

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 12th July 2017



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P Barlow (Vice Chairman)	Yes	G Maclure	Yes
Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	Mrs I Parker	Yes
Mrs D Garrod	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	No	B Rose	Yes
A Hensman	Apologies	P Schwier	Yes
P Horner	Yes	C Siddall (Chairman)	Yes

1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all Councillors remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision when the Item was considered.

2 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

3 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP 2016-17**

INFORMATION: Members were advised that the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a joint responsibility upon specific agencies to develop and implement strategies to protect communities from crime and help residents feel safer. It was therefore a requirement of each Local Authority across the country to have a Community Safety Partnership.

The Braintree District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was made up of representatives from Braintree District Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Essex Community Rehabilitation Company, Essex County Council (Primary & Secondary), Community 360, Greenfields Community Housing and Mid Essex CCG.

There was a statutory requirement for Community Safety Partnerships to carry out an annual strategic assessment. This assessment collated and analyzed statistical and

contextual data from a range of partners and was used to inform key findings and recommendations for priorities moving forward.

Members were informed that the key priorities for 2016/17 were to reduce the risk and impact of hidden harm, reduce re-offending and effective Partnership Working to meet emerging local threats and issues. Some of the key partnerships involved with the Community Safety Partnership were the Essex Police Strategic Tasking Meeting, and the Community Safety Hub.

The Braintree District Community Safety Partnership received an annual Community Safety Grant from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and for the year 2016/17 this amounted to £20,158.

It was reported that one of the emerging crimes in Braintree was in relation to gangs and serious organised crime and a seminar was held to increase awareness and understand the issues affecting the district. Training sessions on domestic abuse and the work of Safer Places had also been provided. A referral system had been set up by One Support, whereby partners were able to identify vulnerable people within the community who may have been associated with gangs and refer them to One Support where they were able to gain access to a support package. The Community Safety Partnership also served its first closure notice on a property within Braintree following repeat complaints from local residents in relation to anti-social behavior and criminal activity. This was the first time this power from the ASB, Crime & Policing legislation had been used. The notice was effective and the occupier received support from partners in relation to other issues and had since gone on to lead a positive life providing support to others.

Members were advised that the priorities for 2017/18 would remain the same moving forward and a decision was taken across the county to reduce each CSP's annual allocation by 12%. This amount alongside other funding had been directed into a centralised pot to deal with any future DHR's (Domestic Homicide Reviews) that may unfortunately arise.

DECISION: That Overview & Scrutiny review the annual report and make recommendations to Cabinet, if necessary.

REASON FOR DECISION: To highlight any issues for the Cabinet Member to consider.

5 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP - SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO OBESITY IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

INFORMATION: Further to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review into Health in the Braintree District, a Task and Finish Group was set up on behalf of the committee to undertake a specific scrutiny review into obesity in the Braintree District.

Following a meeting with Adrian Coggins, Head of Public Health and Wellbeing Commissioning, Essex County Council, the Task and Finish Group decided to focus their review on childhood obesity. The Group took part in a number of evidence gathering sessions where they were joined by representatives from Essex County Council, Braintree District Council, Slimming World and Fusion.

A number of recommendations had been formulated, following the consideration of the evidence gathered by the Task and Finish Group from the various specialist invited speakers who gave their perspective on the local obesity issue.

Members were advised that following the Task and Finish Group's Scrutiny Review into Obesity some of the recommendations put forward by the Group were already being implemented and Members agreed to reflect this in the recommendations. Members also agreed to include an additional recommendation for consideration by Council and response from Cabinet in respect of the contents of vending machines in the Council Offices with a view to include healthier options for staff.

DECISION: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the report and recommendations put forward by the Task and Finish Group, including the additional recommendations put forward by the Committee, and that the recommendations are then reported to full Council for referral to Cabinet.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committees' report to be referred to Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

6 **THIRD EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO EMPLOYMENT SITES AND PREMISES**

INFORMATION: This was the third evidence gathering session of the work programme for the Committee's Scrutiny Review into employment sites and premises.

The session provided Members with an insight into the restrictions of the availability of commercial property from a Chartered Surveyors perspective and also an introduction to the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) in respect of the Publication Draft Local Plan Employment Land Supply. The following invitees had kindly agreed to participate in the scrutiny review and they attended the meeting to present information and to answer Members' questions:-

Paul Bird, Managing Director Joscelyne Chase,
Janet Whyte, Project Manager – Braintree District Council,
Gary Sung, Senior Policy Officer – Braintree District Council.

The following points were made by Paul Bird, Managing Director Joscelyne Chase in his presentation to the Committee:

- The Skyline 120 site had been a very successful scheme for Braintree as a major business park for the area. This shows the different range of types of deals that have been completed and the variety of companies that have relocated to the business park from inside and outside the Braintree area.
- Over the past 10 years over 0.5 million sq ft of warehouse, industrial and office space had been developed on the Skyline 120 site. The entire scheme was kick-started when the developers, Countryside, built seven units at the end of the estate and a deal was made with Standard Life to purchase the completed warehouses as long term investments which then enabled the developers to fund the infrastructure leading up to the estate.
- Since the completion of the seven units these had been sold on twice, firstly to Aviva and more recently sold on to Mercury Asset Management.
- The variety of companies on the site include Connectix a cabling systems company, who had relocated from a number of units at the old Broomhills Industrial Estate, and Zodiac Aerospace, who maintain and repair the emergency shoots on commercial aircraft.

- Countryside sold a site to the Delamode group who built an 80,000sq ft warehouse, which was now fully occupied and was a major logistics company.
- Countryside also developed the Urban Hive which was made up of nine small warehouse units which were designed to be of use to a number of different companies for a variety of different purposes and Joscelyne Chase originally sold all nine units, mainly to owner occupiers. Some of the companies who purchased units included Urmet Domus, who moved to the area from Great Dunmow, G & G Gallo Enterprises, a wholesalers, and Wyatt Crocker Ltd, an ironmonger who relocated from Romford.
- Another type of deal that Countryside had carried out included a freehold design and build package. An example of this was with Coopers Stortford who were unable to find premises in Bishop's Stortford and decided to relocate to Skyline 120 where they were offered a building that met their needs in a good location with links to a major road. Having agreed a specification, Coopers Stortford was then provided with a price and a timetable within which the unit would be built. The first payment was for the land, which was financially advantageous as this included stamp duty payment for the land and not for the entire unit. Whilst the building was being constructed they would pay for this in tranches with the final payment following completion subject to specification needs being met. The Coopers Stortford unit was constructed within 6-7 months.
- Many companies were attracted by the Council's planning process being very receptive to new businesses moving into the District and the planning consents being granted reasonably quickly. This, combined with the availability of land, speed of building production and cost advantages was a major incentive for companies wanting to relocate to the District.
- Countryside also produced the Courtyard which was made up of seven small office buildings, which were again sold mainly to owner occupiers.
- It was reported that there were three sites remaining and as a result of Countryside being more focused on residential development in recent years, decided to sell the service sites. This was unusual for a developer as under normal circumstances it was much more profitable to build on sites, however in this instance the development had reached its capacity and Joscelyne Chase were able to dispose of the three remaining sites which were purchased by Oadby Plastics, Global Engineering and Westdrive.
- Members were advised that the entirety of Skyline 120 was now either let or sold and currently there were no commercial buildings of warehouse or industrial design on the market.
- On the Springwood Industrial Estate there were currently two buildings available. One of which was currently being marketed on a short term basis and the second building was currently on the market with another agent. These were the only commercial buildings available in the area.
- The owners of a nine acre site at the end of Bradbury Drive on the Springwood Industrial Estate had recently secure planning permission for 20,000 sq ft of warehousing and industrial space, however due to the market for industrial investments in the south east currently being very limited, the owners had been offered substantial sums of money and had decided to sell it on for a profit. This has delayed the process in respect of the end occupier.
- Skyline had been very successful in terms of helping local companies expand as well as attracting new businesses in to the area.
- There were significant issues with the access to the Springwood Industrial Estate; the traffic flow could be eased by enabling relief through to Panfield Lane and this was something the Council may be able to assist with.

Members of the Committee received a presentation from Gary Sung, Senior Policy Officer, which may be viewed on the Council's website at:

The following points were made by Gary Sung, Senior Policy Officer in his presentation to the Committee:

- Members were reminded of a presentation they received in December 2016 on the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA). The ELNA was a technical assessment by specialists who undertook an employment land survey in October 2016 and gathered additional information through a desktop study. As part of the survey officers were able to identify clusters of B class uses of more than 2.5 hectares in the District. A call for sites was undertaken in 2014 and officers also considered the inclusion of sites received in the draft Local Plan consultation in June 2016.
- In terms of demand assessments officers use the East of England Forecast Model (EEFM) as a baseline and account for other local factors and drivers of change to produce a range of scenarios for economic growth. The medium growth scenario would result in a requirement of 49.6 hectares.
- Policy LPP2 of the Local Plan set out the location of new employment land and it was intended to allocate 51.1 hectares to match the medium growth scenario.
- There were seven recommendations in the ELNA, which were set out in the report. The recommendations were based on local economic factors to establish strengths and weaknesses and implications of future employment land and premises. Analysis included population profiles, commuting patterns and changes to industrial activity over the last 20 years.
- The majority of the recommendations were adopted by officers and incorporated into the Local Plan, however there were discretionary judgments exercised on some sites. The Halstead town centre cluster was reduced from 4 hectares to 1 hectare and this would be a mixed use site, a comprehensive redevelopment area for Factory Lane, west of Kings Road. There were new clusters being established as an extension to Eastways, Panfield Lane and a small extension to Bluebridge Industrial Estate and sites at Gosfield Airfield and Earls Colne Airfield were partially taken forward as allocations.
- A reserved land extension to the west of Eastlink 120 was rejected; however there was still a significant allocation at this site.
- It was reported that 19.5 hectares would be required for office space. 60,000 m² was the mid-point for new requirements between the high and low economic growth scenarios. This represented a 25% growth of current office space.
- 60,000 m² was the equivalent of delivering 3,300 m² of office space a year; this was a significant increase to the 2300m² that had been delivered in previous years.
- To meet the required 49.6 hectares of office and industrial employment land the Local Plan allocated 51.1 hectares of new employment land. This included a degree of frictional vacant land for choice and competition.
- There were also allocations to be determined at major business parks on each of the cross border garden communities. The final amount would be determined through strategic growth DPDs in agreement with partners and this would be in addition to the 51.1 hectares identified.

The Chairman thanked invitees for their attendance and he expressed his gratitude for their contributions to the Scrutiny Review.

7 **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO EMPLOYMENT SITES AND PREMISES WORK PLAN FOR 2017-18**

INFORMATION: Members considered the anticipated work plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Scrutiny Review into Employment Sites and Premises for 2017/18. Members were reminded that this was an 18 month review and would run until March 2018 when recommendations put forward by the Committee would be received by Full Council and responded to by Cabinet.

The work plan outlined the keys dates and stages for the Committee's scrutiny activities.

Members were advised that included in the work plan was the opportunity to attend site visits. The first tour would consist of a day trip to a number of selected industrial sites, including those at Earls Colne and Skyline 120. Members were informed that a potential date for the tour would be circulated to Members and that a maximum of eight Members would be required. Following the site visits Members would then be required to report back to the Committee on their findings. Members were also encouraged to carry out visits to other sites across the District in their own capacity where appropriate.

The second tour was scheduled for September – November 2017 and would look to focus on individual company visits and again would consist of a maximum of eight Members

DECISION: That the anticipated work plan for 2017/18 was noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To ensure that the Scrutiny Review is delivered within the agreed timescale.

9 **ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2017-18**

INFORMATION: Members were advised that due to a technical issue, a topic submitted by Councillor Mrs Parker was not received by Officers during the period for submissions and was therefore not considered by the Scrutiny Steering Board to be taken forward as a topic for Scrutiny Review. Copies of Councillor Mrs Parker's submissions had been tabled for the meeting.

Members were reminded that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme and, in doing so, it should take into account wishes of the Members of the Committee and have regard to the Scrutiny Steering Board's recommendations. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was currently engaged in an 18 month scrutiny review into Employment Sites and Premises, which was due to be completed in March 2018, and as a result of this, for the year 2017/18 the work programme was limited to Task and Finish Groups only.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny Steering Board and the Council's Management Board had considered the submissions and, in doing so, had recommended that Physical activity in the District and the role of the Highway Authority in the Braintree District should be taken forward as topics for the Committee's work programme.

Following a debate by Members, the consensus of the Committee was that the topic regarding Physical activity in the District may cover similar ground to that of the previous Task and Finish Group into Obesity, and whilst Members did not disregard the importance of this issue, felt that the Committee would be best focused on other issues facing the

District for this year's Scrutiny Review by Task and Finish Group. As a result of this, it was agreed by the Committee to adopt the additional topic put forward by Councillor Mrs Parker into Tourism in the Braintree District as a single topic for this year's Scrutiny Review by Task and Finish Group.

DECISION: It was agreed:

- 1) That the topic for Scrutiny Review by Task and Finish Group for the year 2017/18 is:
 - Tourism in the Braintree District – July to March 2018.
- 2) That the Committee delegates authority to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Review by Task and Finish Group.
- 3) That the topic submission of Planning Committee's adherence to the concept of localism be recommended for inclusion in the Member Development Programme.
- 4) That the Governance and Member Manager commence the call for expressions of interest for Members to form the Task and Finish Group.
- 5) The determination of the Membership of the Task and Finish Groups is delegated to the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in consultation with the Scrutiny Steering Board.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the Council Procedural Rules for Scrutiny Reviews and to set down the annual work programme.

10 **DECISION PLANNER**

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st August 2017 to 30th November 2017 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.35pm.

Councillor C Siddall
(Chairman)