

Extract from the draft Minutes of Business Council 11th January 2010

1 Declaration of Interests

The following interests were declared

- Jim Addison declared a personal interest as a senior manager at the College at Braintree, for items during the meeting that linked with skills, employment training and enforcement/anti social behaviour issues.
- Brenda Baker declared a personal interest as Chairman of Braintree Against Retail and Business Crime, for the enforcement and anti social behaviour references during Item 2 – Business Consultation 2010/11.

2 Business Consultation 2010/11

Councillor Butland presented the Budget Consultation reports and referred to the main issues guiding the Council for the next 2 – 3 years, including the current significant reductions in income, the triennial review of the Council's pension scheme and the final year of (i) the pledge to keep the Council Tax increase down to 2.5% and (ii) the Government Comprehensive Spending Review. From 2011/12 onwards an assumption has been made of a percentage decrease of funding from central government. This results with the Council seeking £1m to £1.5m in savings on the Revenue Budget over the next two years. The Capital Budget is in a better position, and the Council are looking at ways to make this money work for them. A significant consultation process had been undertaken, and public feedback had resulted with some areas being revisited, i.e. community wardens, Parish Support Grant. It had also identified areas of concern – more visible enforcement actions on anti social behaviour, and planning contraventions. Public response had also been received on proposals to increase car park charges. The Council are looking to transfer Community Halls under their management to local community groups and organisations - who can access funding opportunities - and expressions of interest are required by 31st March 2010.

Members stated that the 'pay on exit' system at car parks is the preferred option of the business community – and this had been reiterated at previous Business Council and Partnership Board meetings. Although this method did find support from the Leader of the Council, Members noted that it is not currently possible to achieve this as the car park has to have two exits, and be staffed to allow for broken machines. However, the new machines will have increased flexibility and ways are being explored to attract customers, i.e. off-peak parking offers, free parking for events.

During the discussion the following issues were raised or noted

- that a significant proportion of the funds lost with the Icelandic banks will be recovered, and increase the Capital funds
- the publication of a draft Cultural Strategy is pending, and could assist on the Community Halls aspect
- the introduction of Village Agents and their remit to signpost services for the elderly and vulnerable people in the community. Village Agents are part of a two-year pilot scheme funded through the LSP as a joint partnership project
- to take into account those Parish Councils with a cash surplus that is used for specific projects, and have limited funds due to the size of the community. Parish Council's also have to 'match fund' most grants
- the Council will know in late January if the Secretary of State had agreed an application for capitalisation of revenue costs

- a meeting is taking place on 12th January 2010 between 'key players' in the BDS/BEAU joint project to deliver a range of business support services
- the facility for businesses to pay their Council Tax/Business Rates over a 12-month period will continue. Over 240 businesses had already used this option
- the anti social behaviour feedback received through the Place Survey was considered to be on the perception of anti social behaviour. An example was given of the initiative of Colchester and Uttlesford Councils when streetlights had been switched off early – this had resulted with the level of crime falling, but the perception of anti social behaviour increasing. Youths congregating in a group also create a perception of anti social behaviour.

The Chairman, Jim Addison, queried that as the Council appear 'Capital rich' whether there are any ways to help the revenue shortfall. Councillor Butland advised that the future of Mayland House, Witham (when determined) could produce revenue income, and the Braintree Town Hall Centre site, the Newland Street site in Witham, the Community Halls, and buildings in the Halstead project could assist.

The Leader of the Council stated that feedback on the Budget proposals is welcome until 31st January 2010, with the final decisions being made at Cabinet and formally at Council on 15th February 2010.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Butland and Mr Myers for their attendance at the meeting.

DECISION: That comments and/or proposals stated above are conveyed to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 1st February 2010.

Service Level Agreements with Greenfields Community Housing

	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £	2012/13 £
Grounds Maintenance (expired 31/12/09)	0	137,000		
Street Scene (expired 31/12/09)	6,450	19,350		
ICT (extended to 31/10/09)	72,400	165,650		
Cashiers (extended to 30/09/09)	(70)	-		
Customer Services Centre (expired 30/09/09)	101,790	66,050		
Out of Hours Service (expired 30/09/09)	44,210	14,730		
Cordons Farm (extended to 31/03/12)	33,670	(33,670)		134,670
Payroll (expired 31/03/09)	(5,310)	(5,000)		
Procurement (expires (31/03/10)	0	-		
Choice based lettings (expires 31/03/12 under review)	0	34,670		15,330
Leased Car admin. (expires 31/03/11)	0	0	2,950	
Graphic Design and Reprographics (expired 31/10/09)	0	0		
	253,140	398,780	2,950	150,000
Accommodation - Causeway House (expired 31/10/09)	(15,000)	140,000	(92,500)	(277,500)
Accommodation - Millenium Tower (expired 31/10/09)	0	206,440	(100,000)	
	(15,000)	346,440	(192,500)	(277,500)
Total Value of Service Level Agreements - Added to Base/ (Reduction from Base)	238,140	745,220	(189,550)	(127,500)

Requests for Revenue Funding

Date Produced: 15th January 2010

Business Plan	Project Title	Project Description	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
			£	£	£
Enterprise & Culture	Corner House -External Works	To carry out urgent repairs to the roof areas of the Corner House as specified in Asset Management Condition Report dated 2/7/09. Works to include replacement of the cracked and missing roof tiles, repair of the flat roof area and the overhaul of the lead gutters and downpipes.	3,400	0	0
Enterprise Culture & Leisure	Economic Development	To provide an grant to Braintree Development Services/Braintree Enterprise Acorn Units (provisional figure)	40,000	0	0
Enterprise Culture & Leisure	Leisure Services	Reorganisation and restructure of Leisure Services	8,390	8,390	8,390
Housing Service	Temporary Accommodation	Recharge from GCH regarding voids and repairs on properties held on behalf of BDC and council tax liabilities	39,000	39,000	39,000
Operations	Landfill tax	Every year disposal costs increase as a result of increases in Landfill Tax	25,000	25,000	25,000
Operations	George Yard Car Park Maintenance	Overhaul and clean out gutters, surface-water outlets and down pipes and sweep the car park surfaces on a regular basis to ensure that the structure is not damaged by penetrating water. Allow £1000 four times each year £4,000 - (Urgent) CCTV survey of the drains adjacent to the leak in the lift pit. Allow £600 - (Urgent). Structural monitoring - Allow £1250 (Urgent) Cut out the applied caulking to the expansion joints in the main fabric and replace or apply a replacement aesthetically pleasing solution. Allow £4000. (Essential) Make good the defective electrical ducting adjacent to expansion joints that have parted, exposing the cable and giving cause for the concern of the public. Replace badly corroded electrical ducting on stairs damaged by moisture ingress through natural light/ventilation openings or vandal damage. Allow £500. (Urgent)	10,350	5,000	5,000
Operations	Sports Ground Demolition Project	The demolition of a brick and tile storage building at King George V Playing Field which is no longer in use and is currently in a very poor condition.	5,000	0	0
Total of Revenue Bids			131,140	77,390	77,390