

COUNCIL

AGENDA



THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

Date: Monday 22nd April 2013

Time: 7:15pm

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

Membership:

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

QUESTION TIME

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meeting AttendedDate of Meeting.....

Comments.....

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

Contact details.....

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

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

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

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

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

PUBLIC SESSION

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

To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.
4. **Question Time.** (See page i).
5. **Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20th February 2013 (Copy previously circulated).
6. To consider the following **Motion** submitted by **Councillor Cunningham**:

“The Council commends the Government’s proposal to allocate over £3.5 billion to support those who want to get on, or move up, the housing ladder and which will act as a vital stimulus to the economy.

The Council also believes that where property ownership is not possible, affordable housing and rented accommodation should be available to meet people’s needs and reaffirms its commitment to the District Council’s Core Strategy policies which seek to provide more affordable homes”.

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4 of the Constitution. The motion has been proposed by Councillor Cunningham and seconded by Councillors Canning, Galione, Ricci, Santomauro and Wilson.
7. To consider the following **Motion** submitted by **Councillor Canning**:

“The Council recognises the valuable contribution small enterprises and startups make to our economy and also notes the challenges young people face in the changing world economy. The Council recognises the work of the previous Labour government in enterprise education and the work of the Conservative-led coalition government with its youth start-up loans scheme.

This Council resolves to work with its partners to encourage entrepreneurship among young people within the Braintree district and to make firm commitment to help improve the recognition among young people in the district of enterprise as an alternative career”.

Appropriate notice of the motion has been given to the Chief Executive under Rule 4 of the Constitution. The motion has been proposed by Councillor Canning and seconded by Councillors Baugh, Beavis, Butland and Siddall.

8. **Recommendations from Cabinet, 8th April 2013- Local Authority Mortgage Scheme.** Report attached (Page 1).
9. **Gambling Licensing Policy Statement.** Report attached (Page 13).
10. **Electoral Arrangements.** Report attached (Page 15).
11. **Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowance Scheme.** Report attached (Page 19).
12. **Appointment of the Monitoring Officer.** Report attached (Page 29).
13. **Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Annual Report 2012-13.** Report attached (Page 31).
14. **Governance Committee – Annual Report.** Report attached (Page 34).
15. **Question Time Reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members**
 - (i) **Reports from the Leader and Cabinet Members.** To receive the following reports from each Portfolio Holder:
 - a) Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council (Page 37);
 - b) Councillor Beavis, People and Participation (Page 39);
 - c) Councillor Bebb, Performance and Efficiency (Page 42);
 - d) Councillor Lady Newton, Planning and Property (Page 44);
 - e) Councillor Schmitt, Place (Page 46);
 - f) Councillor Siddall, Prosperity and Growth (Page 50).
 - (ii) **Oral questions** without notice on matters related to a particular portfolio, the powers or duties of the Council or the district. (Procedure Rules 7.1 to 7.3 apply). Where a verbal response cannot be given, a written response will be issued to all members.

(A period of up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item).
 - (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements. ***None have been received.***
 - (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of **meetings that have been held in public session** since the Council meeting on 20th February 2013. (Report attached – Page 52).

16. **Statements by Members**

To receive any statements by Members of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6.

There are none.

17. To receive reports about and receive questions and answers on the **business of external organisations.**

- a) **Braintree Halstead and Witham Citizens' Advice Bureau.** Report by Councillor Sutton – Report attached (Page 53);
- b) **Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency.** Report by Councillor Howell – Report attached (Page 55);
- c) **Ignite Business Enterprise.** Report by Councillor Siddall – report attached (Page 57);

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

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

19. **PRIVATE SESSION**

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

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

To receive and give responses to statements by Members which contain confidential or exempt information of which the appropriate written notice has been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.6. The Chairman will invite the Leader or relevant Cabinet Member to comment on each statement.

There are no statements

21. **Question Time - Private Session**

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

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

- (iii) **Chairmen's Statements.** To receive statements containing exempt information from those Chairmen who have given prior notification in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 7.9 and to respond to questions on such statements - ***There are none.***
 - (iv) To raise any matters arising from the minutes of meetings that have been held in private session since the Council meeting on 20th February 2013.
22. **Private Session Policy Recommendations.** To consider any policy recommendations (in private session) that have arisen within the last meetings' cycle – ***There are none.***

N BEACH
Chief Executive

The last page of this agenda is numbered 58.

Recommendations from Cabinet, 8 th April 2013		Agenda No: 8
Local Authority Mortgage Scheme		
Portfolio Area:	Performance and Efficiency Councillor Bebb, Cabinet Member, Performance and Efficiency	
Background Papers:		Public Report

Minute Extract:

CABINET – 8TH APRIL 2012

112. LOCAL AUTHORITY MORTGAGE SCHEME (LAMS)

DECISION: That it be recommended to Council:

1. That the development of a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme for the Braintree district area in conjunction with Essex County Council be agreed.
2. That the following local criteria for the scheme be approved:
 - All post codes wholly within the Braintree district
 - The deposit and indemnity will be a maximum of £2million (including a maximum of £1million contribution from ECC), with the Council's share funded in the capital programme, financed by cash available due to excess legacy borrowing above the Council's Capital Financing Requirement.
 - The maximum loan to value is set at £250,000, resulting in the maximum indemnity per mortgage of £50,000.
3. That an acceptable legal opinion letter is obtained by the Monitoring Officer and that the Council indemnify the Monitoring Officer in respect of any personal liability in respect of this matter, as required by the lender.
4. That the current Treasury Management Policy be revised to permit a deposit of up to seven years with an approved LAMS lender, and the Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to state that any capital expenditure incurred under a LAMS will not require MRP to be made as resources will be repaid by the lender at the end of the scheme.

5. That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance) and the Cabinet portfolio holder for Performance and Efficiency to finalise documentation and ancillary matters details of the scheme after all necessary due diligence is completed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide a scheme for first time buyers who can afford a mortgage but not a deposit of 25% of the property value to buy a property in the district. The scheme supports the Council's housing strategy by improving choice over "affordable" housing solutions, as well as bringing wider economic benefits.

CABINET
8th April 2013

Local Authority Mortgage Scheme		Agenda No:
Corporate Priority:	Prosperity & Performance	
	Securing appropriate infrastructure and housing growth; Improving our services through Innovation	
Portfolio Area:	Performance & Efficiency	
Report presented by:	Councillor David Bebb	
Report prepared by:	Trevor Wilson, Head of Finance	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Papers on LAMS provided by Essex County Council at meeting with Finance Officers on 7 th February 2013.		
Options:	Key Decision: No	
To agree/ not agree the Recommendations in full or with amendment		
Executive Summary:		
<p>The Council has been invited to partner with Essex County Council in establishing a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) that will give a limited Council-funded indemnity to approved lender(s) providing mortgages to first-time buyers. The scheme will support the Council’s housing strategy by improving choice over “affordable” housing solutions, as well as bringing wider economic benefits.</p> <p>The proposal is for the Council to invest £1million, which will be match funded by Essex County Council giving a total of £2million, providing funding to assist around 66 first-time buyers.</p> <p>In supporting a LAMS for the Braintree district, it is proposed that the following eligibility criteria is applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply to all post codes – lenders involved in the scheme will require that these must fall wholly within the district boundary. However, the County Council is seeking to be able to set-up a LAMS that would capture properties that straddle Essex district/ borough boundaries.• Maximum loan size supported is £250,000 – this the proposed limit to apply to all schemes supported by Essex County Council – it is however anticipated that the average loan size for this Council’s scheme would be £150,000, this being the average price for properties in the lower quartile across Essex.		

- Maximum indemnity of £2million (including match funding).

The scheme will target first time buyers who can afford a mortgage but not the 25% deposit. The scheme does not promote reckless lending as potential buyers must meet the standard credit criteria of the lender, including income levels.

The amount of indemnity will represent the difference between the typical 75% Loan-to-Value (LTV) mortgage and a 95% LTV. For example. A first-time buyer wishing to purchase a property for £150,000, with a 5% deposit, the Council will provide an indemnity for £30,000. The first-time buyer would still receive a mortgage based on 95% but this would be on terms that would apply to a 75% mortgage, usually at a lower interest rate and therefore more affordable.

The indemnity is in place for five-years, subject to either the mortgage being repaid earlier, or if the account had been in arrears within the final six-months of the five-years, the period of indemnity is extended by two years.

The indemnity is only called upon if the first-time buyer defaults AND the property is repossessed and sold at a loss to the lender. The indemnity is capped, and any loss above the amount indemnified is met by the lender.

As the scheme would be run in partnership with ECC the risk of the indemnity is shared 50/50.

At the outset of the scheme the Council would deposit the £2 million with an approved lender for a period of five years receiving a commercial rate of interest plus a premium of around 0.7%. Current scheme operators include a number of building societies and Lloyds TSB and the scheme would require revisions to the Council's Treasury Management Policy. The premium would help to fund any potential default, and the Council could earmark its share of the excess commercial rate interest over and above base budget for interest to provide extra provision.

LAMS are subject to legal agreements, including an Indemnity Deed. The Monitoring Officer may also be required to provide a formal opinion and would seek indemnity from the Council for any personal liability involved. A service level agreement will also be required with ECC. In order to complete the necessary formalities and be able to launch the scheme it is proposed that delegation is given to the Corporate Director (Finance) and the Cabinet portfolio holder for Performance and Efficiency.

Decision:

Cabinet RECOMMENDS to Council:

1. To agree to the development of a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme for the Braintree district area in conjunction with Essex County Council
2. To approve the following local criteria for the scheme:
 - All post codes wholly within the Braintree district

- The deposit and indemnity will be a maximum of £2million (including a maximum of £1million contribution from ECC), with the Council's share funded in the capital programme, financed by cash available due to excess legacy borrowing above the Council's Capital Financing Requirement.
 - The maximum loan to value is set at £250,000, resulting in the maximum indemnity per mortgage of £50,000.
3. That an acceptable legal opinion letter is obtained by the Monitoring Officer and the Council indemnify the Monitoring Officer in respect of any personal liability in respect of this matter, as required by the lender.
 4. To agree to revise the current Treasury Management Policy permitting a deposit of up to seven years with an approved LAMS lender, and the Policy on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to state that any capital expenditure incurred under a LAMS will not require MRP to be made as resources will be repaid by the lender at the end of the scheme.
 5. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Finance) and the Cabinet portfolio holder for Performance and Efficiency to finalise documentation and ancillary matters details of the scheme after all necessary due diligence is completed.

Purpose of Decision:

To provide a scheme for first time buyers who can afford a mortgage but not a deposit of 25% of the property value to buy a property in the district. The scheme supports the Council's housing strategy by improving choice over "affordable" housing solutions, as well as bringing wider economic benefits.

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

Financial:	<p>The Council would invest £1million funded from the capital programme, which will be matched by Essex County Council (ECC).</p> <p>The total £2m will be deposited with an approved lender at a commercial rate of interest plus a premium of around 0.7%, at the current time this would give a total return of around 2.29% per annum.</p> <p>The premium would provide £14,000 per annum or £70,000 as a provision against potential default and payment by the Council under the terms of the indemnity.</p> <p>The overall repossession rate for the Country is around 0.3%, which would equate to potential loss of £6,000. The premium would equate to provision for a rate of default in the order of 3.5%. The Council could earmark part of the commercial interest received as part of the overall provision</p>
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	<p>if it wanted to be more prudent.</p> <p>The risk of default is shared equally with ECC.</p> <p>There is an initial cost of £3,000 payable to Sector Treasury Services, who first set-up LAMS and will support the scheme.</p> <p>The deposit is repayable after five-years, subject to any extension of the indemnity for 2-years as a result of mortgage arrears in the final six months.</p> <p>Funding of the Council's £1million investment would be through the capital programme financed by cash available due to excess legacy borrowing above the Council's Capital Financing Requirement – a Balance Sheet derived measure of the need to borrow for capital purposes, reported in the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement.</p>
Legal:	<p>The power for the Council to enter into a LAMS is contained in the sections 435 and 442 of the Housing Act 1985, together with, where appropriate, the section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972</p> <p>Subject to a decision being made in accordance with the recommendations contained in this report, it will be necessary to undertake a detailed review of the legal documentation associated with the LAMS.</p> <p>The power for the Council to indemnify the Monitoring Officer as described in the report is contained within the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004</p>
Equalities/Diversity	<p>The provision of an indemnity should increase the accessibility of mortgages to those who would not otherwise be able to afford them and thus assist residents (existing or those wishing to move to the district) to address their housing needs.</p> <p>The scheme is only available to first-time buyers with a minimum 5% deposit, and excludes certain types of purchases, e.g. new homes, former right-to-buy, second homes, shared ownership/equity or Homebuy schemes.</p>
Customer Impact:	<p>The scheme could support 66 first-time buyers, with the numbers increasing if property prices are below the Essex lower quartile of £150,000. By creating liquidity in the housing market this is likely to benefit other property owners in the chain, as well as benefitting the wider economy.</p>
Environment and Climate Change:	<p>Not applicable</p>

Consultation/Community Engagement:	None undertaken.
Risks:	<p>The main risks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing a deposit for up to seven years with an approved lender exposes the Council to additional counterparty risk in excess of the current Treasury Management Policy. • Funds applied to the scheme will not be available for at least five years for any other purpose. • Mortgage defaults and consequently losses to the Council could be higher than anticipated. The premium on the deposit provides some financial provision, which could be enhanced by earmarking all or part of the Council's share of the commercial rate return. The risk of losses is being shared with ECC, although the maximum exposure would be the £1million of Braintree funding. • Essex County Council has announced its intention to partner district and borough councils and to establish its own LAMS in Essex. At this time this is still subject to approval through the Council's governance arrangements. If approval is not forthcoming then this Council would have the option to withdraw, proceed with a scheme with a maximum value of £1million or increase its input to £2million; the latter having a consequential increase in maximum level of exposure. • The extent to which the scheme supports Braintree district residents. The scheme is limited to specified post codes wholly in the district, thereby potentially excluding some residents. This may be prevalent in the north of the district where villages have post codes which are shared with villages/towns in Suffolk. Households moving into the area could apply, whereas those residents looking to move outside the district may not receive support. The potential to not meet aspirations of residents may be alleviated by the County Council operating a cross borough/ district border scheme, and/ or other local authorities participating. • Demand may exceed resources. It is considered this risk is relatively low as income levels would still be the main barrier to potential first-time buyer applicants being approved for a mortgage.
Officer Contact:	Trevor Wilson
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Local Authority Mortgage Scheme

Introduction

One of the main barriers to first-time buyers getting on the housing ladder is the requirement from most lenders for deposits of typically around 25%, even where income levels mean mortgages are affordable.

To help address this problem the Council has been invited to work in partnership with Essex County Council to establish a Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (LAMS) that will give a limited financial indemnity to an approved lender providing mortgages to first-time buyers.

LAMS were first established as a pilot in 2009 by Sector Treasury Services (Sector), a consulting firm to UK public services, initially with 11 local authorities. Since then further schemes have been introduced and now operate in 44 local authority areas.

Eligibility criteria

The scheme is aimed at people who want to purchase their first home in the district, not necessarily local people. The scheme will exclude new-build homes, properties purchased to be let, second homes, former right-to-buy properties, shared ownership or shared equity cases, or purchases under a Government Homebuy Scheme.

The Council can specify criteria to be applied:

- Postcodes within the district that will fall within the scheme. The lender will require properties to be wholly within the district boundary; however, properties falling across boundaries could be picked up by a separate Essex county wide scheme operated by ECC provided they are wholly within the county boundary.
- The maximum loan size that will be supported. To apply a county wide initiative it would be preferable to set a consistent amount. It is understood that the Cabinet at Essex County Council, at its meeting on 21st May 2013, will consider a proposed maximum loan size of £250,000 which it is hoped will be adopted across all of the schemes, in which it is a partner. Whilst it is proposed to adopt a maximum loan size which is consistent across Essex research suggests that the majority of loans in this district will not exceed £150,000, which is the average price for properties in the lower quartile across Essex.
- A maximum limit on the total indemnity to be offered under the scheme. It is proposed that Braintree contribute £1million, which would be matched by ECC taking the maximum total to £2million for the district.

Target population

The LAMS is aimed at first-time buyers who can afford mortgage payments but not a 25% deposit. The scheme does not promote reckless lending as potential buyers must meet the standard credit criteria of the lender, e.g. having sufficient income to meet the mortgage repayments, as well as the criteria specified by the Council. Potential buyers must have a 5% deposit.

If the potential buyer meets the criteria, the Council provides an indemnity to the value of the difference between the typical 75% Loan-to-Value (LTV) and a 95% LTV mortgage. The potential buyer thereby obtains a 95% mortgage on similar terms to a 75% mortgage which means the interest rate charged and repayments are lower making it more affordable.

Terms of the Mortgage for the First-time Buyer

Typical features of the mortgage provided under the scheme to first-time buyers are:

- Loans up to the maximum agreed with the Council
- Only a minimum 5% deposit, although more can be put if they have it to reduce the overall amount borrowed
- Available to single first-time buyers or people buying together provided at least one of them is a first-time buyer
- Initial three-year fixed rate at a lower rate than would normally be the case for buyers with a 5% deposit
- Early repayment charges apply during the three-year period, but there are no trailing early repayment charges to tie in the buyer beyond the fixed-rate term
- Mortgages must be on a repayment basis, including principal and interest
- If the buyer wishes to move they will have to come out of the scheme, remortgaging on any new property and paying any early exit fee if this applies.
- An arrangement fee may be charged to the borrower

Council Indemnity

The Council indemnifies the lender for an amount equivalent to the difference between up to a 95% LTV and the typical 75% LTV, i.e. 20%. The indemnity is in place for a fixed 5 year period, which may be extended for a further 2 years if a mortgage is in arrears during the final six months of the initial 5 years.

The proposal from ECC means that the indemnity provided is effectively being funded 50/ 50 with the Council.

The indemnity is only called upon if a loss is crystallised by the lender. An example of how this would work shown below:

Example

Indemnity provided:

Property valued at £150,000

First-time buyer provides a 5% deposit

The Council provides an indemnity to the lender of £30,000 (i.e. £150,000 x (25% less 5% deposit))

The lender provides a mortgage to the first time buyer of £142,500 (i.e. 95% LTV)

If the borrower defaulted during the period of the indemnity:

Property sold (net of costs) £130,000

The Council pays the lender £12,500 (i.e. £142,500 mortgage less sale proceeds)

The first time buyer will also have forgone their 5 deposit and any other repayments

The Council's indemnity would be capped at £30,000, therefore, should the property

realise less than £112,500 the excess loss above the indemnity would be borne by the lender.

Any indemnity paid to the lender is ultimately borne 50/50 by the Council with ECC.

The lender would request payment under the indemnity from the Council, which would normally be paid within 30 days.

If there is no default the indemnity will terminate either at the end of the five-year agreed term, or on early repayment of the mortgage.

Benefits of the Scheme

The scheme has many benefits that support the Council's strategies, particularly around supporting the community to gain "affordable" housing by improving choice and potentially reducing demand on social housing.

Based on the maximum indemnity, the scheme could potentially help to secure up to 66 first-time buyers achieve their aspirations and resolve their housing needs without direct Council intervention.

The scheme supports the local housing market, increasing liquidity, and with it the local economy. Key workers could benefit which would also contribute to economic development.

The scheme will not support all first time buyers, as some will still be prevented from being accepted for mortgages based on other credit criteria, including income levels to support repayments.

During the life of the scheme management information will be provided via Sector which will provide details, such as: listing of applications and their progress, post code analysis, loan value and indemnity values, etc.

Financial Implications

The proposed investment by the Council in the scheme is £1million, which would be match-funded by ECC to produce a combined funding of £2million. Under a "cash backed scheme" this amount would be placed on deposit for the fixed five-year period of the indemnity and would attract interest at the commercial rate plus a premium of round 0.70%. At the present time this would equate to around 2.29% interest per annum.

Funding of the Council's £1million investment would be through the capital programme financed by cash available due to excess legacy borrowing above the Council's Capital Financing Requirement – a Balance Sheet derived measure of the need to borrow for capital purposes, reported in the annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

The lender does not have a legal charge over the deposit and will therefore not be able to deduct any shortfalls from the sum.

The premium is to reflect the risk associated with the scheme, and would equate to £14,000 per annum or £70,000 over the fixed five year period. The intention would be to "ring-fence" this sum in order to meet any payments under the indemnity.

It is difficult to be precise about the likelihood of default. The overall repossession rate across the Country is around 0.3%. To date under the LAMS scheme there have been no repossessions although the scheme is relatively new and defaults generally occur after the first few years of a mortgage. Taking a conservative estimate of 2%, the expected amount paid under the indemnity would be £40,000 (i.e. £2 million x 2%), which would be more than covered by the premium on the deposit. The rate of premium would in fact equate to a default rate of 3.5%, more than 10 times the national average. The risk of default is being shared 50/50 with ECC.

There is an initial £3,000 contribution to Sector towards the legal costs associated with setting up LAMS, and supporting and monitoring schemes adopted by local authorities.

Risks

As part of the final preparation of a scheme a full risk assessment will be prepared, however, the most significant risks for the Council are likely to be as follows:

- The scheme requires a deposit to be placed with an approved lender. Most lenders active in the scheme do not meet the Council's investment policy criteria, and although Lloyds TSB does meet the minimum criteria the term of the deposit – up to seven years - is outside the current counterparty limits.
- Investment of £1m would be required for a minimum 5 years meaning this funding will not be available for any other purpose.
- Mortgage defaults and consequently losses to the Council are higher than anticipated. The premium rate received on the deposit would provide for a substantially higher default rate than the national average. If the Council wished to be more prudent then it could earmark its half of the additional interest earned from the five year commercial rate on the deposit (estimated to be around 1.59%) over and above the budgeted return on annual investments (currently 0.7%), which would increase the default provision by a further £8,900 per annum, or £44,500 over five-years.
- The extent to which the scheme supports Braintree district residents. The scheme is limited to specified post codes wholly in the district. Also households moving into the area would be eligible, whereas first-time buyers already resident but wishing to purchase outside the district would not be eligible. However, it is possible that they could be eligible under another local authority's LAMS. Within Essex the County Council is seeking to support the development of schemes across all areas, although this is subject to individual borough/ district council decisions. The scheme will exclude those villages in the north of the district which have post codes which are shared with villages/towns in Suffolk. The eligible post codes for the district are currently being determined.
- Demand for the scheme could exceed resources. It is currently estimated that this risk is relatively low as income levels would still be a barrier to many potential first-time buyer applicants being approved for a mortgage.

Legal and Other Implications

There are a number of approved lenders operating LAMS and typically these are building societies operating in defined geographical areas. However, Lloyds TSB and the Leeds Building Society run national schemes. The Council will explore in conjunction with ECC the range of potential lenders before finalising any scheme.

The LAMS is supported by legal arrangements, including an Indemnity Deed, involving the Council, the proposed lender, and Sector. For some lenders an Opinion Letter is required from the Monitoring Officer, who in turn would be expected to require some form of indemnity from the Council in respect of any personal liability.

The participation of the Council in conjunction with ECC also requires a service level agreement to be in place covering the match funding and sharing of the indemnity provisions.

The legal basis for the scheme, including its impact under State Aid rules has already been addressed by Sector in establishing the first pilots. However, it is necessary that the Council satisfies itself on these matters.

The LAMS has accounting issues in terms of the way in which the initial deposit and indemnity is accounted. Again, Sector have considered these areas and issued guidance to participating local authorities. The Council will need to satisfy itself that these are appropriate and it would be sensible to agree in advance with the external auditor the accounting arrangements.

Timescales and Delegations

Once all the formalities have been concluded it is planned that a scheme could be launched in July 2013.

To finalise the scheme, delegation is sought to the Corporate Director (Finance) and the Cabinet portfolio holder for Performance and Efficiency.

Conclusions

The LAMS is designed to help increase the supply of affordable housing for those who need it, and to help the local housing market and thereby local economy. By working in partnership with ECC the level of assistance for the district can be doubled.

The scheme is designed to minimise the financial impact on the Council (and ECC) by working in partnership with market experts in the residential mortgage market.

The scheme requires a financial indemnity of up to 20% of a mortgage for potential first time buyers, subject to income and other strict criteria.

Funding for the scheme is available through capital resources.

The LAMS has obtained Counsel's opinion on the legality of the scheme. However, the Council is still required to undertake its own due diligence on both the legal and financial accounting matters. Indemnities will also be required in respect of Monitoring Officer.

Gambling Licensing Policy Statement		Agenda No: 9
<p>Corporate Priority: Place</p> <p>Report presented by: Councillor M Banthorpe, Chairman of the Licensing Committee</p> <p>Report prepared by: Lisa LeBesque</p>		
<p>Background Papers:</p> <p>Statement of Gambling Act Policy Reports and Minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 25/3/13 Gambling Commission – Guidance to Licensing Authorities 4th edition (September 2012)</p>		Public Report
<p>Options: To adopt the revised Statement of Gambling Act Policy for the Period 2013/2016</p>		Key Decision: No
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>Pursuant to the Gambling Act 2005, the Council is the Licensing Authority for the licensing of premises used for gambling and is required to have a Statement of Gambling Act Policy (Section 349 of the Act) for the Braintree district. If the Council does not have a policy it would be acting ultra vires with regards to any decisions it makes in determining gambling premises licences.</p> <p>The Council's Gambling Act Policy Statement sets out in detail how the Council as the Licensing Authority will administer and exercise their responsibilities under the Gambling Act 2005.</p> <p>Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 stipulates that the Council's Statement of Gambling Act Policy should be reviewed at least every three years.</p> <p>Members are advised that a public consultation was undertaken in relation to reviewing and updating the Council's three-year Statement of Gambling Act Policy which is to run from 2013 to 2016. The draft policy has been considered by the Licensing Committee and is recommended to Full Council for adoption as the Council's Statement of Gambling Act Policy.</p> <p>The revised Statement of Gambling Act Policy is included in Appendix 1 (separate document).</p>		

Decision: To adopt the revised Gambling Act Policy as the Council's Statement of Gambling Act Policy for the Period 2013 to 2016

Purpose of Decision:

The Gambling Act 2005 requires the Council as the Licensing Authority to have consulted on a review of its three year Statement of Gambling Act Policy.

Corporate implications [should be explained in detail]

Financial:	The principal behind modifying the policy is to minimise any risk of a judicial review from an aggrieved applicant.
Legal:	<p>The Council is required to review its Statement of Gambling Act Policy every three years in accordance with Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 and to have widely consulted on that review with responsible authorities and other interested parties.</p> <p>Following the adoption of the revised Statement of Gambling Act Policy the Council is required to publish a notice in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 specifying the date of on which revision will come into effect</p>
Equalities/Diversity	An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.
Customer Impact:	The responses to the consultation process have raised issues which were considered as part of the report to Licensing Committee (25 th March 2013)
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising out of this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	A 12 week consultation has been carried out and comments have been received.
Risks:	Failure to adopt a revised Statement of Gambling Act Policy will result in the Council being unable to administer its licensing functions under the Gambling Act 2005
Officer Contact:	Lisa LeBesque /Daniel Mellini
Designation:	Environmental Health Manager (Food, Health & Safety and Licensing)
Ext. No.	2212 / 2228
E-mail:	lisa.lebesque@braintree.gov.uk daniel.mellini@braintree.gov.uk

Electoral Arrangements		Agenda No: 10						
Corporate Priority: Report presented by: Nicola Beach, Returning Officer Report prepared by: Steve Daynes								
Background Papers: Developing Democracy Group 1 st August 2012 Council 28 th August 2012		Public Report						
Options: A limited number of options related to Polling Stations are available and discussed in the report.		Key Decision: No						
Executive Summary: Polling Stations Following representation from both Ovington Parish Council and the Head Teacher of Powers Hall Junior School, the Returning Officer seeks Members support for proposals to permanently revise the location of Polling Places for Ovington (DV) and Witham (West)(CN). Members are asked to confirm the following as designated Polling Places for future elections: <table border="0"> <tr> <td>DV</td><td>Ovington</td><td>Community House Belchamp St Paul</td></tr> <tr> <td>CN</td><td>Witham (West)</td><td>Powers Hall Infants School</td></tr> </table> Members of Developing Democracy Group have been consulted and are content with the proposals. In addition, all affected ward Members and political groups have been consulted and their comments have been considered in relation to proposals outlined in the report.			DV	Ovington	Community House Belchamp St Paul	CN	Witham (West)	Powers Hall Infants School
DV	Ovington	Community House Belchamp St Paul						
CN	Witham (West)	Powers Hall Infants School						
Decision: That the proposals to re-designate Polling Places as outlined in the report be supported.								
Purpose of Decision: To ensure that suitable venues are secured for the conduct of elections.								

Corporate Implications	
Financial:	None
Legal:	The proposals comply with Section 18 of the Representation of the People Act 1983
Equalities/Diversity	The proposed Polling Places provide for suitable access for all electors
Customer Impact:	It is anticipated that the change of locations will not adversely impact on customers.
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	All affected Ward Councillors, Members of DDG and Political Parties have been consulted and support the proposal related to the designation of alternative Polling Places
Risks:	There are no significant risks to be considered
Officer Contact:	Steve Daynes
Designation:	Democracy Manager
Ext. No.	2751
E-mail:	Steve.daynes@braintree.gov.uk

POLLING PLACES

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to revise the current polling places due to the unavailability of current buildings.

2.0 Polling Districts Ovington (DV)

The designated Polling Place for this village was the Artist Studio at The Pines, Tilbury Juxta Clare. It was however located at the end of the Garden (approx 75 yards) with access being across the lawn with no clearly defined pathway.

The Owner indicated that whilst she was happy for the Studio to be used as a Polling Station, she was concerned that access arrangements would not be appropriate for the Police and Crime Commissioner election last November.

Given the physical restrictions of using the Studio in winter Members accepted that there was an overriding case to make temporary arrangements for both communities to vote at Belchamp St Paul and revert to the established Polling Place for future elections.

Following the November election the Returning Officer received representation from Ovington Parish Council requesting that their permanent Polling Place be located at The Community House, Belchamp St Paul.

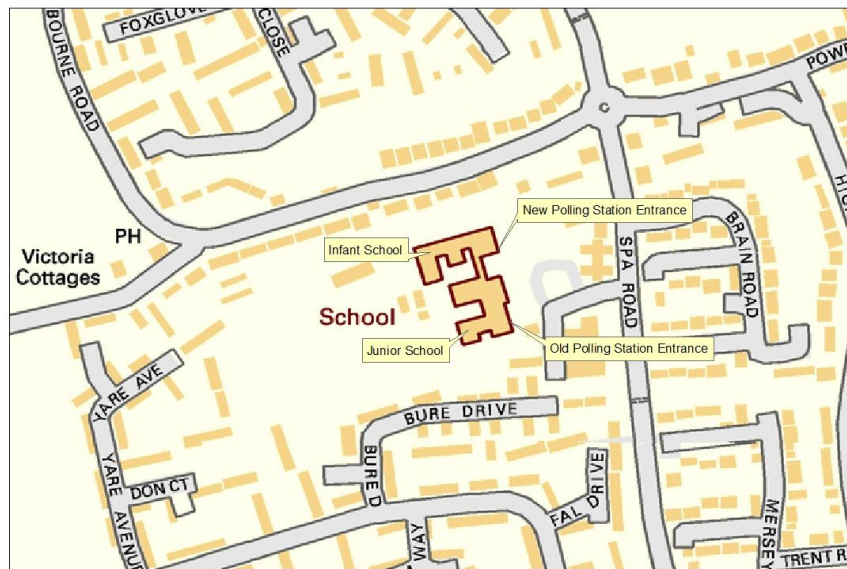
As Returning Officer I would support the request from Ovington and would ask Members to designate The Community House, Belchamp St Paul as the permanent Polling Place for the electors of Ovington (DV).

2.1 Polling District Witham (West) (CN)

The designated Polling Place for this Polling District has for many years been Powers Hall Junior School, Spa Road, Witham. The School is somewhat unique in design in so far as the building is open plan. Whilst I only require the main hall, this effectively requires the closure of the entire School.

Understandably the Head Teacher has been increasingly reluctant to close the school and requested that I seek alternative solutions.

Accordingly, I sought support from the adjoining Powers Hall Infant School and was grateful to the Head Teacher who identified a suitable classroom which could be isolated from the main school with convenient access for both pedestrians and driver using the car park.



Members are therefore asked to support the designation of Powers Hall Infant School as the permanent location of the Polling Place for electors of Witham (West)(CN).

Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members' Allowance Scheme		Agenda No: 11
Corporate Priority: Portfolio Area: Leader of the Council Report presented by: Councillor Butland, Leader of the Council Report prepared by: Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager		
Background Papers: Council Minutes 26 th May 2011		Public Report
Options:		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: <p>The Independent Remuneration Panel has reviewed some specific issues related to the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme at the request of the Council. The Panel has also taken the opportunity to conduct a brief overview of the Scheme and to consider a few other issues.</p> <p>In the light of its consideration of these issues, the Panel recommends the following amendments to the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Sub-committee be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance be equivalent to the basic allowance x 1; • that the Chairman of the Mi Community Scheme be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance be equivalent to the region of x 0.25 to x 0.5 of the basic allowance; • that the payment of a special responsibility allowance to a leader of a political group be limited to the leader of an opposition group which has 5 or more members; • that part of the Basic Member Allowance be linked to training and development undertaken by members and that the Council's Member Development Working Group identifies those member development opportunities which are important within the Member Development Programme and should be included in those linked to part of the Basic Allowance; 		

- that the Council's Member Development Working Group develops proposals for consideration by Council for the development and implementation of a scheme linking part of the Basic Allowance to training and development undertaken by members.
- that the current allowance of £15 per month to cover Broadband costs incurred by members be considered adequate;
- that the provision of a daily allowance of £1.00 for walking to/from an approved duty be removed from the Members' Allowance Scheme;
- that members should not be offered the opportunity to join the Local Government Pension Scheme;
- that that Carers' Allowance be increased to the actual cost up to a maximum of £10.00 per hour;
- although linking increases in member allowances to staff pay awards has served the Council well since 2009, given that the last comprehensive review of the Members Allowance Scheme was carried out in 2005, the Panel believes it would timely to conduct a comprehensive review in 2014-15.

Decision:

Members are invited to consider approving the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in this report.

Purpose of Decision: To consider approving the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme.

Corporate implications

Financial:	The Panel's recommendations are within the current budget for member allowances.
Legal:	None arising from this report.
Equalities/Diversity	The Panel recognises the increased costs for carers.
Customer Impact:	None arising from this report.
Environment and Climate Change:	No significant issues.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	The Panel has consulted political group leaders.
Risks:	N/A
Officer Contact:	Alastair Peace
Designation:	Member Services Manager
Ext. No.	2602
E-mail:	alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk



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

March 2013

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Independent Remuneration Panel has reviewed some specific issues related to the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme at the request of the Council. The Panel has also taken the opportunity to conduct an overview of the Scheme and to consider a few other issues.
- 1.2. In the light of its consideration of these issues, the Panel recommends the following amendments to the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme:
 - 1.2.1. That the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Sub-committee be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance be equivalent to the basic allowance x 1;
 - 1.2.2. That the Chairman of the Mi Community Scheme be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance be equivalent to the region of x 0.25 to x 0.5 of the basic allowance;
 - 1.2.3. That the payment of a special responsibility allowance to a leader of a political group be limited to the leader of an opposition group which has 5 or more members;
 - 1.2.4. That part of the Basic Member Allowance be linked to training and development undertaken by members and that the Council's Member Development Working Group identifies those member development opportunities which are important within the Member Development Programme and should be included in those linked to part of the Basic Allowance;
 - 1.2.5. That the Council's Member Development Working Group develops proposals for consideration by Council for the development and implementation of a scheme linking part of the Basic Allowance to training and development undertaken by members;
 - 1.2.6. That the current allowance of £15 per month to cover Broadband costs incurred by members be considered adequate;
 - 1.2.7. That the provision of a daily allowance of £1.00 for walking to/from an approved duty be removed from the Members' Allowance Scheme;
 - 1.2.8. That members should not be offered the opportunity to join the Local Government Pension Scheme;
 - 1.2.9. That that Carers' Allowance be increased to the actual cost up to a maximum of £10.00 per hour;
 - 1.2.10. Although linking increases in member allowances to staff pay awards has served the Council well since 2009, given that the last comprehensive review of the Members Allowance Scheme was carried out in 2005, the Panel believes it would timely to conduct a comprehensive review in 2014-15.

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

2.1.1. At its meeting on 26th May 2011, Council agreed that:-

- (a) Subject to the consideration of any recommendations that the Independent Remuneration Panel may make, that it amends its Members' Allowance Scheme as follows:-
 - That the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Panel be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance shall be equivalent to the basic allowance x 1.
 - That a sub paragraph (d) be added to paragraph 3 of the current scheme to state that the payment of a special responsibility allowance to a leader of a political group shall be limited to the leader of an opposition group which has 5 or more members;
- (b) The Independent Remuneration Panel be asked to consider and make recommendations on the following issues:
 - The possible linking of part of the Basic Allowance to training and development undertaken by members;
 - The ICT Allowance paid to members in light of the greater reliance on technology for communication and engagement;

2.1.2. Subsequent to the meeting of Council, the Panel has also considered the following:

- That the Chairman of the Mi Community Working Scheme be included in the list of special responsibilities set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme;
- The possibility of including members in the Local Government Pension Scheme;
- The level of the Carers' Allowance;
- Walking Allowance;
- Members joining the Local Government Pension Scheme;

2.1.3. The Panel also took the opportunity to conduct an overview of the Members' Allowances Scheme.

2.2. Research

2.2.1. The Panel obtained information from a number of sources in support of its review most notably from an overview of comparative information on

allowances in other similar sized district and borough Councils and through interviewing Group Leaders.

2.3. Acknowledgements

- 2.3.1. The Panel is grateful for the time given by Group Leaders to meet with the Panel as part of the information gathering process.

3. Consideration of issues

3.1. Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of the Local Development Framework (LDF) Sub-committee

- 3.1.1. The Panel notes that the LDF Sub-committee has played a vital role in developing the district's Local Development Framework which has included the consideration of consultant studies and draft LDF documents as well as representations made by the public. The Sub-committee makes policy recommendations that affect the growth and development of the district for the next 20 years and also has responsibility for determining the allocation of significant funds in the Growth Area Funding scheme.
- 3.1.2. In addition, the Panel notes that the LDF Sub-committee meets on a regular basis and the role of the Chairman is no less onerous than that of other Chairmen who receive a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). Indeed, it is not clear why the Chairman of the LDF Sub-committee has not been entitled to a SRA. The earlier records of the Council do not contain any discussion on this position and it seems to be an anomaly that the Council is seeking to rectify.
- 3.1.3. The Panel also notes that whilst the Council has now adopted the Local Development Framework, there is still a continuing and substantial role for the LDF Sub-committee to play as growth and infrastructure is a major priority for the Council.
- 3.1.4. The Panel agrees that Chairman of the LDF Sub-committee is a critical role and one that warrants recognition. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the Chairman of the Local Development Framework Sub-committee be included in the list of special responsibilities as set out in Part 2 of Appendix 1 of the current scheme and that the amount of the allowance be equivalent to the basic allowance x 1;

3.2. Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chairman of Mi Community Scheme

- 3.2.1. The Council has established the Mi Community scheme to invest in people and organisations with ideas to improve their local community. It is a 4 year scheme, launched in 2011, with a fund of £500,000. Executive members are not involved in the decisions made in the running of the scheme and ward councillors have been empowered through a working group to take those decisions. Decisions taken by the working group include in the development of policies and criteria for the awarding of Mi Community Funds as well all decisions on the awards.

- 3.2.2. Applications to the scheme are assessed by a Judging Panel which also decides on those applications which are awarded funds. Members support the Mi Community scheme by acting as a link between local communities and the Mi Community Working Group.
- 3.2.3. The Working Group held a number of meetings in the early stages in 2011 in developing the policies and criteria for judging bids to the Mi Community scheme. However, those policies and criteria have now been agreed and Mi Community scheme meetings are now grouped around the time of judging bids. The Panel is aware that the Chairman of the Working Group has a role in supporting and promoting the Mi Community scheme throughout the year.
- 3.2.4. As a result, the Panel supports the payment of a SRA to Chairman of the Mi Community but believes the amount should be in the region of x 0.25 to x 0.5 of the basic allowance.

3.3. Allowances Paid to Group Leaders of Political Groups of less 5

- 3.3.1. In the current members' allowance scheme, the Council has applied the statutory definition of a political group which is 2 or more members to determine the payment of group leader allowances. The Panel notes that the Council is not obliged to apply this statutory definition to the Members' Allowance Scheme.
- 3.3.2. The Panel believes that leading political groups with several members requires a number of skills along with significant responsibilities and demands. This includes skills in leadership and the organisation, coordination and development of political positions within the group.
- 3.3.3. The Panel believes that leading political groups with a small number of members have considerably less responsibilities and demands. For example, coordination and developing political positions in a small group might be achieved through a dialogue on a telephone rather than chairing a group meeting.
- 3.3.4. The Panel, therefore, agrees that the number of members threshold for payment of a special responsibility allowance to the leader of an opposition group should be increased. The Panel supports the proposal of the Council that the current scheme be amended to state that the payment of a special responsibility allowance to a leader of a political group shall be limited to the leader of an opposition group which has 5 or more members.

3.4. Linking of Part of the Basic Allowance to Training and Development Undertaken by Members

- 3.4.1. The Panel notes that the Council is committed to the development of all its members to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their various roles. The Panel also notes that the Council provides regular member development opportunities to all members.

- 3.4.2. The Panel believes that member attendance at some member development events is important in the development of members. The Panel therefore supports linking of part of the Basic Allowance to training and development undertaken by members.
- 3.4.3. The Panel recommends that the Council's Member Development Working Group identifies those member development opportunities which are important within the Member Development Programme and should be included in those linked to part of the Basic Allowance.
- 3.4.4. The Panel also recommends that the Council's Member Development Working Group develops proposals for consideration by the Council for the development and implementation of a scheme to link part of the Basic Allowance to training and development undertaken by members.
- 3.4.5. The Panel recognises that the development and implementation of a scheme may be difficult. The Panel suggests that one method the Member Development Working Group might consider is linking payment of the twelfth month of the basic allowance to undertaking certain member development opportunities.

3.5. ICT Allowances

- 3.5.1. The Panel notes that members are strongly encouraged to use their remote council email account as a means of communication within the Council and with residents and others. The Council also provides a Members' Portal providing a range of information online directly related to the interests Members.
- 3.5.2. To assist with their connection to email and the Members' Portal, members currently receive a Broadband Allowance of up to £15 per month to cover the actual costs of a Broadband connection (any costs above £15 are not covered). The provision of Broadband also enables members to conduct their own online research. The Panel notes the monthly fees of a range of Broadband service providers and believes that £15 per month is adequate to cover costs incurred by members.
- 3.5.3. The Panel also notes that members incur some costs with ICT consumables eg. paper, ink cartridges. The Panel notes that the basic members allowance is provided to assist members with the costs of being a member. The Panel believes it is reasonable to assume that ICT consumables are covered by the basis allowance.
- 3.5.4. The Panel therefore recommends that the current allowance of £15 per month to cover Broadband costs incurred by members be considered adequate.

3.6. Walking Allowance

- 3.6.1. The Panel notes that the current scheme provides a daily allowance of £1.00 for walking to/from an approved duty. Although the Panel supports measures to decrease the carbon footprint of members, it does not see any significant environmental benefit compared to the

administrative costs of maintaining the provision of the walking allowance.

- 3.6.2. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the provision of a daily allowance of £1.00 for walking to/from an approved duty be removed from the Members' Allowance Scheme.

3.7. Pensions

- 3.7.1. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 provides the authority with the discretion to include a pension for members in its members' allowance scheme. The Regulations also require the scheme to state whether members are to be entitled to pensions under the Superannuation Act 1972 and, if so, what allowances are amounts in respect of which pension payments are payable.
- 3.7.2. The Panel considers that including members in the Local Government Pension scheme would incur increased costs and a significant administrative burden on the Council. The Panel also believes that receipt of a pension is not a motivating factor for members of the public considering becoming councillors.
- 3.7.3. The Panel noted that information published by Local Government Analysis and Research Department published in March 2007 showed that less than half of authorities offered access to the pension scheme.
- 3.7.4. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that members should not be offered the opportunity to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

3.8. Carers' allowance

- 3.8.1. The Panel notes that the current scheme provides for costs incurred when a carer for a dependent has been engaged to enable a Councillor to undertake an approved duty to be reimbursed at the actual cost up to a maximum of £6.33 per hour.
- 3.8.2. The Panel believes the current rate does reflect the increased costs of using carer services. Accordingly, to reflect increased costs, the Panel recommends that Carers' Allowance be increased to the actual cost up to a maximum of £10.00 per hour.

3.9. General Review of the Members' Allowance Scheme

- 3.9.1. The Panel notes that the last comprehensive review of the Council's Members' Allowance Scheme was carried out in 2005. The Panel also notes that having established the various special responsibility allowances within the Scheme, the Council decided in February 2009 to link future rises in member allowances to staff pay awards (although Council also decided in 2009 to freeze members allowances for a 2 year period.
- 3.9.2. Although linking increases in member allowances to staff pay awards has served the Council well since 2009, given that the last

comprehensive review of the Members Allowance Scheme was carried out in 2005, the Panel believes it would timely to conduct a comprehensive review in 2014-15.

Interim Appointment of the Monitoring Officer		Agenda No: 12
Corporate Priority:	Overall Corporate Strategy and Direction	
Report presented by:	Councillor G Butland, Leader of the Council	
Report prepared by:	Nicola Beach, Chief Executive	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options:	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>Subsequent to the resignation of the Head of Governance, the Council needs to appoint an interim Monitoring Officer until a permanent appointment is made to the Head of Governance post.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer has a statutory role and statutory requirements to meet under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. In order to perform these functions the appointee must be an officer of the Council and it is recommended that Emma Wisbey, Local Governance Manager, be appointed on an interim basis.</p>		
Decision:		
<p>To approve the interim appointment of Emma Wisbey as the Monitoring Officer with a retrospective date of 1st April 2013 until the new Head of Governance takes up their appointment.</p>		
Purpose of Decision:		
<p>To ensure compliance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.</p>		

Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail	
Financial:	None. Costs met from existing budget
Legal:	Set out in the report
Equalities/Diversity	None
Customer Impact:	None
Environment and Climate Change:	None
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None
Risks:	The designation of the Monitoring Officer is a statutory requirement
Officer Contact:	Emma Wisbey
Designation:	Local Governance Manager
Ext. No.	2610
E-mail:	emma.wisbey@braintree.gov.uk

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2012-13		Agenda No: 13
Report presented by:	Councillor Dr. Evans, Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report prepared by:	Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options:	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<u>Key Scrutiny Topics 2012-13</u>		
<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's key areas of scrutiny in 2012-13 have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Safety Partnership;• Council's Budget; <p>Brief details on each are set out below.</p> <p>Community Safety Partnership</p> <p>Scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership has been timely given the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) in November 2012 and the transferring of budgets for Community Safety to PCCs.</p> <p>As part of its review, the Committee has conducted 2 scrutiny review meetings with several invitees from various partners within the Community Safety Partnership including Police, Fire and Rescue, Essex Probation, Safer Places and Council officers.</p> <p>The Committee will consider its scrutiny report of the CSP at its meeting in May 2013. It is expected that the report will make a number of recommendations to Cabinet and be submitted for consideration by Council at its meeting in June and by Cabinet at its meeting in July.</p>		

Council's Budget

The Committee scrutinised the Council's budget at 2 meetings in November 2012 and January 2013 with Cabinet Members. Both meetings included presentations from the Leader of the Council on the Council's proposed priorities for 2013-14, Council Budget and Council Tax 2013/14 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013/14 to 2016/17.

The Committee's meetings on scrutiny of the budget were opened to all council members to attend. It is pleasing that many members who are not member of the Committee were able to attend these meetings and participated in the questioning sessions.

Given that members have commented favourably on opening the Committee's meetings on scrutiny of the budget to all council members, the Committee's budget meetings in 2013-14 will also be open to all members to attend.

Update on Scrutiny Topic from 2011-12

Scrutiny Review of Transport and Access to Health Services across the District

The Committee's report on its scrutiny review of Transport and Access to Health Services across the District was well received by both Council at its meeting on 16th April 2012 and by Cabinet at its meeting on 9th May 2012.

The Committee recently received an update on its recommendations on Transport and Access to Health Services in respect of the Hospital Hopper Service and Village Agent Service. The Committee was pleased to note that the Hospital Hopper Service is to be provided in a different way which should lead to service improvements and that Essex County Council had confirmed the continuation of funding for the Village Agent Service in 2013-14.

The changes introduced by the Health and Social Care Act include the formation of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) with the Group for Mid Essex coming into being on 1st April 2013. The Committee has agreed that it is timely to invite representatives of the Mid Essex CCG to a future meeting of the Committee to outline the Group plans on how they might improve the delivery and access to health services within the district.

Task and Finish Groups

The Committee established the following Task and Finish Groups in 2012-13:

- Affordable Housing;
- Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau and Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency.

The Committee has received progress reports on the work of the Task and Finish Group, both of which are progressing and looks forward to seeing the recommendations of both groups.

The following earlier Task and Finish Groups have now completed their work and their reports and recommendations have been considered by both Council and Cabinet:

- Highway Liaison;
- Council's General Property and Land Investment Policies.

Acknowledgement

The Committee is grateful to all those who have attended its meetings over the year and assisted with its enquiries and studies. This includes Cabinet members and all members attending the Committee's budget scrutiny meeting and all those partners attending scrutiny meetings on the Community Safety Partnership.

Decision:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2012-13 be noted.

Purpose of Decision:

To note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.

Governance Committee Annual Report 2012-13		Agenda No: 14
Report presented by: Councillor Lager, Chairman, Governance Committee		
Report prepared by: Lesley Day, Audit Insurance & Risk Manager		
Background Papers:		Public Report
Options:		Key Decision: No
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>The following activities were considered by the Committee during 2012/2013:</p> <p><u>AUDIT & GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>Report: Annual Governance Statement 2011/2012</p> <p>Received for approval the Annual Governance Statement for incorporation into the Statement of Accounts. Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 require “The relevant body shall be responsible for ensuring that the financial management of the body is adequate and effective and that the body has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of that body’s functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.”</p> <p>Report: Annual Internal Audit Report 2011/2012</p> <p>Received the Annual Report on Internal Audit Activity for 2011/2012.</p> <p>Reports: Internal Audit Activity (quarterly)</p> <p>Received and noted details of the audit assignments completed together with status updates in respect of Reportable Recommendations.</p> <p>Report: Annual Audit Letter 2011/2012</p> <p>Received the external auditor’s Annual Audit Letter covering the Council’s financial audit. The Committee receives the report on behalf of the Council and may make observations to Cabinet who can decide to take action to make improvements based on the external auditor’s assessment.</p>		

Report: Internal Audit Strategic Plan 2013/2017

Received and approved the Internal Audit four year plan supported by Risk Assessment.

Reports: External Audit Plan 2012/2013**Audit Commission Work Programme and Scale of Fees 2012/2013
External Audit Fee Letter**

Received and noted PKF External Audit Plan including fees.

Report: Grant Claim Certification year end 31/03/12

Received a report from our external auditors summarising the main issues arising from the certification of grant claims for the financial year ending 31st March 2012.

Report: Protecting the Public Purse 2012

Received the Audit Commission's report together with an assessment of controls and processes at the Council. Agreed an action plan to address areas identified as requiring improvement.

Approval of the Anti-Fraud Strategy.

RISK MANAGEMENT**Report: Strategic Risks**

Received a report detailing the review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register by Management Board and Cabinet together with details of how the significant business risks are being monitored and managed by Management Board in line with the Council's Risk Management Strategy.

Report: Operation Risks

Received details of the annual review of the Council's Operational Risks.

MONITORING AND FINANCE**Report: Receipt of the Statement of Accounts for 2011/12 together with the External Auditor's Annual Governance Report**

Considered and approved the draft Statement of Accounts for 2011/2012 which were subject to external audit.

The external auditor's report is presented to the Governance Committee in accordance with the provisions of International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260 Communication with Those Charged with Governance, ISA 265 Communicating Deficiencies in Internal Control and Management, and the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice

Reports: Quarterly Performance Management Reports and Briefings

Noted quarterly Performance Management Reports.

Briefings covering Performance and Project governance, Change Control process and Covalent reporting system

Reports: Financial Indicators (quarterly)

Received and noted details of key financial indicators.

Requested clarifications on a number of issues including write-off policy, debt recovery policies for Business Rates, Council Tax and other debtors.

Report: Treasury Management Annual Report 2011/2012 and Mid-Year Report 2012/2013

Noted and advised Cabinet to accept the reports.

Report: Draft Treasury Management Strategy 2013/2014

Reviewed and provided comments on the draft Strategy prior to its submission to Cabinet.

STANDARDS

Appointment of Standards Sub-Committee and Independent Persons.

COMMITTEE OPERATION

Completed a Committee self-assessment checklist and produced an action plan as required.

Other reports received:

Impact of Foreign Currency Exchange Rates – Icelandic Banks

Consultation on Auditor Appointment from 2012/2013

Council Tax and NNDR – Direct Debit Instalment Error – Investigation report

Decision:

That the Governance Committee's Annual Report for 2012-13 be noted.

Purpose of Decision:

To note the Governance Committee's Annual Report.

LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL

Agenda No: 15(i)a

Report covers activity ending 10th April 2013

1. Essex Police & Crime Panel – 21st February 2013

There were two main items on the agenda for this meeting.

The first was to hold a confirmatory hearing relating to the Police & Crime Commissioner's (PCC) proposed appointment of a new Chief Constable for Essex. The Panel has powers to review the Commissioner's proposed appointments of Chief Constable, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel is required to hold public confirmatory hearings for these posts and is able, if appropriate, to veto the Commissioner's choice of candidate.

The Panel received a detailed report of the selection procedure that was used and interviewed the Commissioner's nominee, Mr Stephen James Kavanagh. Mr Kavanagh is currently Deputy Assistant Commissioner (Specialist Operations) with the Metropolitan Police Service. The Panel were very impressed with him and unanimously endorsed his appointment.

Also on the agenda was the PCC's Police & Crime Plan. The Commissioner must issue a police and crime plan in accordance with Section 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Section 7 of the Act states that a police and crime plan is a plan which sets out:

- the police and crime objectives;
- the policing of the police area which the chief officer of police is to provide;
- the financial and other resources which is to be provided to the chief officer of police for the chief officer to exercise the functions of chief officer;
- the means by which the chief officer of police will report on the chief officer's provision of policing;
- the means by which the chief officer of police's performance in providing policing will be measured; and
- the crime and disorder reduction grants which are to be made and the conditions (if any) to which such grants are to be made.

The Panel questioned the PCC on aspects of his plan. The Plan can be viewed at www.essex.pcc.police.uk

2. Essex Police & Crime Panel – 26th March 2013

A further meeting of the Panel was held to determine the Panel's work programme for 2013-14, the process for commissioning community safety and

crime reduction initiatives, and the process to be adopted for handling complaints about the Police and Crime Commissioner and their Deputy.

3. Forthcoming Meetings

I shall be attending the following meetings which will be held between the publication of these papers and the Council meeting.

Essex Council Leaders' on Thursday 11th April
Braintree Locality Board Meeting on Friday 12th April
Have Gateway Partnership Board on Thursday 18th April

I will report verbally on any important issues arising from these meetings.

Cllr Graham Butland
Leader

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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF PEOPLE
AND PARTICIPATION**

Agenda No: 15(i)b

The new Witham Leisure Centre.

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

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

A large fitness suite with gym and weights area.

Two glass backed squash courts.

Two dance studios.

Wet and dry changing areas.

Steam room and sauna.

Treatment rooms and café area.

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

I'm very pleased to be able to confirm that the Secretary of State has now granted Section 77 consent. This means there are no further outstanding barriers as far as the land ownership is concerned so we can now progress the land deal with Essex County Council.

The Leisure Partnership Board met on the 26th March 2013. Barr Construction Limited, the company awarded to design and build the new pool and Fusion Lifestyle, the Council's new leisure provider, attended the meeting. Barr Construction Limited gave a comprehensive presentation on the scope of the project which will commence on 30th April 2013. The construction period will be 60 weeks. I was pleased to learn from Barr Holdings Limited that they will be taking a community approach to the project which will involve engaging with the wider community, local schools and sports and community groups. I was also encouraged by the concept of "Meet The Constructors Day" which offers a window of opportunity for local sub-contractors to come forward to bid for contracts as part of the project. A communications plan is being worked up to ensure that as many avenues as possible are explored to promote this exciting new project for Witham.

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

1. Braintree Swim Centre - New gym facilities – Plans in progress for 2013.
2. Braintree Leisure Centre - Additional gym facilities – Plans in progress for 2013.
3. Halstead Swim Centre – Dry side improvements to sports hall, changing rooms and second floor "spin suite" and "dance studio". Plans in progress for 2013.

At the Leisure Partnership Board on the 26th March 2013 Fusion Lifestyle presented a summary of all of the above proposals including an artist's impression of the specifications being considered. I will report back to Council in my next report to Full Council.

The Fusion Leisure Contract.

At the Leisure Partnership Board on 26th March 2013 Fusion Lifestyle presented a report on the progress of the new Leisure Contract. Progression within the new contract include:

- Participation month-by-month since September has increased.
- The new Reward Card offers free sessions to those using the facilities regularly.
- Focused campaigns during Jan.-Mar. quarter to increase participation.
- Concessions are now available at all times and are not restricted.
- Recruitment of a new Community Sports Development Officer.
- “Open Air” launches this spring to take exercise out to parks and open spaces.
- Fusion working with Greenfields CH to use sport to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Fusion working with Health to develop a GP referrals scheme.

THE ACTIVE BRAINTREE NETWORK.

Vision – *“The Active Braintree Network will use Sport and Physical Activity to ensure that the Braintree District is a place where individuals and communities have the opportunity to take part in their chosen activity and are inspired to achieve”.*

The Active Braintree Network met on the 8th March 2013. The network comprises of community stakeholders including ECC, GCH, BDVSA, BDC, Health, and local schools and colleges.

The Network has just been awarded £10,300.00 following their submission to fund local community groups. Projects include: BDVSA – Walking for Wellbeing. Cycling in Braintree. A skate park event at Meadowside on the 13th April 2013.

Health and Wellbeing Panel.

Following discussions with the Leader and our new Chief Executive we have considered forming a new Health and Wellbeing Panel for the Braintree District. This will allow discussions to commence in the broader context of “Public Health”. The Joint Locality Group considered the proposals at their last meeting and asked for further details to be worked up. An update will be reported back to the next Joint Locality Group on 12th April 2013.

Essex Rural Partnership.

The Essex Rural Partnership met at the Colchester Community Stadium on the 13th March 2013. Details regarding the work of the Partnership including links to funding and community workshops can be found at info@essexruralpartnership.org.uk The Council has a Service Level Agreement with the Rural Community Council of Essex who work with town and parish councils and community groups to support with Community Rights and Neighbourhood Planning.

The Local Government Association - Rural Commission.

The Rural Commission met on the 6th March 2013 at Local Government House. Presentations were received on Local Governance Finance and Rural Broadband. The main area of discussion on the agenda was on the Local Enterprise Partnerships ensuring a focus is kept on rural economic programmes. Rural Commission members added that local authorities and LEP’s had a big opportunity to engage on EU funding. They also highlighted the opportunities of the important links between urban and rural economies

The Localism Board.

The Localism Board met on the 21st March 2013. A report was given on:

Developing the role of the Community Councillor.

The Member Development Working Group is leading on this piece of work. Over the next few months interviews will take place with all members of Member Development Working Group, the Leader and a cross-section of other members identified by the Member Development Working Group. The purpose of the interviews, carried out by an external facilitator, is to ascertain the on-going development needs of members.

Localism Summit.

A report was received. Covered previously in my report.

The Witham Neighbour Pilot.

A stakeholder group has been set up and the new Chairman appointed. A Community Mapping exercise is being progress to identify the needs of young people. Witham Boy's Brigade is actively engaging in this process and local community projects have commenced.

The Rural Community Council of Essex – Service Level Agreement.

A report was received on the progress of Community Rights and Neighbourhood Planning. A report on the work to date will be presented at the Localism Summit on the 13th June 2013.

C.A.B. Meeting (Citizens' Advice Bureau).

I met with the C.A.B. on the 22nd March 2013. The purpose of the meeting was to monitor the Service Level Agreement between the Council and C.A.B and to discuss any areas of interest or concern. The main discussion point was on Welfare Reform. I understand from the C.A.B that the number of client contacts are currently down but greater time is being spent on the complexities of individual cases. The C.A.B is currently recruiting and training new volunteers to replace long-standing volunteers who will be retiring.

Hospital Hopper Service.

The Pilot with Essex County Council has finished. The Pilot taught us that our residents valued the service but, the service was restricted to many residents and was scheduled to visit hospitals in Halstead, Braintree and Broomfield Hospital only. Due to the success of the pilot the Community Transport Service will continue to offer a "Hospital Hopper" service using the current "Social Car" scheme. The service will be offered to all residents of the Braintree district and will be expanded to deliver residents to hospitals and health facilities in Colchester and Witham. A recruitment drive is on-going to seek further volunteer drivers to support the service.

Cabinet Member – Cllr. Joanne Beavis.

Further information on the contents of this report can be obtained by contacting:
Cllr Joanne Beavis and Cllr Peter Tattersley.

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

Agenda No: 15(i)c

1. Finance Department

Predicted Financial Outturn

The predicted outturn of the Council's finances for 2012/13 is an underspend against the original target budget of £884,000. This is due mainly to reduced costs on leisure management (£526,000) and ICT contract (£75,000) and increased recycling income (£175,000). These changes have already been taken into account in setting the budget for the new financial year (2013/14).

Annual Billing

Council Tax and Business Rates:

- 61,173 Council tax bills issued
- 4,437 Business rates bills issued

In addition the Other Income service raised:

- 850 invoices issued to users of our trade waste service

Revenues and Housing Benefit Services

Both teams have been dealing with a higher than normal volume of telephone calls about council tax bills and the impact of the local council tax support scheme since the bills were issued in Mid-March.

Housing Benefits

The service updated the claims of 6,550 rent allowance claimants in social housing with rent increases for 2013/14 as notified by the Registered Social Landlords.

2. Customer Service Centre

In March the CSC took 15,803 phone calls and had an average call answering time of 18 seconds (the same period last year was 14,835 calls and response time of 13 seconds). The reason for the increase is attributed to the significant volume of calls related to Council Tax enquiries following the annual distribution of Council Tax bills. (1,734 council tax calls in March 2013; 710 for the same period last year). Many calls were seeking clarification on relatively simple points which were not evident to them as the layout of the bills had been changed. Relevant managers will work together to identify ways of improving the information provided in large mailouts to attempt to reduce the number of telephone calls seeking advice or clarification.

3. Upgrade to Windows 7 and Office 2010

Microsoft support for the existing operating system and Office software used in BDC will cease from April 2014. To ensure that the authority is using supported software, Business Solutions (working with Capita) embarked on a full uplift of all PC's and laptops to the Windows 7 operating system and Microsoft Office 2010. Three hundred machines were upgraded before Easter and the remaining 109 will be complete by the

end of June.

4. Website and intranet developments

Following the launch of our new website in August 2012 work continues on improving online presence. The webcasting service (which is now available via tablet and mobile devices) has been enhanced and a new service has been implemented where customers can download their refuse and recycling collection calendars. A new intranet for staff has also been introduced and provided the technical infrastructure for the BDC/Greenfields Housing StatNav partnership microsite.

5. Essex County Council move into Causeway House

The second floor of Causeway House was prepared for Essex County Council to move their Braintree-based staff in Tabor, Crossman and Technikon Houses into the building. The moves commenced in July 2012 and the bulk of the people (approximately 200) were moved in by September with the remaining 50 moving between January and March 2013. Business Solutions project-managed the refurbishment of the second floor ensuring that it met the agreed ECC specification. The service now provides general support as well as Reception and Duty Officer services to ECC and acts as the first point of contact for ECC in its day-to-day dealing with the authority.

6. Achievement of Customer Service Excellence Standard in Operations

Each of BDC's key services is being assessed against the Customer Service Excellence Standard. Business Solutions and Housing have already achieved this standard and the Operations service were assessed in March. They passed with a number of areas identified for additional credit (known as "compliance plus"). The programme continues with other services including Environmental Services, Sustainable Development and Finance preparing for assessment this year.

7. Staffing

Andy Wright, new Corporate Director, recently took up his post on February 25th. Recruitment is underway for 12 posts, 5 of which are turnover, 5 related to support increased workloads due to reforms to Council Tax benefits from April (4 of which are fixed term contracts), and 2 posts to support Economic Development. One member of staff has taken ill health retirement after long term sickness, and sadly one member of staff has recently died in service.

Cllr David Bebb
Cabinet Member for Performance and Efficiency

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

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

Agenda No: : 15(i)d

Planning Policy

National Grid Sub-Station Proposals

National Grid has been consulting on the proposed options to build a new substation on one of two locations in the District, to the west of the Twinstead Tee. The substation will support the Bramford to Twinstead new high voltage transmission line project. The Council has responded to the consultation, maintaining its support for an underground connection from Rushley Green to Braintree and an expansion of the existing Braintree sub-station. The Council has also commented on the proposed sub-station locations. I am grateful to local councillors who have been assiduous in attending meetings with National Grid and monitoring the progress of NG proposals.

Asset Management

Land East of High Street, Halstead

Following refusal of the Tesco planning application the Consortium of Vendors has agreed to appoint a specialist residential land agent to re-market the site as soon as possible. The Consortium of Vendors has also agreed to refresh the Vendor Consortium Agreement on the same basis as before.
Formal notice is still awaited from Tesco to terminate the existing contract.

19/21 Bocking End, Braintree

This property is currently being refurbished and extended to enable the relocation of the Braintree and Bocking Community Association from their existing premises in Victoria Street, Braintree. The refurbishment works are due to complete on the 10th May 2013 after which the lease with the Community Association will be completed. We anticipate that the Community Association's lease will commence on the 24th May 2013 and BDC will be assisting with their relocation.

Housing

Homelessness Update

Generally we are seeing an increase in people needing assistance with their housing problems. From April 2012 to February 2013, the Council has made 205 homelessness decisions and has accepted a duty to help 150 households find a home. The total number for the whole year between April 2011 and March 2012 was 209 homelessness decisions and a duty to help 137 households.

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

We have now recruited a new Housing Options Officer for the next two years, as we are anticipating an increasing number of enquiries generally and also need to be able to support residents through the current welfare reform changes.

Rough Sleeping

In 2012 the seven Greater Haven Gateway councils and Uttlesford DC received a grant of £362,000 from the Department of Communities and Local Government. The purpose of the grant is to help local authorities tackle rough sleeping and single homelessness by pooling resources to provide services such as street outreach, reconnection services and improve access to accommodation for people that are harder to house.

Genesis Housing Association will be working to secure 110 units of private rented accommodation over a two year period across the eight council areas. Additional support will be provided to help people keep tenancies.

By working together local authorities have been able to achieve an efficiency of scale whilst at the same time responding to the needs of each local authority.

During the continuing severe weather, our local emergency arrangements have continued to be in place to help people who may otherwise sleep rough in the district.

Affordable Housing and Empty Homes

For the year April 2012 to March 2013 there have been 71 new affordable homes completed and this exceeds the target for the year. This excludes any units purchased under FirstBuy during January 2013 to March 2013 on which Moat are due to report early April 2013.

In addition, by the end of February 2013, 67 empty homes have been brought back into use. This exceeds the annual target of 55 for 2012/2013.

Housing Assessment and Allocations

We want to help people who are affected by the changes to Housing Benefit and in particular those looking to downsize. We have always given a high 'Band' to households looking to downsize; people freeing up homes with 3 or more bedrooms are placed in Band A and those wanting to downsize from a 2 bedroom property are in Band B. This helps people to move but if significantly more people register to downsize, waiting times will increase for all applicants.

In March, we jointly organised an event with Greenfields for people looking to downsize to meet with people who are overcrowded to see if it was possible for them to exchange properties. We opened the Council offices for people to come and prepare advertisements for their property and to indicate what they were looking for. People were encouraged to wear badges with the information on and the day was deliberately light-hearted and informal.

More than 60 people completed feedback forms, which were overwhelmingly positive. Seven people indicated in their feedback that they thought they had found a potential partner to swap with and over 20 more said they were positive about finding a partner from the contact details they had taken. It is planned to hold additional events in the future – the next one will be at Greenfields offices in June.

Councillor Lady Newton
Cabinet Member – Planning and Property

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REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF PLACE

Agenda No: : 15(i)e

GENERAL

I am pleased to report that the Council's Operations Department recently underwent a two-day assessment for a Customer Service Excellence Standard Award. The feedback from the assessor was extremely positive in relation both to the Council as a whole and its front line service delivery and I will provide a further update to Council.

STREET CLEANSING

I was delighted to host an afternoon tea with Green Heart Champions in recognition of the invaluable contribution they make to their local neighbourhoods in helping the Council to keep them looking clean, tidy and well maintained. The event was well attended by (80+) volunteers across the District which reinforces the pride they obviously feel in their local environments.

A Spring Clean of the A120 central reservation is programmed to take place in April. This will be a night time operation going into the early hours of the morning, because of the need for traffic management to minimise the risk to staff.

WASTE MANAGEMENT: Government Consultation: The Government has announced that it will publish the first *Waste Prevention Programme for England* by December 2013. The Programme is a DEFRA priority, which aims to support growth and help householders, local councils and businesses to save money. The aim of the Programme will be to:

- help businesses recognise and act upon potential savings through better resource efficiency and preventing waste, to contribute to a more sustainable economy;
- make it easier for people to find out how to reduce their waste, and how to re-use items they no longer want; and
- support action by local and central government, businesses and civil society to capitalise on these opportunities.

HIGHWAYS: Starting in April the Council will be planting up nine new strategic gateway sites mainly in the Braintree (3 sites) and Witham areas (6 sites). This is part of the Green Heart programme intended to enhance the appearance of the District, particularly the key entrances to our towns.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES: The refurbishment of the Riverside Play Area, Braintree, has now been completed which brings to an end this year's programme of refurbishment.

CAR PARKING: The Council's car parks were recently inspected by the British Parking Association and Essex Police and successfully retained the Park Mark Awards which is a national quality standard that recognises cleanliness, maintenance and safety of public car parks.

Plans are being made to introduce cashless parking at all of the Council's Pay & Display car parks from early June 2013. This enhancement will enable customers to pay for parking using their debit or credit card either on line or via their mobile phone. This will be operated in tandem with the existing ticket machines, giving people more choice in how they pay for parking.

A review of the Council's off-street parking provision is being undertaken in 2013. This will be a high level review, the outcome of which will be a 3-year strategy designed to ensure that we can meet the developing needs of our customers whilst at the same time helping to ensure the economic prosperity of our town centres. The review will be carried out by the North Essex Parking Partnership and progress will be reported to a Programme Board comprising key officers and elected Members including myself, Cllr. Siddall, Cllr. Mitchell and a member representative from both Braintree and Witham towns. A report is due to be presented to the Council's Cabinet in the Autumn.

LANDSCAPE & COUNTRYSIDE

A meeting was held on 14th February to launch the Green Team Project, this is being run by Groundwork Hertfordshire with CHIP and S 106 funding to help disadvantaged and unemployed young people in our district turn their lives around through a 16 week landscape based training and workability scheme. We would then work with local businesses to try to then get the young people an apprenticeship.

ENVIRONMENT

Community Day Of Action: BDC Licensing Enforcement Officers and our colleagues from ECC Trading Standards inspected a number of licensed premises across Hatfield Peverel and Witham as well as carrying out some test purchasing. These inspections were instigated following a tip off from the HMRC. All was generally in order, spirits were tested for authenticity, checks in the cellar to ensure that the beers/lagers matched up with what was advertised on the pumps and lastly the licence and supporting documentation was examined.

In one premise a large quantity of Italian red and white wine was found on which the duty had not been paid. All 217 bottles of wine were seized under The Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 on behalf of HMRC to be signed over for continued investigation.

Government Plans on Street Traders: The Government is proposing to repeal the Pedlars Act 1871 and 1881. It is proposed that a new definition of pedlar will be introduced; they will be exempt from any form of certification or licensing. Also in the proposed amendments the grounds for refusing a street trading application will be reduced with an increase in the flexibility about the period of a licence.

BDC will need to ensure it complies with the Services Directive. While councils and the police will retain powers to tackle illegal activity, such as selling counterfeit goods, harassment and fraud, councils will be unable to address on-going resident and business concerns about pedlar activity in their communities.

Changes to the Building Regulations: As part of the changes to be introduced to the Building Regulations in April of this year DCLG are to remove the requirement for a person carrying out building work to notify the local authority regarding what are known as 'statutory stage notifications', and introduce the notion of 'service plans'. Statutory notifications are stages in the building work where the person who is carrying out the work is required to notify the local authority that they have reached a particular stage of

the work. There are currently nine stage notifications, these will be reduced to commencement and completion only with all other stage notifications the subject of individual assessment by the local authority.

The onus will be on the building control officer to work where possible with the client in determining the risk category and likely numbers of inspections a particular project requires, and by adopting this approach we believe the outcome will be more compliant and better quality building projects.

Changes to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act: The eagerly awaited changes to the Scrap metal trade is entering the Committee Stage at the House of Lords as a Private Member's Bill, it is aimed at improving the levels of professionalism within the Scrap Metal industry. It intends to do this by increasing the standards for record keeping and ensuring appropriate requirements for licensing and enforcement.

The Legislation will be enforced by our Environmental Health Department and will also allow the police to raid and close scrap metal yards dealing in stolen goods. The new laws are seen by the LGA as a huge step forward for councils tackling the 'major issue' of metal theft, which has been spiralling out of control and this has been in no small part down to the lack of adequate legislation for regulating scrap yards.' Councils have long been clear that we need a comprehensive and modern system for running the industry, with a proper licensing system to hold scrapyards to account, this new legislation will go a long way to resolving these issues.

Essex Centralised Traveller Unit: At a recent meeting with ECC and officers and members of this Council it was agreed that the Council will become a partner in the Essex Countrywide Travellers Unit. It aims to improve fire safety on sites, education outcomes, health and social care and management of local authority sites, as well as ensure consistency in dealing with unauthorised encampments.

We will support the unit by committing a contribution of £7,187 and we will sign up to a simple service level agreement which would only commit us to one year and would specify what we would expect to be delivered for our financial contribution. In terms of unauthorised encampments we will work in partnership with the unit over the next 12 months maintaining the lead especially in terms of communication dissemination but we will look to utilise the resources within the unit where appropriate or necessary.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Whole Essex Community Budget, Community Safety strand, asked for expressions of interest from Council's to become a pilot area for Domestic Abuse work. BDC offered and this was accepted. Two options were put forward by the WEBC Team:

Option 1 – IDVA support for all High Risk Survivors in the District (New Post with Victim Support)

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) specialise in offering support to high risk victims of domestic abuse, though they often support survivors with other levels of risk. Currently in Essex, due to restricted funding and resources, the IDVA service, provided by Victims Support under contract to Essex Police, only take referrals where-

- The victim is over 18
- The perpetrator has been charged with a domestic crime
- The DASHH (Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment and Honour Based Abuse) assessment has been confirmed as high risk

This equates to approximately 25% of cases that the police confirm as high risk. This will provide the all victims assessed as high risk with IDVA support in the District. Along with complementary work, the evidence suggests that a combination of IDVA support has a 60% success rate in reducing the incidence of domestic abuse.

Cost is a three way split with ECC, Essex Police and BDC at £6,666 each.

Option 2 Volunteer support for some medium risk survivors

This option enhances the existing service provided by Victims Support under contract to the Home Office. Under this contract victims of particular crimes are offered help from Victim Support. Referrals can come from the victim directly or from any agency, but the majority of referrals received by victim support come from the police. A victim can choose to decline the service offered. The support offered is not specific to victims of domestic abuse.

Victim Support would like to expand this service using volunteers to offer a service to all medium risk survivors of domestic abuse not just those who are victims of a crime (currently only victims of a crime receive support). The volunteers will tailor support for each victim and offer signposting and referring to other agencies, advocacy, and emotional support to the victim. Again this project will compliment other work.

Cost is a three way split with ECC, Essex Police and BDC at £3,423 each.

BDC has agreed to pilot both projects for a 12 month duration at a total cost of £10,089. Work is commencing to setup the two pilots.

High Sherriff Funding Awards 2013

The fund is part of the Essex Community Foundation which supports voluntary and community organisations in Essex to make their communities safe from crime and the fear of crime.

The Braintree Community Safety Partnership received 2 awards for projects: Keep Safe, £890, to produce promotional leaflets across Braintree, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford, for people with learning disabilities and their carers. Domestic Abuse 'Cut it Out' Campaign £1,000. To set up a pilot of the 'Cut it Out' campaign in hairdressers initially in Braintree Town centre with a view to a roll out across the District. (Campaign led by Safer Places a Domestic Abuse registered charity.

Cllr Schmitt
Cabinet Member – Place

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

Cllr Schmitt

Contact:	Cllr W Schmitt or Cllr R Mitchell
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**REPORT TO COUNCIL, PORTFOLIO AREA OF
PROSPERITY AND GROWTH**

Agenda No: 15(i)f

TOWN CENTRES

Backing Braintree Capital Projects

South Street & Fairfield Road Junction

An application has been made for consent to demolish the existing properties at 75 & 77 South Street and to provide a new junction and area of open space. This application was submitted to BDC Planning Department in March 2013 and will be referred to the Secretary of State following a recommendation being made by Planning Committee. It is anticipated that demolition will be undertaken in summer 2013 and the highways works are scheduled to be delivered in autumn 2013/2014 through the ECC Highways programme.

Sandpit Lane

Lighting upgrades are being undertaken and consents are being sought from ECC Highways and BDC legal team respectively. Exploratory holes for the arch or alternative sign (contractor appointed) are being dug as soon as the party wall legislative procedures are enacted.

A QR code has been created and mosaic design ordered and being prepared. This will be cited on the wall at Sandpit Lane and will be linked to the BDC/ Backing our Towns website and will hold project information, historic information and details of Sandpit Lane. A logo for Sandpit Lane project is being prepared by BDC graphics to be used in a variety of mediums.

St. Michael's Fountain

Site exploratory works were undertaken at end of March including paved areas and planting beds. Minor paving repairs and making good following exploratory works were completed in early April 2013. The metalwork condition survey was carried out in early March and a report on options for conservation of sculptures is awaited early April.

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

An inception meeting & site visits with GVA consultants was held on 26th February. The first set of workshops were held in Witham with Members & key organisations on 21st March and 4th April in Halstead respectively. The reports are due for completion in June 2013.

Portas Pilot Update

Meetings have taken place in the three towns and Town Teams have been established. BDC continues to work with the teams, supporting and sharing learning from the Braintree Portas Pilot.

Pop Up Shop

On the 27th March the official opening and launch of Braintree's popup shop took place. The first tenant is a bespoke jewellery designer, Tynska Design, who are being supported by Ignite Business Enterprise. Applications for the second tenancy are being received and business planning workshops are due to take place at Ignite in April.

Ignite – Springwood Drive Units

Final drawings have been approved and signed off by BDC and Ignite Business Enterprise. A planning application will be submitted by the Architects in April 2013. A meeting has been held to put together a brief for the tender document, which will be sent out once planning permission has been approved.

Loving Your High Street Awards 2013

Approximately 60 local retailers and representatives from local trade groups including BDC, Ignite Enterprise and Town Teams attended the LYH awards ceremony held on 27th March at Prested Hall. This year 3,808 votes were received for 139 shops in the District. The new category 'Customer excellence award' proved very successful receiving 503 votes and the winner being a Braintree Market Trader.

10p after 3 - Car Parks (excluding White Horse Lane which is not part of the promotion)

Following the successful first year of the promotion the Council formally launched the extension of the parking initiative to March 2014.

Councillor Chris Siddall
Cabinet Member – Prosperity and Growth

Contact:	Councillor Chris Siddall
Designation:	Cabinet Member
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COUNCIL
22nd April 2013



LIST OF PUBLIC MEETINGS HELD SINCE LAST COUNCIL MEETING		Agenda No: 15(iv)
Corporate Priority: Not applicable Report presented by: Not applicable Report prepared by: Alastair Peace – Member Services Manager		
Background Papers: Published Minutes of the meetings listed within the report below.		Public Report
Options: Report for noting		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary: Since the last Council meeting held on 20 th February 2013, the following minutes have been published for the meetings held in public session: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 13th February 2013 (2) Planning Committee – 19th February 2013 (3) Council – 20th February 2013 (4) Planning Committee - 5th March 2013 (5) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 13th March 2013 (6) Braintree District Local Highways Panel – 14th March 2013 (7) Planning Committee - 19th March 2013 (8) Governance Committee - 20th March 2013 (9) Licensing Committee – 25th March 2013 (10) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 26th March 2013 (11) Planning Committee – 2nd April 2013 (copy to follow) (12) Cabinet – 8th April 2013 (copy to follow) (13) Local Development Framework Sub-Committee – 11th April 2013 (copy to follow) 		
Decision: Members are invited to note the minutes published.		
Purpose of Decision: Not applicable		
Officer Contact:	Alastair Peace	
Designation:	Member Services Manager	
Ext. No.	2602	
E-mail:	alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk	

Business of External Organisations Annual report on the Citizens Advice Bureau	Agenda No: 17(a)
Report presented by: Councillor Jennie Sutton Report prepared by: Councillor Jennie Sutton	
Background Papers:	Public Report
Options:	Key Decision: No
<p>The Citizens Advice Bureau as a lot of you will already know is an organisation that helps residents of the district with problems that they may have – such as benefit, debt, housing, domestic abuse/violence, unemployment, tribunals and lots lots more.</p> <p>There service is entirely free (unless you wish to make a donation) and the volunteers that give advise go through a very stringent training, which is always ongoing with all the changes that take place in benefit laws, housing and debt etc.</p> <p>This year (starting April 2012 to end March 2013) has been one of the busiest years ever for the CAB – not only with clients but also with moving premises in Halstead to Ramsey School.</p> <p>One of the first things to sort out was the Essex Virtual Call Centre Telephone Service otherwise known as VCC. The two year funding that we received for operating a telephone gateway service ended at the end of April, and we felt that we wanted to keep the momentum of our telephone service to our clients going. So we had to find new ways of operating. Having been encouraged to join the Essex VCC we felt now was the time to consider this. The Essex VCC consists of a number of bureaux who have grouped together to provide a gateway service to Essex clients who reside in the participating bureaux communities. It is administered by Brentwood CAB and currently includes 8 bureaux across Essex. Each bureaux undertakes to provide some hours of telephone gateway service to the VCC per week.</p> <p>When a bureau is logged onto VCC, calls will come in from across the VCC region. The client is then given a gateway assessment, but if it is found that a full interview is required – then the gateway assessor will e-mail the clients local bureau – who will then contact the client to make an appointment to be seen at the bureau.</p> <p>The whole point of the VCC is that this system provides a much larger number of hours to clients</p>	

We have also been awarded £7,000 for new telephony and will liaise with Uttlesford CAB who have also been awarded funds on the possibility of a joint purchase, thereby hopefully cutting down cost for the two of us.

Consumer Direct is now a part of the CAB and is called Citizens Advice consumer service. So far there do not seem to have been any big issues it seems to be running very smoothly, and of course involves a closer working relationship with Trading Standards.

Outreach services are currently delivered from two venues in the Braintree District. This service provides access to advice for clients living in outlying areas where a lack of public transport makes it difficult for them to visit one of the three main bureaux. Presently outreach sessions are held at :- Coggeshall Village Hall and Freshwell Health Centre – Finchingfield. The advisers that take on outreach are paid members of staff as they self supervise – so only experienced advisers are employed in this role.

We offer a specialist Money Advice Service for clients with more acute money problems or those facing financially related legal action. The adviser can be contacted directly through a dedicated phone line or by appointment after a referral from a generalist adviser. The money advisers will help clients prepare financial statements for creditors – help them with budgeting etc. Where necessary the money adviser may negotiate with creditors and other agencies on behalf of the client.

BHW CAB also delivers a Disability Outreach service that supports disabled clients in their homes by assisting them with their benefit claims. Advice will also be given on any other eligible benefits and Social Care Packages that might be available to them.

There is a dedicated Welfare Adviser who works 24 hours spread across 4 days. This person offers advice on a wide range of Welfare Benefits issues, and clients can request a home visit.

We held an opening event at our new premises at Ramsey College in Halstead on the 6th June, where Cllr David Hume – Mayor of Halstead cut the ribbon. Everyone that attended said how nice the new premises looked.

We have been in discussions with Braintree Council and the Department of Works and Pensions over the impact of the Localism Act on its policies. The scale of this is already clear, in relation to the benefit ceiling cap and the ‘spare rooms’ edict, which comes in next year. Universal Credit will also be implemented in the near future, and one aspect that we will be looking at is the impact of HB being paid directly to the tenant rather than the landlord.

We have been talking with Braintree District Council and Greenfields about the provision of continued money advice, both want to fund some money advice hours for us. This is due to the anticipated impacts of welfare reforms, especially changes to housing benefit and council tax benefit. These additional demands for money advice coupled with our reduced capacity and imminent changes to our management structure mean that we will have to consider some structural changes to our money advice team. We must deliver a consistent service to our sponsors such as BDC and Greenfields. Both BDC and Greenfields are now helping to fund Money Advice for which we give our thanks.

Business of External Organisations Braintree District Voluntary Support Agency - Annual Report	Agenda No: 17(b)
Corporate Priority: Report presented by: Councillor Sandra Howell	
Background Papers: None	Public Report: Yes
Options:	Key Decision: No
<p>BRAINTREE DISTRICT VOLUNTARY SUPPORT AGENCY (BDVSA) - ANNUAL REPORT</p> <p>The BDVSA is a registered charity whose aim is to give help and support to the many voluntary and community groups in the Braintree district. It is funded by a grant from Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, the mid Essex PCT and a five year grant from the Lottery Fund. All these grants are monitored closely and the Lottery Grant is for a specific piece of work known as Management Matters, the aim of which is to support, co-ordinate, promote and develop the work of the voluntary sector within the Braintree District. It is envisaged that up to 300 voluntary organisations benefit from this grant.</p> <p>BDVSA still feel their most important role is to enable local statutory and voluntary organisations to work together openly and to help small groups in the community with training, governance and management issues.</p> <p>Every year volunteering enquiries continue to increase and in 2012 they received nearly 1600. About 250 people go on to register and another 300 are referred directly to other agencies. Figures show that 90% of all volunteers come from the 18 to 35 years age group, followed by 8% of 36 to 60 years and 2% over 60 years.</p> <p>On 1st April 2012 the BDVSA took on the responsibility for BDC's Health Walks Programme. A Health Walks Project Leader was appointed for twelve months and he has worked tirelessly with the 50+ volunteers to ensure that the 11 health walks across the district continue to grow and provide health benefits to those living in the Braintree District. The main problem has been finding the funding to continue this work. Although there have been several successful small bids, major funding has proved elusive. BDVSA feel that funding should come from Health but with the changes from Primary Care Trusts to GP Consortiums it seems that nobody is willing, at present, to commit themselves to sanctioning funding.</p>	

BDVSA recognise the importance of this programme and are extending the Project Leader's contract for three months in the hope that during this time a successful bid will be made. They would also like to publicly thank Angela Verghese for her help and assistance in putting bids together.

Members may recall that at a previous council meeting it was reported that BDVSA had taken the painful decision to discontinue the gardening scheme called Greenfingers. Every year I reported on the tremendous growth in demand for this scheme where one paid gardener and one volunteer helper tended over 100 gardens belonging to older or disabled people. There was always large waiting list and referrals were growing all the time. Matters came to a head when the gardener went on long term sick leave and BDVSA were faced with paying other agencies to do the work for them. This was always a self-funding scheme and quite simply there wasn't any money to pay another organisation to carry out the work.

As you can imagine this decision was quite distressing to the people whose gardens were tended as for many people it was also a social contact. I can however assure members that every person affected has been offered alternative help.

BDVSA are also part of an Overview and Scrutiny in-depth review being undertaken by a Task and Finish Group, a first draft of which has just been published.

Finally could I remind members that BDVSA produces a quarterly newsletter and a small pamphlet called 'snippets' copies of which are now emailed to you and which I hope you enjoy reading.

Cllr. Sandra Howell

Business of External Organisations		Agenda No: 17c
Ignite Business Enterprise		
Corporate Priority:	Prosperity and Growth	
Portfolio Area:	Boost employment skills and support business	
Report presented by:	Cllr Siddall	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
Options: Report for information	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>Ignite Business Enterprise was formed from the merger with Business Development Services (BDS) and Braintree Enterprise Acorn Units (BEAU) in April 2012. The purpose of the merger was to provide a fit for purpose organisation to deliver local business support activity, which would be sustainable, self-sufficient and efficient, providing business support and work space options for SME's (small and medium sized enterprises) and new start-ups in the district.</p> <p>At present Ignite has 30 incubator units at Springwood Drive which are fully let. They also lease the Corner House office building in the town centre which is not fit for purpose.</p> <p>The successful and fully occupied Braintree Enterprise Centre promotes 30 small businesses, providing them with integrated business support and work space options.</p> <p>Plans are currently moving forward to extend the existing enterprise centre at Springwood Drive in order to create a sustainable service, meet increasing demand and provide a revenue stream for the newly formed Ignite. This will enable the delivery of incubator units for start up businesses and business support services for the Braintree District.</p> <p>The extension will provide 12 new business incubator units (6 x 20m² and 60 x 40m²) as well as training and conference facilities. The Council is investing £866,000 of Growth Area Funding and is hoping to secure a further £300,000 funding from Essex County Council.</p>		

The new building will provide fit for purpose units which can serve a range of different local businesses and also provide flexible work units which are able to grow with the businesses and change in size.

Plans for the extension have been finalised and a planning application will be submitted in April 2013 with work commencing on site in the summer and completion anticipated in September 2014.