatives introduced by the Council in ten pilot schools in the District appear to have become embedded in the daily lives of pupils and their parents. A recent survey amongst parents to assess the perceived impacts of their child's physical activity have been very promising and some of the key findings are presented below:-

- 69% of parents felt that their child has increased their physical activity levels since Livewell Child started, either at school or at home
- 98% of parents claimed their child does 30 minutes or more of physical activity each day

The survey also asked parents whether they were happy with the amount of physical activity their child gets. The responses were as follows:-

- 84% said yes totally
- 9% said yes but I wish they would do more
- 7% said no

Daily Mile Co-ordinator

Perhaps the most successful of our Livewell Child Schools campaign has been the Daily Mile. It is popular with teachers, parents and pupils alike. The Daily Mile is simple and free and gets children out of the classroom for fifteen minutes every day to run or jog at their own pace with their classmates, with the aim of making them fitter, healthier, and more able to concentrate in the classroom.

Recent feedback shows that it is a worthwhile and enjoyable activity which improves both the physical activity and learning capability of pupils. In the Braintree District approximately 31% of junior schools have introduced the Daily Mile as part of the school routine.

Active Essex has now appointed a 'The Daily Mile Local Co-ordinator' for the whole of Essex. The post is funded by The Daily Mile Foundation and Sport England Essex and is one of only twelve in the Country. The role will focus on increasing the number of schools registered and participating in The Daily Mile.

Active Braintree Projects for 2019/2020

The Active Braintree Network is considering introducing a number of new initiatives to encourage residents to become more active. These include:-

- Continue with the Livewell Run Series, holding 2K and 3K family fun runs

- Introduce walking cricket with help from Essex County Cricket
- Deliver #Womenlikeus Festival in our local sports centres
- Introduce netball in Halstead
- Work with First Stop, Barnardo, and Department of Work & Pensions to increase the activity levels of hard to reach groups
- Hold a Family Inactive Festival
- Develop initiatives to promote increased walking for the inactive
- Street Play – organise the closure of streets to allow children to play

The latter is a twist on the summer play camps delivered by the Council in previous years. This will help the local community to organise outside play by closing streets and providing equipment to allow different types of games to be played. From exploratory talks, Great Yeldham Parish is keen to trial this concept.

On Sunday 3rd February 2019, Active Essex and Active Braintree worked together to bring the Women Like Us Festival to Halstead Leisure Centre. The festival brought Karate, Rebound UK, Bootcamp, Walking Football, Burlesque, Netball and many more activities to 40 women of all different ages and abilities. The festival provided these women with the opportunity to try out 6 new sports and activities for free, whilst meeting new like-minded women. Overall it was a great success as some of the inactive women discovered a new form of physical activity that they love and wish to continue.



Netball session at the Women Like Us Festival, Halstead

Bocking Windmill

Work started in March 2019 to improve the exterior appearance of Bocking Windmill. Over the last few years, a green algal mould growth has affected the white clapperboard paint work. A Millwright will undertake the repainting of the clapperboard with a new type of paint which should prevent further mould growth. Whilst working on the mill, the Millwright will meet with the Friends of Bocking Windmill so that they can learn more about the mill and how best to carry out maintenance.

Mental Health Workshop

After hosting and facilitating two previous successful workshops, a third Mental Health Workshop was held on 6th March 2019. This considered practical steps partners can take to improve the services available in the District. Some of the areas for discussion included:-

- Improving the referral pathway
- How to raise more awareness of mental health
- Improving services for children and young people

Mid Essex Care Navigation Plan

A new initiative introduced by Essex County Council aims to relieve the burden on GP surgeries by directing patients from their GP surgery to a Community Support Service where the patient needs non-clinical support. A high percentage of patients who visit GP surgeries do not require a clinical intervention but need some form of Community Support.

The Mid Essex Care Navigation Plan is a new service to provide the right type of Community Support for the patient. The trial will start in April of this year and will work on the basis that, where the GP determines that the patient needs Community Support, they will refer the case to the Care Navigation Team. The team comprises highly trained staff who have a wealth of knowledge in relation to Community Support Services and how to access them.

Within 48 hours of receipt the Team aim to carry out a holistic assessment of patients non-clinical needs and decide on the best intervention for them. They will then contact the patient and refer them direct to either Essex Lifestyle Service (ELS), Community Agents (CA) and/or a community group/service, depending on need. All referrals will be reviewed after one month to ensure progress has been made. The Council will look forward to assessing the success of this new service, especially if it reduces the pressure on our GP surgeries.

Chlorine use in Swimming Pools

When the Leisure Contract was awarded to Fusion in 2012, financial provision was made in the Contract to replace the potentially hazardous method of producing the Chlorine used to disinfect the swimming pools, as and when safer and more effective methods were developed.

Alternative technology now allows the installation of a safer method to generate chlorine. This will not only give financial savings, but provides much safer working methods and improved environmental conditions in the pool hall and plant rooms.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Volunteer Awards 2019

Planning is in place for the third Volunteer Awards which will take place on Thursday 6th June at Braintree Arts Theatre. This year we will be introducing categories for young people including those with carer responsibilities.

Maltings Lane Community Facility

The Options Appraisal report has been received from the consultants and a feedback session took place on Wednesday 13th March at Witham Leisure Centre. This detailed the findings of the stakeholder engagement and community consultation together with an outline of the next steps.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Braintree, Halstead and Witham CAB is currently investigating options for cost

savings. A number of opportunities are being considered and Members will be advised of any planned changes to the service.

DEMENTIA, LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

A number of initiatives introduced by the Council, Parish Councils and Voluntary Groups to recognise and support those living with dementia, loneliness and social isolation, have previously been reported in my Cabinet Member report.

The Braintree Town Hall Centre is leading the initiatives on behalf of the District Council and below are some of the events being held in the venue over the coming weeks:-

- Over 65's free exercise class (launched in February 2019)
- Gentle exercise class for people in remission/treatment for cancer (also launched in February 2019)
- Dementia afternoon tea meetings every week (there were 46 attendees at the last meeting)
- Over 65's games mornings held weekly on Mondays
- Dementia Walks take place on the first Tuesday of the month starting and finishing at the Town Hall

Further details can be found on the following link:-

<https://www.braintreeownhall.co.uk/whatson>

At the February Council meeting I advised Members that I would provide a list of activities that are taking place across the District. The majority of activities are run by a variety of partners including voluntary groups and local businesses.

ACTIVITY	DAY	TIME	REGULARITY	VENUE
DEMENTIA				
Dementia Cinema	Thursday	1.45	Monthly	Halstead Cinema
Tea Dance	Thursday	1.30 – 3.00	Monthly	Archer Centre
Walk & Talk	Monday	10.00a.m	1 st Monday of the month	Halstead Fire Station
Walk & Talk	Wednesday	10.00a.m	1 st Wednesday of the month	Witham Leisure Centre
Seated Exercise	Thursday	1.45p.m – 2.45p.m	Weekly	Witham Leisure Centre
Swimming	Thursday	1.00p.m – 2.00p.m	Weekly	Witham Leisure Centre
SOCIAL ISOLATION & LONELINESS				
Meet Up Mondays	Monday	9.30am – 11.00am	Weekly	Cool Beans in the Park, Braintree
	Monday	9.30a.m – 11.30a.m	Weekly	Valero Lounge, Witham
	Monday	12noon – 2.00p.m	Weekly	The Bell Inn, Castle

				Hedingham
Meet Up Tuesdays	Tuesday	10.00a.m – 12 noon	Weekly	Horse & Groom, Cornish Hall End
60+ on board	Monday	10.00a.m – 12 noon	Weekly	Braintree Town Hall

The following provides more detailed information about the activities.

Dementia Activities

Cinema: The Halstead Empire have secured funding from Land Sec, Greenfields CH and the Freemasons which will enable the dementia friendly cinema sessions to continue throughout 2019.

Tea Dance: These take place at the Archer Centre, Braintree on a monthly basis and give those attending the opportunity to dance a variety of styles or simply enjoy the atmosphere. The cost is £1.50 and tea/coffee and biscuits are included.

Cream Teas: These are hosted at Braintree Town Hall at a cost of £3.50 per person.

Walk & Talk: these dementia friendly walks are free of charge and are led by Essex Fire & Rescue Service.

Swimming: weekly session on a Thursday from 1–2pm at Witham Leisure Centre.

Seated Exercise: a new activity led by Sport for Confidence which encourages people to be more active.

Slow Shopping: Working with George Yard Shopping Centre

Slow shopping offers a dedicated time within the week (usually the quietest day/time) where staff are aware that customers may need extra time and assistance. This is to encourage people to remain socially active and engaged with their community for longer, especially those older people who may find the shopping experience overwhelming during busy periods. More information can be found at www.slowshopping.org.uk or by contacting Kryshia Fuller in the Community Services Team on 01376 552525 ext. 2313.

This initiative launched on Thursday 28th February in George Yard at the following shops: Claire's Accessories, Eatons Tea & Coffee House, F Hinds, Time 2 Vape, Vodafone, WH Smith and Boots.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

Meet Up Mondays

Meet Up Mondays is an initiative that gives the hospitality businesses the opportunity to offer a free drink and a friendly chat to those who may not have seen anyone over the weekend, are fed up of their own company or are new to an area.

Two new venues have joined the scheme in the last few weeks, the Bell Inn in Castle Hedingham and the Horse & Groom in Cornish Hall End are holding their session on a Tuesday as their establishment is not open on a Monday.

Cool Beans in the Park in Braintree and the Valero Lounge in Witham report that they have regular attendees and have attracted interest from the local media.

60+ on board

This is a free weekly club for adults to socialise and enjoy friendly games with one another. Since its introduction in November 2018 there have been regular attendees and anecdotally we are aware that some of them have become friends and are meeting up independently including booking holidays together.

There are many activities being carried out across the District and it is hoped that by sharing these with all Members we will be able to encourage a greater involvement.

I would like to thank the Task & Finish Group led by Councillor Mann for its work around Social Isolation and Loneliness and look forward to learning about new ideas that can be introduced through the Town Hall and Parish and Town Community Centres. The Council's Community Services Team is always happy to provide guidance and support to any organisation who may wish to pursue any of these initiatives.

Councillor Peter Tattersley
Cabinet Member for Health and Communities

Contact:	Councillor Peter Tattersley
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List of Public Meetings Held Since Last Council Meeting		Agenda No: 13
Portfolio Not applicable Corporate Outcome: Not applicable Report presented by: Not applicable Report prepared by: Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer		
Background Papers:		Public Report
Published Minutes of the meetings listed within the report below.		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: Since the last Council meeting held on 25 th February 2019, the following Minutes have been published for meetings held in public session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Council – 25th February 2019 (2) Planning Committee – 26th February 2019 (3) Licensing Committee – 27th February 2019 (4) *Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 6th March 2019 (5) *Cabinet – 11th March 2019 (6) *Planning Committee – 12th March 2019 (7) *Planning Committee – 19th March 2019 <p>*Those minutes identified by the prefix * were not available at the time of publishing the Agenda, but are intended to be available to view on the Council's website prior to the meeting.</p>		
Recommended Decision: Members are invited to note the Minutes published.		
Purpose of Decision: Not applicable.		