

MEMBERS' FOCUS

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AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Braintree Community Transport	CONTACT OFFICER: Tracey Corcoran
TEL/EMAIL No.:01376-347604/tracey.corcoran@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: ?
<p>INFORMATION: Braintree Community Transport is a working partnership between Essex County Council and Braintree District Council. We offer three transport services for residents (who meet a set criteria) of the BDC area.</p> <p><u>Minibus Scheme</u></p> <p>Three 12 seater, fully assessable minibuses, owned by BDC. Two kept in Braintree, one in Witham for use by any non-profit making group in the district. A registration fee of £10 per year then the group pays for mileage. Groups can utilize our bank of MiDas (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) trained volunteer drivers or we will train a person nominated by the Group to drive on their behalf.</p> <p>Used by groups for day trips, clubs, social trips etc the service is dependent on a volunteer being available. The Service operates at all times.</p> <p><u>Social Car Scheme</u></p> <p>Co-ordinated by Braintree Community Transport and operated by volunteer drivers using their own vehicles, who receive out of pocket expenses only on a non-profit making basis of 35p per mile. This service is for individuals living in the district who have a disability, mobility problems, are rurally isolated or whose needs are not met by public transport. Membership based at £7.50 per year then the member pays a contribution towards the cost of their trip at 35p per mile, minimum fare of £1.75 applicable. Trips must be pre-booked with Braintree Community Transport. The services operates Monday to Friday approximately 8.00-18.00 with a very limited service during the evening and at weekends. The service is dependant on a volunteer being available.</p> <p>Used by individuals for shopping, social events, clubs, education and any medical appointment except hospital.</p> <p><u>Dial-a-ride Scheme</u></p> <p>We have one dial-a-ride vehicle owned by ECC and operated by a driver employed by ECC. Predominately for wheelchair users and their carers who live in the district and are unable to transfer into a car therefore unable to use the Social Car Scheme. Membership and costs are the same as the Social Car Scheme. The service operates from 9.00-17.00 Monday to Friday (a little flexibility can be arranged).</p> <p>Use as Social Car Scheme.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Promoting Democracy

SUBJECT: Freedom of information	CONTACT OFFICER: Mike Letch
TEL/EMAIL No.: 2723 mikle@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
INFORMATION: Implications of the new Freedom of Information Act	

The Freedom of Information Act comes into force on January 1st 2005 and covers any information held by public bodies. After that date, anyone requesting information from a public authority will be entitled to be told whether the public authority holds that information and, if so, to be given that information. An individual's right to information is absolute, but some exemptions will apply: personal data is still covered by the data protection act, national security, police operations, and ongoing commercial discussions will all be exempt for obvious reasons, but in the main, a public authority will need a pretty convincing reason for not disclosing something.

Although they seem contradictory, the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act support each other quite well. Freedom of information is about people having access to the background information that helped inform a decision. It only relates to non-personal information about things, places and ideas. Data Protection only relates to personal data and personal data is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act. The two acts are complementary to each other but the Data Protection Act will always take precedence to safeguard people's privacy.

The intention of the Act is to make it easy for people to get access to information, so their request does not have to be formal or complicated. There are no official channels for requests, so an enquirer can submit a request to any part of the organisation, and assume that it will be managed. This means that all Council Employees and Members will need to be alert to the fact that they could be asked for information, as there is quite a strict and demanding deadline of twenty working days to respond. Training will be provided for staff and Councilors to ensure that we will recognise a Freedom of Information request and do something about it.

The Act is fully retrospective, so it applies to all electronic and paper records, no matter how old and no matter what form they take. Handwritten notes, emails and comments on reports are all fair game. Anyone will be able to request information, and there will be very few reasons to withhold it. Personal data will be protected, as will matters relating to security, legal action and commercial confidentiality.

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To ensure that people get access to information, it will be a criminal offence to destroy information that is the subject of a freedom of information or data protection request. Where there is doubt or accusation, there must be a clear records management procedure, which will show that information was destroyed in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures and not in response to an information request.

With such wide-reaching powers to explore files, it is sensible to make sure that they are as we would wish them to be. The more records we store, the longer it takes to search them so it is in our interest to only keep what we need, and to be ruthless about disposing of unwanted documents. Although it is easy to look at this as a way of losing inconvenient or 'difficult' information, it is not. By opening-up records to public inspection, it ensures that we only keep things that are relevant and necessary. If we have no need of it, we should get rid of it. This is the freedom of information act, not the storage of information act. The idea is that people should have access to the information that shapes their lives, *if it exists*. If it no longer exists, it cannot affect them, and so the spirit of the Act is to keep only the information you need, and make it available to those who want to know.

What will the Council have to do?

- Identify all the information that we hold and note how and why we store it.
- For all information, think what we want to keep and whether we really need to keep it
- Only keep information that you would be prepared for members of the public to see.
- Think about the phrasing and terminology used in documents.
- Consider how less formal records are kept. The Freedom of Information Act covers all hand-written notes and emails as well as formal records.

At the moment, the Government is not clear on what sort of charging policy it expects. We will be able to charge a realistic amount for information request but we should wait for the guidance in October before setting a charging policy.

The Government and the Information Commissioner's Office will be publicising the right to information, but we will also need to publish information on our responsibilities for making information available to those who need it, and reminding the public how to request information.

It is difficult to estimate demand but other countries which already have a similar act in place regularly face a demand of several thousand requests a month but the largest demand is likely to be for education, social services and health information.

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AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Investors in People	CONTACT OFFICER: Charmaine Dean
TEL/EMAIL No.: ext 2740	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The answers to the 'Coffee Time Quiz' in your JULY Member Focus are as Follows: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BDC first committed to achieving IiP in February 1992 and were actually awarded it in 1993. We were proud to be one of the first Local Authorities to achieve Authority-wide IiP and gave assistance to a number of other authorities to meet IiP requirements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Our 'delivery partner' is Business Link for Essex - they can guide an organisation and arrange for an Assessor from the local Regional Quality Centre to undertake the assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The type of documentation which would assist an Assessor (in understanding how Members are developed) would typically be: the Member Induction Programme, *Training Needs Analysis forms and a results summary, the Training Records, Evaluation summaries, and the Strategic Business Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The role of any Member which might be spoken to would be to provide an accurate picture of the way Member Learning and Development is carried out in BDC, and to demonstrate an understanding of where your learning fits into meeting the needs of the business. For instance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How development opportunities are brought to your attention How you evaluate your learning (ie what do you do differently/better etc as a result of what you have learned) How you share your learning/knowledge within your group (or wider) What 'learning' you have undertaken recently - and how that fits into our Strategic Objectives <p><i>* The response rate to requests for completion of the TNA form is approximately 33% - although the deadline date has passed it would be most useful if those not yet returned could be asap – thank you.</i></p> <p>There are 4 Principles that Investors in People are based upon: COMMITMENT PLANNING ACTION EVALUATION <i>Communication</i> is a vital thread which is looked for to ensure each Member and Staff knows – that their contribution is valued - how their contribution fits into the bigger picture - what that bigger picture is – and how each of us can develop.</p> <p>The Council is well positioned for a good outcome with comprehensive procedures and systems having been in place for many years and improved upon consistently. However we are dependant upon everyone playing their part .</p> <p>As well as further information in your September issue there will be a short Member Seminar on the evening of Thursday 23rd Sept – notice will be in your post.</p>	

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Diary Dates

Taking a stand against anti-social behaviour

Residents across the District are invited to visit the **Taking a stand roadshow** to learn more about how they and their neighbourhood can take a stand against anti-social behaviour. Representatives from the Community Safety Partnership including Environmental Health, Housing and Community Safety Officers, the Police and EYPDAS (Essex Young Peoples Drugs Advisory Service) will be on hand to talk about problems with anti-social behaviour and to offer advice.

Residents will also be able to nominate someone or a local group who deserve recognition for finding ways to deal with problems in their neighbourhood in the national **Taking a Stand awards scheme**.

In Braintree the roadshow will be joined by the BBC Essex mobile radio studio for live features throughout the morning. The roadshow will run from 10am until 4pm at:

Witham	Newlands Shopping Centre	Monday 26 th July
Braintree	George Yard Shopping Centre	Wednesday 28 th July
Halstead	outside Solar, Weavers Court	Friday 30 th July

ENDS

For further information please contact :
Councillor Wendy Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Public Protection, 01376 345636
Jayne Mills, Anti Social Behaviour Liaison Officer, 01376 551414 ext. 2330

Issued by PR Section 20 July 2004

News

Award recognises aim to involve minority groups

Page 1 of 2

An Essex wide project to reach out to ethnic minority groups has gained an award from the East of England Regional Council for Local Government Services. Two project workers aim to improve representation of the views of ethnic minority communities in the work of councils, police, health authority and other related organisations. Encouraging minority groups to become established will ensure continuous representation in policy making and consultation.

The award submission was prepared at Braintree District Council on behalf of the Essex wide group and the presentation was made to Essex Racial Equality Council outreach worker Jatinder Purewal, Equalities officer Sheila Cook, Ch Insp Steve Tutton and Braintree District Councillor Tony Shelton.

Councillor Tony Shelton comments: "It's often difficult for people to feel confident that their views can count with all the different local authorities: and all the more so if they have a different cultural background. In Essex we want to encourage more local minority communities to contribute their point of view so that services can be provided equally to everyone who needs them."

Jatinder Purewal comments: "The project has been a success although it can be difficult finding groups, clubs and associations for people from minority communities. We have made contact with a number of groups and would welcome contact from others, so that they too can have their say in how services are run in Essex."

ENDS

Notes: Local contacts for ethnic minorities can be made through the Essex Racial Equality Council: 01702 333351 or the equalities officer at each of the partner organisations.

Participating organizations include all District Councils in Essex, Southend Unitary, Essex County Council, Police, Fire and Rescue, Health, Courts, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service, Youth Offending Teams and Chelmsford Prison.

Further notes on p2.

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Regional equalities award – notes continued

Picture caption (available separately by e-mail or print): Reaching out to minority groups and waiting for your call: left to right, Jatinder Purewal, Sheila Cook, Steve Tutton and Tony Shelton.

Building Cohesive Communities is a project led by Essex Police, endorsed by the Essex association of chief council officers and is steered by a group of “equality” professionals from Essex local authorities and statutory agency partners. The project has been jointly funded by the organisations represented on the Steering Group and is funding a project to build network and consultation capacity with ethnic minority communities in Essex. This is a particularly valuable piece of original research for those of us who are struggling to make connections with our ethnic minority residents.

Essex Racial Equality Council has been commissioned to run the project and they report directly to the Steering Group. They have recruited two project workers who will have completed their gap analysis by the end of March 2004. The project will then concentrate on outreach work.

The Steering Group is already being acknowledged as the potential start of a county-wide network for equality practitioners

Although not yet completed, this project shows best practice in

- Addressing a common issue through joint working
- Working with a range of partners
- Sharing resources to achieve joint objectives
- Working with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and the Community Cohesion agenda
- Developing a county-wide equality network

For more information contact: (01376) 557752
Issued by: PR Section 29 July 2004

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News

HMS Kite memorial unveiled

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At 11.30 am on Saturday 21 August 2004, Mr Lionel Irish, one of the last two living survivors of the tragic sinking of HMS Kite, will unveil a memorial to the crew in the Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens. Mr. Irish will be joined by relatives of those lost on HMS Kite, members of the HMS Kite Association, local members of the Royal Naval Association and British Legion, The Chairman of Braintree District Council and Alan Hurst MP.

It will be sixty years ago, on the date of the unveiling, that the German submarine U-344 attacked the Arctic convoy and sunk HMS Kite. Of the 226 crew only 16 men were pulled from the sea by HMS Keppel and of those seven died of wounds or exposure before the Keppel docked - just nine of the HMS Kite crew survived.

Braintree like other towns in the UK participated in the "Warship Week" by investing in National Savings Certificates. By 1941, a total of 99 National Savings Groups had been formed in the town at factories such as Crittall's and Warner's as well as establishments such as Townrow's, the Town Hall and the White Hart Hotel. Their motto was "the more you lend the quicker the end". The aim was to establish a savings group in every street and the success of these groups meant that enough money was invested to enable the Kite to be officially adopted in March 1942.

Braintree supported the Kite in many ways. Townspeople sent parcels, cigarettes and letters to the crew of the vessel as well as knitting balaclava's and socks. In return, the crew of the Kite made a presentation to the town of a model and many crew became pen pals with residents.

Portfolio holder Councillor Tony Shelton said,

"We are delighted to welcome Mr. Irish to Braintree once again. The memorial will be a lasting tribute to the crew of HMS Kite and marks an important period of our recent history."

ENDS

News

Visitor numbers up at new area office

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Visitor numbers are up at the new area office in Halstead. During the first week of August nearly double the number of visitors called in at the new office at The Centre compared to the same week at the office in Trinity Street last year. From 2nd to 6th August 311 customers visited the new office with various inquiries, during the same period last year the area office had 171 visitors.

The internal layout of the office is bright and open, rather like a building society. Up to nine people are working or are based there and the office offers an expanded range of services, based on a state of the art communication link with Causeway House in Braintree. The idea is for people to be able to sort out their queries by talking directly to the staff on hand and there are private areas for confidential meetings if necessary. There is a leaflet with a list of services available at the area office.

Cabinet member Councillor Nigel Edey comments: "It is encouraging to see residents in the Halstead area are visiting the new area office in its more accessible location at The Centre off the High Street. I congratulate all the staff for their efforts in making the transition so smoothly while continuing to offer their usual excellent service to our customers".

ENDS

For more information contact:

Anne Proudfoot (01376) 557752

Issued by: PR Section 12 August 2004

News

New Residents welcomed to the District

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On Thursday 19th August at 11.30am the new PACT Welcome Guide will be launched at Freeport Braintree. The free 'moving-in' guide will help new residents get their bearings with essential information like how to find a doctor or where is the nearest civic amenity point to offload all that packaging or items left by the previous household. Every new resident moving into the Braintree District will receive the Welcome guide on the day they move into their new home. It will help make life a lot easier by providing information about:

?local schools and courses dentists	?registering with doctors and dentists
?registering for council tax	?24-hour supermarkets
?refuse collection and recycling	?access to civic amenity sites

...and much more.

The Welcome guide has been produced by **PACT** (Partners and Communities Together), the local strategic partnership for Braintree District. The content and design of the new guide reflects the views of a group of residents new to the District who were asked about their experiences of moving home and the type of information they would find useful. The guide has attracted private sector support from the Freeport Braintree outlet shopping village.

Chairman of PACT, Councillor Michael Lager comments: "There's a lot of research which shows that if people feel connected to local communities and can settle in quickly, it has positive outcomes for their overall health and well-being". He added, "Our own research shows that local people have a strong sense of community and pride in where they live. We'd like newcomers to feel that way about the District too. We all know that first impressions count. I hope our new residents will have a good first impression of our District."

John O'Shea, Freeport Braintree Manager said,
"I've just moved into the District myself – and I think that the Welcome leaflet is a great idea. I've had to move lots of times with my job in the past and I've never received anything like it. It's going to be really useful for anyone moving into the area."

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For more information contact: Martyn Woodward 01376 551414 ext 2001

New residents will be joining the launch and will be available for photographs

Issued by: PR Section 16 August 2004

News

A safe District – getting even safer

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A newsletter delivered to 20,000 households in the north of the Braintree District this week aims to strike the right balance.

The leaflet deals with anti-social behaviour and the practical action that local people, organisations and the Police can take to avoid and reduce it.

Councillors recognise that it's not easy to provide hard information of this kind, without contributing to people's fear of crime, which tends to be greater than crime statistics should suggest.

The leaflet goes a long way to put anti-social behaviour into the context of a District which is one of the safest in the UK.

It has been produced by the local community safety partnership: county and district councils, Care Trust, Police and fire service authorities and has been funded as a small part of a £146,000 Home Office programme of support to local communities: the Building Safer Communities fund. During this and next year, many local projects will receive support and some are shown in the leaflet.

District councillor Wendy Schmitt comments: "It's everything from stopping litter and gum on the pavements, to improving play equipment and support for vulnerable people. Most people have pride in the place where they live and by working in partnership we can help to encourage everyone to make their District an even better place."

Police divisional commander Sue Harrison adds: "The community safety partnership has been set up between many local organisations to really improve people's quality of life; with a mixture of environmental and community benefits. It's good for everyone and helps reduce the need for intervention by the Police."

ENDS

Notes: Cllr Schmitt is a cabinet member at Braintree District Council with special interest in community safety and crime reduction.

For more information contact: Cllr Wendy Schmitt (01376) 345363 or Chris Trim on 557752 Issued by: PR Section 20 July 2004

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AREA: Finance

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: **Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit**

SUBJECT: Pension Order Books	CONTACT OFFICER: June Theisinger
TEL/EMAIL No.: junth@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: Following a liaison meeting with the Pensions Service on 15 th July 2004, they have confirmed that pension order books will only be issued with the last payment counterfoil due to run out in February 2005. After May 2005, order books will no longer be cashable at Post Offices. The Pensions Service are in the process of writing to all Pensioners with order books to make arrangements for payments direct to their bank accounts, or for swipe cards that can be used at the Post Office to collect pensions only. In a minority of cases, they will issue pensions by cheque to the person's home address.	

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AREA: Community Needs

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Meeting Community Needs

SUBJECT: Reality Road Show	CONTACT OFFICER: Julie Payne
TEL/EMAIL No.:2344 julp@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Reality Roadshow 2003</p> <p>Following a successful funding bid to the Essex County Council Public Service Agreement Pump-priming target 11 grant for £15,000, a project team was set up to coordinate and deliver the 'Reality Roadshow' to all year 9 (13 - 14 yrs) students in secondary schools within the Braintree District over two years.</p> <p>With Jo Charnley (our Crucial Crew consultant) taking the lead, a project team was established that consisted of: Essex Police, Youth Offending Team, ECC Road Safety, Witham, Braintree & Halstead Care Trust, Essex Young Peoples Drug Awareness Service, Essex Fire Service, BDC Environmental Service, Essex Youth Service and Freeport Number Ten. BDC Community Safety & Development team</p> <p>The remit for the project team was to produce an interactive educational initiative with the aim to reduce youth offending & address Anti Social Behaviour.</p> <p>It was decided to deliver the project on a full day basis into each secondary school in the District. The format of the day starts with a play that depicts youths stealing a vehicle, joy riding and ultimately setting fire to it. Rickstones School Vith Form Drama students are invited to participate and use this event as part of their coursework as 'Theatre in Education'.</p> <p>The play is followed by six workshops where the issues raised within the drama are unravelled. The five drama students are each given outlines by the workshop facilitators of what characteristics they would require. The actors work extremely hard to make sure that all these aspects are worked into the fabric of the play, so that these factors could be an integral part of the workshops. The actors remain in character and each attend a workshop participating and interacting where needed.</p> <p>Each Head of year 9 is approached and then visited to sort out the details for the event visiting the school and dovetailing it into the normal school timetable. The timing of the workshops, catering, equipment required by workshop organisers, plans of the school layout were the sort of matters, which are discussed. In order to accommodate us on the day, they reserve either the Hall or Drama studio plus six classrooms. They also agreed to allocate the students to the six workshops prior to the event.</p> <p>The Reality Roadshow was successfully delivered to all 8 secondary schools during two weeks in Oct/Nov 2003. The second event will take place Oct/Nov this year.</p>	

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All students and teachers are asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of the day in order for the event to be evaluated. Some very positive comments are received from the teachers who are keen for us to return again this year.

This Reality Roadshow was the first of its kind in 2003 & the team has learnt a lot during its delivery and, has plenty of good ideas to improve the project this year.

The Essex Fire Authority research intelligence data for 2002 indicated that the 14 to 16 years old age groups were heavily involved in car crime, minor arson related fires and hoax calling to the emergency services. It is reassuring to discover that recent Fire Authority statistics demonstrate a reduction in all levels of crime in the Braintree area.

The event heavily relies on the use of volunteers, and welcomes colleagues to take part in this year's event.

If you would like to be a part of this valuable project – please contact Julie Payne on Ext 2344.

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AREA: Braintree

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Create a Cleaner & Greener District

SUBJECT: Proposal for additional residents-only parking in Braintree.	CONTACT OFFICER: Simon Taylor
TEL/EMAIL No.: simta@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: During the week commencing 16 th August 2004 there will be a small exhibition of proposals to introduce further areas of residents-only parking in Braintree. The roads affected are: Grenville Road, Clydesdale Road, College Road, Hunnable Road, Peel Crescent, Sunnyside, Bunyan Road, Progress Court, parts of Rayne Road & Clare Road plus Croft Close and amendments to Coronation Avenue. All properties in areas involved will have been leafleted in the week prior to the exhibition informing them of its occurrence and where and when it can be viewed. Feedback sheets will be available for comments to be made. The exhibition will be accessible until 8:00 pm on Thursday 19 th August to afford those who work normal office hours an opportunity to view. The exhibition details will be available for personal; viewing in the weeks following the exhibition for those unable to attend for whatever reason. All comments received will be analysed prior to BDC and Essex County Council making formal proposals for the scheme and initiating the Order-making process. Given the expected volume of comments, it is unlikely that individual replies will be made - a rider to this effect will be included on the comments forms.	

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AREA: Finance

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Technical update;- Local Taxes	CONTACT OFFICER: David Ekins
TEL/EMAIL No.:davek@Braintree.gov.uk chrnc@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Balance of Funding Review</p> <p>Proposed options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reform Council Tax<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change the number, width and multiplier for the tax bands• Above would not resolve issues of house price divergence across UK, so regional banding might also be considered.• Reform Council Tax Benefit is vital to the reform of Council Tax.• Have a new Local Income Tax<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would affect all Council Tax payers in the district• Inland Revenue would have to be the collection agent• Tax collection shifts from property based to income based• Re-Localise Business Rates<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow authorities to retain their own business rate receipts. The Local Government Association is in favour, the CBI is not. Central Government seems to be in favour and the debate continues. <p><u>Council Tax – general issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power now available to local authorities to grant local discounts. The billing authority funds this. It is designed to enable authorities to grant discounts when properties are flooded and uninhabitable for a period of time.• The Civil Partnership bill allows for civil partners to be treated the same way as married couples for the purpose of Council tax legislation. It becomes effective in Autumn 2005.• All households containing someone aged 70 or over will receive an additional £100 in Autumn 2004.• Council Tax revaluation due in 2007. <p><u>Business Rates – general issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provision of an automatic rate relief of 80% for clubs registered as Community and Amateur Sports Clubs, effective from April 2004.• A new business rate revaluation comes into force on 1 April 2005. The Valuation Office intends to send out “summary valuations” to the majority of ratepayers from October 2004. Ratepayers will receive better advice about how their business rate is calculated.• Up to 60% of businesses could see a fall in their <u>relative</u> rateable values - and in their rates bills.• The overall rateable value for non-domestic properties in England will increase by 17.9% (see below) but this does not mean a corresponding increase in rates bills as	

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the overall tax take will not increase.

Overall Effect of Revaluation 2005

Economic Region	Average % change in RV from the 2000 rating lists to the 2005 rating lists	Average % change in liability as a result of revaluation before relief's are applied
East	20.5	1.1
East Midlands	15.9	-2.8
London	17.1	-0.8
North East	15.0	-3.4
North West	14.9	-3.5
South East	20.2	0.7
South West	19.9	0.4
West Midlands	13.6	-4.5
Yorkshire and Humberside	13.1	-5.3
Central list	32.9	10.5
Total	17.9	-

- Ratepayers with larger increases in their bills will be helped by a four-year transitional scheme. The scheme will phase in the increases, allowing businesses to plan for their impact.
- Small businesses will also benefit from the small business rates relief scheme starting next April, which will 'cap' their contributions.
- The table below shows the movement in rateable values by region and property type.

Movement in Rateable Values - By Region and Property Types

Region	Main Property Types							
	Offices		Shops		Warehouses		Factories	
	RV Change	Liability Average	RV Change	Liability Average	RV Change	Liability Average	RV Change	Liability Average
East	6%	-1.6%	7%	1.3%	3%	1.3%	9%	0.4%
East Midlands	18%	-1.4%	23%	3.6%	15%	-3.2%	12%	-6.0%
London	11%	-5.4%	26%	7.1%	23%	2.8%	22%	3.0%
North East	24%	2.2%	24%	4.8%	13%	-4.8%	13%	-5.6%
North West	18%	-0.5%	22%	3.0%	11%	-6.4%	10%	-7.3%
South East	8%	-9.0%	29%	8.4%	29%	8.8%	23%	3.4%
South West	21%	1.6%	27%	6.3%	16%	-2.3%	14%	-4.8%
West Midlands	15%	-3.8%	20%	0.7%	11%	-6.6%	6%	-11%
Yorkshire & Humberside	14%	-3.9%	26%	6.0%	12%	-5.7%	9%	-8.3%
England	13%	-4.7%	25%	5.7%	18%	-0.5%	14%	-4.2%

- The figures show the largest increase in rateable values is for shops - reflecting the

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nationwide retail boom. Rateable values have also risen the most in the South and the South East, reflecting rising prosperity in these areas.

- A consultation document on the scheme will be published in early August. The consultation will continue until October. This means ratepayers will know their own individual proposed summary valuations before they respond. The Government will put the final arrangements for the scheme in place by December.
- Information on summary valuations and small business rate capping will be soon be found on a new web site www.mybusinessrates.gov.uk.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDS)

- Consultation period has ended. Copies of comments are available on www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov_027826.pdf

Valuebill

- Valuebill aims to join up Local Authority address data and Valuation Office data more effectively to fit the requirements for Revenues. It should streamline processes and reduce the cost of collection. At this time, it is in a pilot stage at the London Borough of Newham and seven other authorities.

Conclusions

The main queries that will arise from emerging legislation are

- When will pensioners receive their £100 payment?
- Summary valuations will provide businesses with information about their rateable values that has not previously been available. Whilst BDC may get a significant number of enquiries, businesses will be redirected to the Valuation Office who are gearing up for an anticipated 20,000+ enquiries.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Temporary Service disruption Housing & Council Tax Benefits, Council Tax, Business Rates and Other Income	CONTACT OFFICER: June Theisinger, David Ekins, Chris McCloud
TEL/EMAIL No. junth@Braintree.gov.uk davek@braintree.gov.uk chrnc@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>The Council is replacing its Computer system that covers these areas. To allow the transfer of data to the new system it is planned to stop processing work for 3 weeks 10/10/04 - 4/11/04.</p> <p>During this period a full enquiry system will be available, but we will be unable to process transactions onto the customers accounts.</p> <p>This will obviously cause a backlog of work that will be corrected in the immediate period after the new system is up and running. Arrangements will have been made to minimize the effects on benefit recipients, however, it will delay implementing new benefits and changes in circumstances. These will however be prioritized after 4/11/04.</p> <p>Arrangements will also be put in place to maximize the collection of debts and associated recovery processes.</p> <p>A detailed communication plan has been drawn up and stakeholders will be notified using a variety of methods.</p> <p>This change will lower the key performance indicators of the sections and it is unlikely that we will remain in the top quartile during the transition.</p> <p>There is a risk that this 3 week period may prove insufficient, if so, corrective measures will be taken at the time and members advised in retrospect.</p> <p>If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact the Project Manager. Cherie Root ext. 2954 or on chero@braintree.gov.uk</p> <p>Further information regarding changes in service and arrangements during the transition will be available in the September Members Focus.</p>	