

Minutes

Council Meeting



7th October 2019

These Minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A webcast of the meeting is available for six months at www.braintree.gov.uk.

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Pell	Yes
Councillor J Baugh	Yes	Councillor I Pritchard	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes	Councillor M Radley	Yes
Councillor D Bebb	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Yes
Councillor K Bowers	Yes	Councillor S Rehman	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes	Councillor F Ricci	Yes
Councillor J Coleridge	Yes	Councillor B Rose	Yes
Councillor G Courtauld	Yes	Councillor Mrs J Sandum	Yes
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Miss V Santomauro	Yes
Councillor T Cunningham	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Scattergood	Apologies
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Yes	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Councillor P Euesden	Yes	Councillor P Schwier	Yes
Councillor T Everard	Yes	Councillor Mrs G Spray	Apologies
Councillor Mrs D Garrod	Yes	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Councillor A Hensman	Yes	Councillor P Thorogood	Yes
Councillor S Hicks	Yes	Councillor N Unsworth	Apologies
Councillor P Horner	Yes	Councillor R van Dulken	Yes
Councillor D Hume	Yes	Councillor D Wallace	Yes
Councillor H Johnson	Yes	Councillor T Walsh	Yes
Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin (Chairman)	Yes	Councillor Mrs L Walters	Yes
Councillor D Mann	Yes	Councillor Miss M Weeks	Apologies
Councillor T McArdle	Apologies	Councillor Mrs S Wilson (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Yes	Councillor J Wrench	Yes
Councillor A Munday	Yes	Councillor B Wright	Yes
Councillor Mrs I Parker	Apologies		

36 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 1st August 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:-

Councillor J Abbott declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in any Agenda Items that related to Essex County Council (ECC) as he was an Elected Member.

Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5, "Presentation to Maycast-Nokes Ltd," as her husband was employed with the company, and in any Agenda Items that related to ECC, for which she was also an Elected Member.

Councillor G Butland declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in any Agenda Items that related to ECC, as he was an Elected Member, and the North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) Ltd as he represented Braintree District Council on the NEGC Board.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a joint Non-Pecuniary Interest for himself and Councillor Mrs M Cunningham with regard to Agenda Item 13g, (Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members) "Councillor Mrs W Schmitt – Environment and Place," as their family business worked for an ECC supply chain which supplied weed killers that contained the chemical glyphosate.

Councillor A Hensman declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 13i, (Reports from the Leaders and Cabinet Members) "Councillor P Tattersley – Health and Wellbeing," as he was a trustee of the Archer Community Trust.

Councillor S Hicks declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Items 8, "Motion by Councillor McKee," and 13d, (Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members) "Councillor T Cunningham – Economic Development and Infrastructure," as a client of his was affiliated with the Horizon 120 site.

Councillor Mrs J Pell declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 13g, (Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members) "Councillor Mrs W Schmitt – Environment and Place," as she was Chairman of the Friends of Halstead Public Gardens group.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in any Agenda Items that related to ECC as she was an Elected Member.

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

38 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked, or statements made.

39 **PRESENTATION TO MAYCAST-NOKES LTD**

INFORMATION: The Chairman informed Members that the business items on the Agenda for the evening had been reordered slightly to allow the presentation to Maycast-Nokes Ltd to take place immediately following Question Time.

The Chairman was very pleased to welcome representatives to the meeting from Maycast-Nokes Precision Engineering Ltd and extended her congratulations to them for their East of England SME Employer of the Year 2019 Award win. Councillor T Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, was invited to formally present the award. The representatives in attendance at the meeting on behalf of Maycast-Nokes Ltd included Mr Steve Wallings, Managing Director; Mr David Blower, Sales Director; and Mr Simon Gill, of Business Development UK.

Councillor Cunningham praised Maycast-Nokes Ltd for their achievement and stressed that the award exemplified the success of the business as one that continued to invest in all of its staff and prioritise apprenticeships, which would in turn help to ensure that the business remained successful and resilient in the face of future challenges. Representatives from Maycast-Nokes Ltd then thanked Members for their comments and echoed the praise for its employees with a focus on the importance of building resilience within the company, especially with the current business uncertainty surrounding future exportation to Europe.

40 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman's announcements covered the following:-

Anglia in Bloom Awards for 2019

The Chairman was pleased to announce that Halstead in Bloom had been successful in the recent Anglia in Bloom Awards for 2019, having collected three separate awards which included: Best Town and Gold Award in their category, Gold Award in the Medium Parks category (Halstead Public Gardens), and Silver Gilt in the Medium Cemeteries category. Other District award successes were also mentioned, such as Coggeshall for their Silver Award win in the Small Town category, Gosfield for their Gold Award win in the Village category, and Priory Hall in Halstead for their Gold Award win in the Best Care Home category. Congratulations were extended to all winners and gratitude expressed to the volunteers who gave their time for the benefit of the District's communities.

Harvest Concert on 14th October 2019 and Festive Concert at St. Peter's in the Fields Church, Braintree

The Chairman reminded Members that they had each received an invitation to the Harvest Concert on 14th October 2019 and thanked those that had already replied. It was advised that if any other Members wished to attend the event, they contact the Civic Office directly to confirm this. Members were also informed that invitations would soon to be distributed regarding the upcoming Festive Concert event at St. Peter's in

the Fields Church; the Chairman hoped that as many Members as possible would attend the event.

Leader's Announcements

The Leader expressed his apologies to Councillor Abbott, the Leader of the Green and Independent Group, in respect of a complaint that Councillor Abbott had submitted to the Council's Monitoring Officer. The complaint regarded comments made by the Leader that were included in the Braintree and Witham Times on 18th March 2019 which were in reference to Councillor Abbott's interest in Essex Libraries and the ongoing discussions that surrounded the issue. The Leader explained that at the time the comments were made, he was unaware that Councillor Abbott had been in attendance at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18th November 2018, during which he raised the issue of libraries; the Leader's comments alleged that Councillor Abbott had not raised the issue previously. The Leader subsequently withdrew his comments after having watched the webcast for the meeting, and agreed that the issue of Libraries had clearly been raised by Councillor Abbott on a prior occasion. For clarification, the Leader briefly outlined the issues that were raised by Councillor Abbott at the aforementioned meeting, which largely related to the possibility of a review of the financial relationship between Braintree District Council and Essex County Council in respect of the Silver End Library.

The Leader then added that he had raised concerns with both Councillor Abbott and Councillor Unsworth (as the Deputy Leader of the Green and Independent Group) about the issues they had raised at the meeting of Full Council on 1st August 2019. Councillor Unsworth had spoken with regard to the roles of the Leader and Councillor Mrs Spray, the Cabinet Member for Planning, and their connection with the North Essex Garden Communities Ltd (NEGC). Councillor Abbott alleged that an incorrect procedure was followed during the Public Question Time item at the meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee on 18th July 2019.

The Leader subsequently wrote to both Members. Councillor Unsworth was reminded of the ruling of the Monitoring Officer during the meeting in that the officers present did not believe there to be a breach of conflicts of interest, nor a breach of the Code of Conduct, on the provision that Members declared in the appropriate manner, as both the Leader and Councillor Mrs Spray had done at the start of the meeting. On the issue of procedure followed during the Public Question Time Item, the Leader confirmed that he had spoken with three of the Members due to speak at the meeting if they would be prepared to relinquish their speaking slots to allow non-Councillor speakers the opportunity to speak. Those Members subsequently contacted the Governance Team in separate capacities to withdraw their speaking slots. To conclude, the Leader hoped that Councillor Abbott would accept his earlier apology and that both he and Councillor Unsworth would reciprocate this in some way to him.

41 STATEMENT BY COUNCILLOR – COUNCILLOR JAMES ABBOTT

INFORMATION: Prior to consideration of the item, the Chairman advised Members that there would be no right of debate in response to Councillor J Abbott's statement.

Councillor Abbott, Leader of the Green and Independent Group, made a short statement in regard to the recent publication of the State of Nature 2019 Report and its admittance that the UK was still experiencing a decline in key species, despite the

policies, strategies and work of Local Authorities and businesses alike across the country to combat this. It was recognised that District Councils had a notable role in deciding where new land developments occurred, which could impact on the loss of habitat. The issue was of primary concern amongst residents within Councillor Abbott's Ward, especially in light of past decisions made by BDC and ECC which had allowed for major loss of long-established hedgerows and trees. Councillor Abbott underlined the importance of hedgerows and trees to local wildlife and ecology and made reference to a number of locations within the District that had experienced significant losses for the advent of new developments, notably alongside Boars Tye Road in Silver End and Mill Lane in Cressing. It was noted that a local community campaign in Rivenhall had helped to prevent the loss of a historic hedgerow alongside Rickstones Road to land development, although the nearby hedge alongside Gimsons Close in Witham was still due to be cut to enable development in that area to take place.

Councillor Abbott stressed that he did not object to the principle of new land developments as long as they were proportionate to the surrounding location. The need for the Council to take preventative action in order to protect trees and hedgerows was also underlined, as it would enable the Authority to help mitigate the global impact on climate and species at a local level.

In the absence of Councillor Mrs G Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, the Leader of the Council responded to the issue Councillor Abbott had raised in relation to the loss of hedgerow in Silver End.

42 **MOTION BY COUNCILLOR JOHN MCKEE**

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a substantive Motion submitted by Councillor J McKee:-

“This Council reaffirms its approach to be a modern, commercially minded, entrepreneurial, local authority, with an investment strategy that not only invests in the District for the benefit of all residents but also generates revenue to sustain a high level of public services.

The Motion

This Council will continue with an integrated strategy and plans that:

- Increases the income from property held for investment,
- Increases revenue from services provided to external customers,
- Grows the portfolio of high performing pooled funds,
- Make continued investments in the residential property market,
- Grows the investment in employment sites providing more skilled jobs,
- Grows the Council Tax base of the Council through the provision of development sites for high quality residential properties of all tenures, across all areas of the District.”

The Chairman then informed Members that Councillor J Abbott, Leader of the Green and Independent Group, had submitted an amendment to the original Motion submitted by Councillor McKee. The amendment proposed that two new paragraphs be added immediately after the existing text, to be read as follows (changes underlined):-

“This Council reaffirms its approach to be a modern, commercially minded, entrepreneurial, local authority, with an investment strategy that not only invests in the District for the benefit of all residents but also generates revenue to sustain a high level of public services.

The Motion

This Council will continue with an integrated strategy and plans that:

- Increases the income from property held for investment,
- Increases revenue from services provided to external customers,
- Grows the portfolio of high performing pooled funds,
- Make continued investments in the residential property market,
- Grows the investment in employment sites providing more skilled jobs,
- Grows the Council Tax base of the Council through the provision of development sites for high quality residential properties of all tenures, across all areas of the District.

This Council agrees that given the global climate change and species crisis, and noting that the Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, that its integrated strategy and plans will take full account of the need and opportunities to:

- Improve energy efficiency;
- Conserve water and other resources;
- Install clean and green renewable energy technologies;
- Protect existing habitats and species and ensure net biodiversity gain on development sites.

This Council also agrees that its investment strategy will be developed on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles. This will ensure that investment supports sustainable development, high ethical standards, enhances the social fabric of local communities and avoids health impacts to people and harm to the wider environment.”

There followed a general debate on Councillor Abbott’s proposed amendment to the substantive Motion. Once the debate had concluded, a recorded vote was taken and the results of which were as follows:

For the Amendment: Councillors: Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Hicks, Mrs Sandum, Thorogood, Walsh, Wright (7).

Against the Amendment:

Councillors: Baugh, Bebb, Bowers, Butland, Coleridge, Courtauld, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Mrs Dervish, Euesden, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, Horner, Johnson, McKee, Pritchard, Ramage, Rehman, Ricci, Rose, Miss Santomauro, Mrs Schmitt, Schwier, Tattersley, van Dulken, Wallace, Mrs Walters, Mrs Wilson, Wrench (29).

Abstained:

Councillors: Everard, Hume, Mrs Kilmartin, Mann, Munday, Mrs Pell, Radley (7).

Absent:

Councillors: McArdle, Mrs Parker, Mrs Scattergood, Mrs Spray, Unsworth, Miss Weeks (6).

Councillor Abbott's proposed amendment to the Motion was **LOST**.

There followed a general debate on the substantive Motion submitted by Councillor McKee in its original format. Once the debate had concluded a recorded vote was taken, the results of which were as follows:

For the Motion:

Councillors: Baugh, Bebb, Bowers, Butland, Coleridge, Courtauld, Mrs M Cunningham, T Cunningham, Mrs Dervish, Euesden, Everard, Mrs Garrod, Hensman, Horner, Hume, Johnson, Mann, McKee, Munday, Mrs Pell, Pritchard, Radley, Ramage, Rehman, Ricci, Rose, Miss Santomauro, Mrs Schmitt, Schwier, Tattersley, van Dulken, Wallace, Mrs Walters, Mrs Wilson, Wrench (35).

Against the Motion:

Councillors: (0)

Abstained:

Councillor: Abbott, Mrs Beavis, Hicks, Mrs Kilmartin, Mrs Sandum, Thorogood, Walsh, Wright (8).

Absent:

Councillors: McArdle, Mrs Parker, Mrs Scattergood, Mrs Spray, Unsworth, Miss Weeks (6).

The substantive Motion was declared **CARRIED**.

43 **FORMATION OF APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE**

INFORMATION: Members gave consideration to a report presented by Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council on the establishment of an Appointment Committee to facilitate the recruitment process of a permanent Corporate Director. The Constitution (Officer Employment Procedure Rules) stipulated that the Appointment Committee was to include the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Performance Management Board and at least one other Cabinet Member.

DECISION: That Council agreed:-

1. To establish an Appointment Committee of six Members to manage the recruitment process for a permanent Corporate Director.
2. The appointment of Councillors: G Butland (Chairman), T Cunningham, J McKee, Mrs J Pell, Mrs G Spray, N Unsworth to the Appointment Committee and not to apply any political proportionality to the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To facilitate the appointment of a permanent Corporate Director.

44 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY GROUP REGARDING UPDATES TO THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION**

INFORMATION: Members considered a report presented by Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council which included a series of recommendations from the Developing Democracy Group, further to the Group's meeting on 12th September 2019. The recommendations made regarded the introduction of a limit to the number of Motions that could be submitted at meetings of Full Council, consideration around the process of amendments received to Motions before a meeting, and the effectiveness of the Council's Public Speaking time procedure.

DECISION:

That Council acknowledged and agreed the following:-

1. Motions continue to be scheduled on the Agenda in the strict date (and time) order of a Motion being deemed valid.
2. In the event that two or more similar valid Motions were received, the Chief Executive or the Head of Governance would discuss the approach to the Motions with Group Leaders and in the absence of an agreed approach, the default position would be that they were dealt with separately.
3. That following the deadline for the submission of Motions and amendments to Motions that these would be circulated to all Members.

That Council approved the following changes to the Constitution:-

4. A limit of a maximum of four Motions on Notice per each recognised Political Group of Council at each meeting of Full Council.
5. The deadline for amendments to Motions be reduced from 12noon to 9am on the day of the meeting.
6. The implementation of two sections to public question time, to provide a 30 minute session for the public and non-District Councillors and a session for District Councillors which was at the Committee Chairman's discretion, having regard to the reasonable and efficient management of the Committee. The proposal was not to impact on the existing arrangements for Planning Committee or the Licensing Committee.

That the Head of Governance was authorised by Council to amend the Constitution to reflect the recommendations.

REASON FOR DECISION: To support the effective administration of the Council and enable strong Member engagement.

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report on the Council's Treasury Management activities for the period 2018-19. Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, was invited to introduce the report.

A few key areas of note were made. Members were informed that across the financial year, the Council's investment balances ranged from £42.259m and £68.267m, with an average of £58.343m. As at 31st March 2019, the total market valuation of the Council's long-term pooled fund investments was £19.308m, which represented an unrealised gain of £1.308m on the amounts invested. With respect to investment activities, it was reported that the Council's treasury management advisors, Arlingclose, benchmarked the Council on a quarterly basis. The total investment income was £1.158m which was £343,000 over budget, and dividends from long-term pooled funds were £866,000; a 5.24% return. The Council also held direct property investments with a market value of £36.304m as at 31st March 2019, which produced a net rental income of £2.234m and represented a return of 6.3% on the value of assets.

The Corporate Director for Finance had confirmed that all Treasury Management activities undertaken during 2018/19 had complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Council's approved TMSS.

DECISION: Full Council accepted the Treasury Management Report.

REASON FOR DECISION: The Council adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services, which requires the Council to receive an annual report on the treasury management function. This report was considered first by the Corporate Governance Group in order to exercise its responsibility for scrutiny over treasury management activities. The report was then considered by Cabinet before submission to Full Council with the benefit of any proposed changes and/or comments of the Corporate Governance Group.

46

RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2019 – BRAINTREE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION PROJECT – MANOR STREET UPDATE – PUBLIC

INFORMATION: Members were reminded that this Item was linked to Item 15 in the Private Session of the Agenda and that if any Member wished to refer to the private information contained within the report for that Item, it would be necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

DECISION: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting if it is necessary to discuss Item 15 of the Agenda and the Private Report, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

Both Agenda Items were taken together to enable consideration of all issues. It was not necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to a report that provided Members with an update in respect of the Braintree Town Centre Regeneration Project. Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, was invited to present the report.

There were three key areas of note made; the first related to the strategic aspect of the project and the increased footfall and attractiveness of the town centre that this would help to engender. Emphasis was then placed on the value for money for the tax payer that the completed project would provide, especially with the increased support towards the development of new and affordable homes, the creation of new jobs and the influx of at least 24,000 visitors to the town centre annually, which would also assist in furthering the local economy. Note was also made of the support to local residents that the project would provide through the provision of a much needed health and wellbeing centre, additional housing, modernisation of the bus terminal and overall improved public realm throughout the town centre.

In response to a concern raised by a Member regarding the maintenance of the town centre and pedestrian access to the High Street, Councillor T Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, advised that the District Council, County Council and other businesses associated with the project were liaising with one another around this. The funding required to implement such developments was also under consideration, and it was explained that an update would be provided to Members as to the next stages of the project at the next meeting of Full Council, following discussions with Cabinet Members.

DECISION: That Council:-

1. Noted that Cabinet had confirmed its continued support for the proposed regeneration project and continued approval for its implementation because it would significantly enhance the vitality of the town centre, with 35 new homes, a hotel, over 100 new jobs and improved public transport and health facilities.
2. Approved a capital budget for all professional, construction and associated scheme development costs including capitalised interest.
3. Approved a delegated authority to accept up to a 5% increase in total scheme costs.
4. Agreed that additional funds from capital reserves be used, if the above delegated authority was applied.

REASON FOR DECISION: To confirm financial arrangements that enable this strategically important project to proceed.

47 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBERS**

INFORMATION: The Chairman invited the Leader and the Cabinet Members to introduce their reports. Following this, the Chairman invited Members to ask questions. Questions were not limited to the content of the reports and could be about matters relating to a portfolio, the powers and duties of the Council, or the District.

Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, had nothing to add to his report.

Councillor D Bebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, had a few areas of note regarding his report. Firstly, it was highlighted that as a budgetary shortfall was anticipated for the upcoming financial year in February 2020, a high level assessment had taken place to determine whether any of the anticipated variances in the current

year would be sustained in the next financial year. The assessment subsequently identified a potential net positive impact on the 2020/21 Budget of £178,000, which consisted of £223,000 unavoidable additional cost, but was exceeded by £401,000 of cost reductions and additional income, largely from Planning. This, together with an anticipated surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund of £126,000, resulted in a reduction to the funding shortfall of £539,000 (in the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy) to £235,000 for 2020/21. It was added that the figures would need to be validated alongside work to identify further cost reductions and/or additional income to produce a balanced budget proposal for consideration by Full Council in February 2020. It was added that on 4th September 2019, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had confirmed the postponement of both the 75% Business Rate Retention Scheme and the outcome of the Fair Funding Review until 2021/22.

Lastly, Councillor D Bebb reported that the Council's draft statement of accounts for 2018/19 had been signed early by the Corporate Director for Finance. Praise was expressed for the officers involved with preparing the statement of accounts for their hard work which helped ensure that the audit was able to commence. The final report of the external auditor, BDO LLP, was issued on 31st July 2019 and gave an Unqualified Opinion that the financial statements gave "a true and fair view" of the Council's financial position; and an Unqualified Conclusion that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Councillor K Bowers, Cabinet Member for Homes, added that in the period from April 2019 to March 2020, it was anticipated that there would be a minimum of 200 affordable housing completions across a number of different developments. This was a positive figure when compared against the Annual Plan target of 150 affordable housing completions for delivery across the District. Furthermore, it was reported that the Housing Team expected the completion of six wheelchair specification bungalows across three sites, with two each in Halstead, Braintree and Witham. Communication was currently underway with the housing applicants that were likely to benefit from the new homes in order to ensure their awareness of the opportunities available to them. Lastly, the Cabinet Member for Homes informed Members that he would be in attendance at the Housing Essex Excellence Awards on Thursday, 10th October 2019 in relation to the Great Eastern Close development in Braintree which had been shortlisted in the "Partnership Working" category.

Councillor T Cunningham, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Infrastructure, had nothing to add to his report.

Councillor McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, informed Members that the letter of intent in respect of the Manor Street Regeneration Project had now been signed and BDC was due to commence its work on 27th January 2020, with completion expected in August 2021. Several key aspects of marketing around the project were also being prepared around transport, traffic and site marketing. On the subject of Horizon 120, it was advised that the options agreement contract for 20 net developable acres with Marshgate would soon be signed off with solicitors. The infrastructure design and build based on BDC feasibility had been accepted by the contractor, the budget for which included the two entrances from the A131 and the main spine road on the site. In relation to this, it was added that the public consultation for the Local Development Order (LDO) commenced in September and was still ongoing. Officers within the Strategic Investment Team were also in liaison with the

private enterprise Gridserve as when completed, the Gridserve and Horizon 120 site entrances would be accessible to both sets of customers. Lastly, construction work on the new infrastructure intended for the site, which included an electric charging station, was now expected to begin in April 2020 due to the time anticipated for the new junction builds to take place.

Councillor F Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Tourism, had nothing to add to his report but implored all Members to respond accordingly to the scoping exercise initiated by the Community Services Team on the subject of Social Isolation and Loneliness. The scoping exercise formed part of the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group following the end of the 2018/19 Scrutiny Review.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, had nothing to add to her report but informed Members that reusable water bottles had been left in each of their pigeon holes for them to collect at their next convenience.

In the absence of Councillor Mrs Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, updated Members on two aspects of her report. The first update concerned the Examiner's Report for the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan, which had now been received by the Council and was due to be presented at the meeting of the Cabinet on 2nd December 2019. Furthermore, a paper which sought delegation for the decision to take Neighbourhood Plans to referendum was intended to be presented at the meeting with the intention that, if approved, such decisions would in future be made under delegated powers in order to increase the speed at which the process could be implemented. It was added that the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans was still the responsibility of Full Council, and this included the Hatfield Peverel Neighbourhood Plan which was due to be presented at Cabinet in November 2019 before its adoption at Full Council in December 2019.

A further update was provided by Councillor Butland in respect of the number of responses that the Council had received further to the North Essex Local Plan consultation. It was reported that approximately 1,000 responses had been received from over 800 separate individuals; however, it was noted this figure did not encompass any joint group submissions. The responses received were all due to be forwarded to the Planning Inspector for consideration.

Councillor P Tattersley, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, had nothing further to add to his report.

Members asked several questions arising from the reports. A webcast of the questions to and responses of Cabinet Members is available on the Council's website at www.braintree.gov.uk.

The main topics were as follows:-

Further to the meeting of the North Essex Garden Communities (NEGC) Ltd Board on 19th September 2019, Councillor Walsh requested that all main political and community groups be invited in future to attend any future activities of public engagement that related to the NEGC.

Councillor Abbott raised a query in relation to the attendance of District and County Councillors at the A12 Members' Forum on 3rd October 2019.

Councillor Mrs Beavis enquired as to the protocol for inviting District Councillors to public engagement activities within their Wards.

Councillor Thorogood sought clarification of the term “affordable housing.”

Councillor Mrs Pell asked to be kept abreast of any new information that related to residential sites for sale, as one of the sites was located in her own Ward.

Councillor Horner commented on the success of the new Witham Street Market and expressed his hope that Braintree District Council (BDC) would continue to support the initiative in the upcoming year.

Councillor Rose made reference to the new BDC Young Entrepreneurs Programme and the provision of investment funding of up to £3,000, together with the support, guidance and training that would help young people aged between 16 and 30 develop their business ideas as part of a wider District drive to improve the Local Economy. The possible inclusion of the Young Entrepreneurs Programme within the proposed construction of an enterprise area for Witham was also queried.

Councillor Rehman raised a query that regarded the role of the construction industry as a viable sector for significant employment growth.

Councillor Ricci requested further explanation as to the recent visits by the Council that took place with local businesses across the District, the nature of the feedback received and what the inclination of the Council was towards any future such visits.

Councillor van Dulken agreed with Councillor Ricci’s comments regarding the value of the recent visits by BDC to local businesses.

Councillor Baugh commented on the success of the design guide for the Horizon 120 and sought the Cabinet Member’s agreement that this acted as an exemplar for similar projects.

Councillor Johnson raised a number of queries which revolved around the Premdor Medical Centre in Sible Hedingham and the associated land. This included the provision of additional healthcare to villages not currently covered within the scheme for the area; concerns conveyed by local residents regarding the number of proposed car parking spaces on the site; the completion date for the northern end of the path under the Riverside Walk Scheme; signage affixed to the local play area’s fencing which indicated that the park was closed to users, and finally, the date at which the Riverside Walk and play area would become the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Councillor Coleridge queried whether the income generated from the sale of the Bramston Sports Centre Site in Witham was still intended to be allocated for use within the town.

Councillor Mrs Garrod enquired about the source of Gridserve’s power supply and whether the landscaping and aesthetics of this venture had been considered.

Councillor Mrs Beavis commented on the growing concern of residents in the north of the District around the subject of the Premdor Site, and stressed the need for the

Council to communicate on a regular basis with the wider community on key issues and updates relating to the development.

With reference to the Horizon 120 site, Councillor Schwier reiterated the importance of the delivery of infrastructure and expressed his appreciation for the work of Gridserve. Confirmation was also sought as to whether the delivery date for the proposed infrastructure at the site would commence as planned in April 2020. A further request was made for an update on the WiFi4EU initiative which involved the installation of free Wi-Fi across the three District towns. The possibility of extending free Wi-Fi to villages was raised as well.

Councillor Miss Santomauro expressed her delight at the work being implemented by the Council around the subject of social isolation and loneliness. Further to this, it was requested that signage be installed at the designated 'Chat a While' bench in the Braintree Town Centre to increase the public's awareness of the bench.

Councillor Mrs Pell gave her congratulations to the Authority for the dedication of its staff and volunteers towards helping Halstead to secure a Gold Award win for its Public Gardens as part of the Anglia In Bloom scheme.

Councillor Thorogood raised two queries in relation to the BDC recycling bag that was discovered in Malaysia; the queries regarded Viridor's latest response to the issue, and whether it was the intention of the Council to investigate the issue further independently.

Councillor Schwier mentioned the A131 Roadside Beautification trial with Keep Britain Tidy and congratulated BDC and the relevant Cabinet Member on the innovation of the scheme. A question was asked around the possibility of extending the beautification scheme across the wider District, should the results of the trial prove to be positive.

Councillor Abbott asked three questions that related to the prevention of grass verges in Rivenhall and other local villages from being cut in June 2020; the ambition of BDC to increase the rate of recycling in the District and finally, the procedure for residents recycling tetra packaging.

Councillor Ricci commended the hard work and commitment of the Street Scene Enforcement Team at BDC.

Councillor Hensman highlighted the success of the "Manor Community" initiative in Manor Street in Braintree, which consisted of local volunteers who liaised with staff from BDC's Street Scene Enforcement Team to help ensure that area was successfully maintained. It was queried whether similar initiatives could be encouraged across the wider Braintree area as well.

Councillor Hicks queried when Members could expect to see the full report data which followed the recent Annual Air Quality Report. Reference was also made to the BDC recycling bag issue in Malaysia and the lack of control the Authority had with regard to influencing the recycling habits of residents across different generations.

Councillor Mrs Sandum was pleased to see an increase in the information available online from BDC about reducing plastic use and waste. On the subject of glyphosate in weed killers, the possibility of purchasing foam stream equipment was put forward as

an environmentally friendly alternative, and it was queried whether such equipment could be hired out to Parish Councils for their use as well.

Councillor Abbott asked three questions in respect of Councillor Mrs Spray's report. The first question centred on the Rapid Transit System (RTS) proposed under the Local Plan and the subsequent concerns that had been raised in respect of the potential impact on the Flitch Way route in Braintree. The second question related to the spending commitments on roads announced by the Chancellor at the recent Conservative Party Conference in September, of which included the A12 dual carriageway. A query was also raised as to whether the expenditure announced was to be procured from the HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund) bid or separately, and whether the RTS would be delivered alongside the A12 as a potential route. A further question was also raised regarding the proposed widening of the A12 to eight lanes and the compatibility of this with the Climate Emergency declared recently by the Council. Lastly, a response was requested as to the Leader's view on the number of Planning Permissions granted by the Council on unallocated land, as well as a response to the view that, subject to caveats, the Local Plan Part 2 would now deliver "101%" of the required 14,320 houses in the planned period.

Councillor Walsh requested further explanation as to the basis for the Council's decision to commit itself to the implementation of three garden communities under the Local Plan.

Councillor Mrs Beavis commented on the political leaflets that residents within her Ward had received that referenced the potential for 8,000 new homes to be built in Halstead and 1,000 new homes in Gosfield. Clarification was sought as to where the new homes would be situated as they were not allocated under Part 1 or Part 2 of the Local Plan.

Councillor Baugh raised a concern that objection to the proposed garden communities would encourage the re-emergence of housing development sites and ultimately damage the appearance and character of rural areas within the District.

In respect of housing delivery, Councillor Abbott questioned the accuracy of the figures quoted by the Leader as part of the Local Plan shortfall, as recent information contained within political leaflets delivered to local residents appeared to contradict this.

Councillor Mrs Walters made reference to the list of "Dementia Activities" contained within Councillor Tattersley's report that supported residents who lived with the disease and their Carers. It was also queried whether any such initiatives were able to be introduced around the District as well.

Following Councillor Tattersley's report, Councillor Hensman highlighted the benefit of Members and Council staff learning from information shared across different Cabinet Portfolios. Mention was made of the Council's Silver Membership with the Armed Forces Covenant and a query was raised as to whether this could be improved. A further question was asked around the possibility of the Council exploring a commitment to the Disability Confident Employer Scheme.

Councillor Mrs Cunningham sought the Cabinet Member's agreement that the Council and Essex County Council deserved "enormous credit" for their partnership work in the

creation of a successful and financially viable community facility in the form of the Great Notley Country Park. It was added that the successes of the Park served as a tribute to the design and development principles of garden villages a whole.

The following actions were agreed in response to questions raised by Members:-

Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, agreed to provide a written response in relation to Councillor Johnson's query regarding the number of proposed car park spaces at the Premdor Site in Sible Hedingham.

Councillor J McKee, Cabinet Member for Corporate Transformation, also agreed to provide a written response further to Councillor Johnson's query as to the date that the Riverside Walk and play area on the Premdor Site would become the responsibility of the Parish Council, and why incorrect signage was displayed at the play area.

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Abbott's question regarding the recycling of tetra packaging and the correct process that residents should adhere to.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Mrs Sandum on the possibility of purchasing new weed spraying equipment, Councillor Mrs Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment and Place, agreed to ask the question of relevant BDC officers.

Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council, also agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Abbott in respect of his request for an update on the funding announced for the A12 at the September Conference, and whether this funding was separate or procured from the HIF bid. A response would also be provided regarding the delivery of the proposed RTS and the likely impact of this on the Flitch Way in Braintree.

During the course of the discussions, Members moved, seconded and agreed, as required by the Constitution, that the meeting be extended for 30 minutes beyond 10.15pm to enable the remaining business items on the Agenda to be transacted. The meeting was subsequently adjourned by the Chairman at 10.49pm with Item 14, "List of Public Meetings Held Since Last Council Meeting," to be transacted at the next meeting of Full Council on 16th December 2019.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 10.49pm.

Councillor Mrs A Kilmartin
(Chairman)