



Parish Update

The December edition of the Parish Update takes you through to Spring 2007. As you can see, there's a slight 'Christmas' feel to the Newsletter – sorry about the cracker jokes but if you would like to know the answers please look at the back page! (Editor)

A message from Councillor Wendy Scattergood, Member of the Council's Cabinet for Planning and Rural Issues:

“As this is the first Christmas edition of the Parish Update, on behalf of Braintree District Council Members and Staff, I would like to take the opportunity to wish all Parish Councillors and Clerks a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. May I also thank the Councillors and Clerks who have attended the various events we have held during 2006? I look forward to seeing you all in 2007.”

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Children's Activity Days - Page 2
- Autumn Parish Fete Event – Page 6
- Clerk's Guide – Page 6
- Dog Warden Service – Page 3
- Drainage/Blocked Drains – Page 11
- Emergency Plans – Page 5
- Junior Allotments – Page 4
- Parish Precept – Page 3
- Parish Warden Scheme – Page 7
- PCSO's – match funding – Page 9
- Tree Warden Scheme – Page 8
- Abuse of vehicle weight restrictions - Page 8

IMPORTANT NEWS

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: The Rural Community Council of Essex has moved offices – new address and contact details are:
 Rural Community Council of Essex
 Threshelfords Business Park
 Inworth Road
 Feering
 Essex CO5 9SE
 Telephone: 0844 477 3938
 Fax: 01376 573524

Email address remains the same:
rcce@essexrcc.org.uk
jan.cole@essexrcc.org.uk

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR AWARD WINNING PARISHES –

BULMER - Certificate of Merit award from Essex Environment Trust for Coe's Meadow – look inside for more information on this project – Page 9.

HELIONS BUMPSTEAD - for winning NALC website of the year.

HALSTEAD – Best Town Category - Silver Gilt Award – Anglia in Bloom.

KELVEDON – Best Small Town Category – Winner and Silver Gilt Award – Anglia in Bloom.





COMING VERY SOON for Parish Councils and Tree Wardens!!

Tree Warden – “getting to know you” event at Causeway House – **14th December 2006** – 7 pm – 9.30 pm – refreshments available – **more information on page 8.**

COMING IN 2007 – Braintree District Clerk's Network – meeting at Causeway House – Thursday 22nd February – invitation will be sent out shortly.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY DAYS

Would you like us to bring the Children's Activity Days to your Parish in 2007? Braintree District Council's Leisure Development Team is inviting all parishes to host an Activity Day during the Summer Holidays next year.

The Activity Days were a great success this year with almost 800 children across the District between the ages of 5 and 11 benefiting from the art, craft and sports activities.



A charge of £5 per day, per child is made. This income contributes towards the cost of materials and equipment, but by no means meets the staffing costs of Activity Days. We ask that parishes provide a venue free of charge for the day (a parish hall with a small field or green area is ideal) and in return our experienced team of Activity Leaders will provide a day of fun activities for the children of your Parish.

Parents in your parish simply contact our Customer Service Centre (01376 552525) who can take payment over the telephone to confirm the child's place on the Activity Day.

We will provide you with posters and leaflets to display in your parish and write to your local school providing them with information leaflets to distribute to children and parents.

Places are allocated to Parishes on a first come, first served basis so contact the Leisure Development Team now to reserve your place!

For more information or to reserve a place for your parish, contact the Leisure Development Team - Tel: 01376 552525 or email activitydays@braintree.gov.uk

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

More help for sports coaching in rural areas

Braintree District Council has been successful in its application for funding for 2 part time community sports coaches. This funding is from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport through Sport England.

We will shortly be advertising the positions with a view to the coaches being in post in early 2007. The funding is for multi skills coaches and part of their remit will be to ensure that the rural parts of the Braintree District gain access to quality coaching.

For further information on the scheme please contact Mark Aldous, Sports Development Officer, Braintree District Council
Email: mark.aldous@braintree.gov.uk
Tel: 01376 551414

Christmas cracker joke number 1:
Q: Why is it difficult to keep a secret at the North Pole?
(Answer on page 12)



SERVICES

DOG WARDEN

Andrew Potter, who covers the south of the A120 and Stuart Thompson who covers the north of the A120, operate the District Council's Dog Warden Service.

Most of their work is concerned with investigating complaints about dog barking and dog fouling in public places. They also erect dog-fouling warning signs, dog-waste bins and deal with stray dogs.



All dog and cat boarding establishments in the district are also inspected and licensed.

The dog wardens will attend dog shows, parish/town and school fetes and give talks to dog clubs, parish councils and other organisations, as well as carrying out dog micro chipping at a cost of £15 per dog.

They can be contacted weekdays on Tel: 01376 551414 - ask for them by name or key in Ext: 2217 or a message can be left, which will be responded to as soon as possible. Email: andpo@braintree.gov.uk, or stuth@braintree.gov.uk.

If your council would like the dog wardens to attend your village fete or any other event or would like them to visit your parish to carry out dog micro-chipping, please call to discuss your requirements.

Christmas cracker joke number 2:
Q: What's the best way to stop food going bad?
(Answer on page 12)

FINANCE

Local Precepts and Parish Support Grant (PSG)

A big thanks to all Parish/Town Councils for returning their PSG3 (Pink) Forms. This information will be used to determine future levels of grant and returning the form is a requirement of the scheme. The PSG3 Form is also now available electronically and those who have used it feel it is quicker and easier to complete than the paper version and the automatic checks help to ensure figures are entered correctly.

If you have yet to return the 2006/07 Form and would like to receive an electronic version please contact Victoria Farquharson at vicfa@braintree.gov.uk.

All Parish/Town Councils should now have received a letter providing details relating to local Precepts and PSG for 2007/08. This includes notification of PSG entitlement for 2007/08 and a Precept form for submitting your Parish/Town Council Precept for the 2007/08 financial year. Please ensure that PSG is taken into account when calculating Precept and that certified forms are returned by 19th January 2007.

The Precept requested will be converted by BDC to an inclusive Band D rate for each parish/town area. This information illustrates the impact upon taxpayers and will be communicated back to the parishes from early January, as Precept forms are received. Please check this information as any issues need to be addressed immediately. PSG and the 1st Precept installment will be paid on 27th April 2007.

If you would like to receive your payments via BACS please email: Pat Russell, Payments Manager, at pat.russell@braintree.gov.uk with your bank account details and an email address or fax number for receiving remittance advice.



JUNIOR ALLOTMENTS

Do you have allotments in your parish?

Are they all being used?

We are starting a project for the young people in the district whereby they will be able to grow their own vegetables, which will promote healthy living.

A local firm has promised seeds and we have arrangements in place to clear sites where they have become overgrown.

The young people would have the satisfaction of growing their own produce as well as getting out in the fresh air and having a useful hobby, which would last them a lifetime.

They would gain an appreciation of nature, an understanding of recycling; obtain a sense of ownership, achievement and value as well as being able to eat what they produce.



If you would like to be part of this project please contact Tony MacDonald, Community Safety and Development Officer.

Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2356 or

Email: Tony.Macdonald@braintree.gov.uk

HOUSING BALLOT HAS BEGUN

Tenants and leaseholders are to vote for or against transfer to Greenfields Community Housing in confidential ballots before Christmas 2006. All council residents have now received their Offer Document and a second transfer DVD, which outlines what transfer would mean for residents and how Greenfields Community Housing would be set up and run.

All residents have now been posted their ballot paper and they can vote either by post, telephone or via the Internet. The ballot is being carried out by Electoral Reform Services, who are independent ballot specialists. Tenants and leaseholders have until noon on the 15th December 2006 to place their vote.

Transfer will only happen if there is a majority yes vote in the ballot. If tenants vote yes to the proposed housing association, it will take approximately one year to set up.

Please call The Better Homes Team at Braintree District Council on FREEPHONE 0800 7811 344 with any further enquiries.



CULTURAL SERVICES

We can help you produce a village guide to record and identify what makes your parish special and unique, establish a village trail or perhaps set up an art project? Projects have been completed in many villages and if you have ideas or projects please contact the Cultural Team.

Tel: 01376 325266 or email:

jean.grice@braintree.gov.uk



PARISH EMERGENCY PLANS

Following the success of the Parish Fete and the interesting discussions which took place, the Emergency Plans team will be offering assistance to Parishes with creating their own Emergency Plans.

In times of emergency or if an incident occurs within your Parish, it will often fall on Community Leaders to be resilient and help their Community in the first few minutes or hours before the Emergency Services can attend, or the District Council can respond.

Parish Councils know their “patch” the residents and the resources available better than anyone else.

A Parish Emergency Plan is, at its most basic, a list of contacts, key holders and telephone numbers. A comprehensive plan can include lists of resources such as generators, 4 x 4 vehicles, people who speak other languages etc.

Nine times out of ten a Parish will not have to become involved in the initial response of an incident; however you will certainly be involved in the recovery from it.

A plan template is available on the Braintree District Council website:
www.braintree.gov.uk – Click on Council & Democracy - Parish Information – Emergency Planning.

Leaflets Available

The following leaflets are available on how to prepare for emergencies and these can be downloaded from the BDC Emergency Planning Web Page:-

- Flood Advice
- Driving in Severe Weather (Hot or Cold Weather)
- Preparing for Cold Weather and Storms & Hot Weather

Also available:-

- Braintree District Council Generic Emergency Plan 2006
- Braintree District Council A Guide to Business Continuity Planning Booklet

Contact the Emergency Planning Team:-

Kathy Brown, Health, Safety & Emergency Planning Manager & Rachel Hutchinson - Joint Emergency Planning Officer
Tel: 01376 557753;
Email: Kathy.Brown@braintree.gov.uk



Christmas cracker joke number 3
Q: What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus?
(Answer on page 12)



RURAL ISSUES AND PARISH LIAISON

Parish Fete Event – 5th October

The colourful balloons and bunting reflected the energy that went into developing this lively event. Partner organisations were keen to join us.



Stallholders were innovative in the way they promoted their services and shared information through the use of games and prizes, adding to the fun.

There were over 40 fete stalls providing information about services. They included services from Braintree District and organisations such as Essex County Council, the NHS and the Police, Voluntary Agencies, Children's and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership, Highways, Probation and many more. It was a great opportunity for networking for stallholders and Parish and Town Councils alike.

Everyone enjoyed this so much that we may repeat it in the future. Would you like us to hold this event again?

We would like to know your views, please contact Linda Hadley on Tel: 01376 551414 or Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk

Clerk's Guide – Pilot Project launched at the Parish Fete

The Clerk's Guide has been developed in partnership with Essex County Council and Essex Association of Local Councils, primarily to help new Clerks but it's also hoped the document may prove useful to all Clerks in the Braintree District.

We are gradually distributing the guides to our 54 parishes/towns, many through the Cluster meetings and others delivered personally. As this is a document to be added to and improved upon, your comments will be most welcome.

Contact Linda Hadley, Parish Liaison Officer
Tel: 01376 551414
Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk

CHARTER MARK

The Council has succeeded in being awarded a Charter Mark for Development Services. This is the fourth time it's been achieved, the first award being in 1993 when Braintree was the first District Council to receive it for Planning.

The services which have been recognised are Development Control, Building Control, Sustainable Development, Community Transport, Landscapes and Economic Development and Rural Policy.

The Award is for excellence in public services and follows a rigorous assessment process carried out over a two-day inspection earlier this year and interviews with local organisations, partners and service users.

Thank you to the parish council representatives who supported us through this process.

Congratulations to Mel Whiteside, Rayne Parish Clerk, for winning the stallholder quiz held during the Parish Fete event - a £25 token to be used in the district has been sent to Mel.



REFUSE AND RECYCLING COLLECTIONS - CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

There will be NO collections between 23rd December and 2nd January due to public holidays and limited availability of disposal sites.

Households on WHEELED BIN collections:

Please check your calendar which incorporates the Christmas/New Year collection arrangements for your area. Green bin collections will be suspended either side of the Christmas week to allow for an extra grey bin collection (shown on your calendar by a box around the relevant date).

Households on BLACK SACK collections:

From 2nd January, REFUSE collections will be one day later all week, with Friday's collection being done on Saturday, 6th January. Dates for RECYCLING collections are shown on your recycling calendar.

NORMAL SERVICE RESUMES MONDAY, 8TH JANUARY 2007



Have you a project or news item you would like to share with other parish/town councils? Please contact Linda Hadley – Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2343 or Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk

COMMUNITY WARDEN SCHEME

By the time you read this newsletter, you may well have already received a letter and map giving details of the changes to the Community Warden Scheme. One of these changes has been to employ a Warden Supervisor – meet Trevor Lawrence.



A member of the Territorial Army and former Diplomatic Courier, Trevor has lived in Germany, Washington and Northern Ireland to name a few places but says, "It's nice to be back".

He gives one of his reasons for applying for the post as, "I missed being part of a team - I wanted to work in the community and make a difference."

Trevor was away with the army for 22 years and still works as a TA Captain looking after 60 men so he's no stranger to taking the lead.

"I've been out with the Wardens a few times over Halloween and Firework Night and I've been knocking on doors introducing myself and getting to know the area," he said. "I'd be happy to take over if one of them was on holiday or ill."

As supervisor Trevor will be liaising with the local police stations and Parish Councils, as well as taking responsibility for the training and development of the Wardens. He is keen to make the scheme a success.

"I'd like us to be seen as a visible presence on the streets and a service that people can trust."



CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Play is what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas in their own way. At Braintree District Council we are currently carrying out a consultation with children, young people and families across the district, to find out what is wanted and needed for "play" from 0 – 19 year olds. This will inform the development of a "Play Strategy" to ensure that there is a sustainable future for play in the district.

Braintree is working in partnership with Essex County Council and the eleven other District Councils to ensure a joined up approach across the county, but also one that can represent local need. To support this joined up approach, Children's Fund Essex are hosting an online questionnaire, for which the closing date is 15th December – go to www.essexplay.com

We have consulted with nearly 2000 children and young people, but we need to know what parents and communities want.

For any further information please contact:-
Craig Horner, Children and Young People's Services Co-ordinator, Braintree District Council Tel: 01376 551414 or, craho@braintree.gov.uk

LANDSCAPE SERVICES

TREE WARDEN SCHEME

All Parish/Town Councils and Tree Wardens will have received an invitation to a "getting to know you" evening on Thursday 14th December from 7pm to 9.30 pm being held at Causeway House.

Landscape Services are aiming to raise the profile of the Tree Warden Scheme during 2007. The role of a Tree Warden is an important one and the work of the volunteers keeping an eye on trees in the parishes/towns is vital.

Do you know anyone who would be interested in becoming a Tree Warden? Contact Stephen Lester Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2315 Email: stele@braintree.gov.uk.

The event will also include a presentation on the role and responsibilities of the Council's Landscape Services team, led by Melvyn Crow. There have been some changes and new personnel. Please come and meet the team.



ABUSE OF WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

Essex County Council Trading Standards is keen to hear from Parish Councils and local residents about the suspected abuse of weight restrictions on local roads in the Braintree district by heavy commercial vehicles. They wish to ensure they target the limited resources they have available on the hotspots in the district and build up some intelligence on commercial vehicle movements on weight restricted roads.

They stress that no commitment can be given at this stage to target any particular weight restriction. Information you provide will be used to inform any further enforcement work.

They would be very pleased if you could copy and circulate the attached log sheet to those willing to participate.

All information to Matthew Sanctuary at Trading Standards; 2 Beaufort Road, Dukes Park Industrial Estate, Chelmsford CM2 6PS or call on 01245 341923

Email: Matthew.Sanctuary@essexcc.gov.uk



TOWN AND PARISH NEWS

Coe's Meadow – Bulmer Essex Environment Trust - Certificate of Merit Award

The project receiving the award was the creation of a community open space at Coe's Meadow, Bulmer, imaginatively and effectively formed on land bequeathed to the village by Mr. Lawrence Coe. The scheme was designed following consultation with the whole village and the £170,000 project developed over 3 years has provided a significant recreation area with landscaping, a walking/jogging track around the area, a wildlife pond with dipping platform, play areas with equipment, a willow bower, picnic site and car park.

This has proved a huge success, with the recreation ground being used practically every day. There are often young children using the play area with parents picnicking when the weather permits. The football area and basketball court are in constant use. It has certainly taken the youngsters off the streets and away from the bus shelters.

An award from Braintree District Council's Rural Communities Fund of £2655 for a new path has enhanced and improved an existing project for which other funds had already been secured.

“The new path has given better access to all areas of the recreation ground. It has been especially noticed by parents of schoolchildren who cross the meadow for the school bus in their ‘not so muddy’ footwear.”

POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS – MATCH FUNDING

An opportunity for parish councils to have a closer working partnership with Essex Police has arisen in the form of match funding one or more Police Community Support Officers (PCSO). Any PCSOs brought into service through this arrangement would be in addition to any in post already or any additional provision as part of the normal policing arrangements.

The current total annual cost for a PCSO is £27,000 (plus £1088 one off start up cost in year one). Essex Police Authority has agreed to provide £13,500 and as a partner the parish council would match fund the remainder.

Whilst under the direction and control of Essex Police, the officer would work closely with the parish council.

For more detailed information, please contact Chief Inspector Mark Schofield, Braintree District Commander, Braintree Police Station, Blyth's Meadow, Braintree, CM7 3DJ.

Tel: 01376 556201

Email: mark.schofield@essex.pnn.police.uk



Reminder! This newsletter is available to read on the Parish Pages of the Braintree District Council website.

(Homepage: click on Council and Democracy, then Parish Information, then Newsletter)



RURAL SHOPS

The Village Retail Services Association in partnership with Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and Co-operative and Community Finance have announced the launch of the Village Core programme, which will provide two million pounds of start up funding to new community owned shops in rural areas of England.

The funding, which will be available over the next three years will provide up to £40,000 per shop. This will be made up of a mix of grant and loan funding, as well as advice from the Village Retail Services Association.

Eligible applicants will include community based organisations located in rural communities of not less than 200 residents.

Applications for assistance can be submitted at any time up to and including the 30th July 2009.

Contact details:-

Village Retail Services Association
The Quadrangle
Woodstock
Oxfordshire
OX20 1LH

Tel: 01993 814377

Website: www.virsa.org.uk

Email: virsa@plunkett.co.uk



Christmas cracker joke number 4
Q: What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?
(Answer on page 12)

TRAINING

FUTURE TRAINING AVAILABLE AT BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING

Planning Enforcement – arrangements are being made to hold a seminar possibly early next summer on planning enforcement. Parishes/towns will be sent an invitation to attend.

ESSEX TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

STATUTORY PLANNING

Next courses available:

“Planning for the Future of your Village (or Community)” – A half day course provided by Essex Training Partnership

24th January 2007

25th May 2007

9th October 2007

ESSEX RURAL PARTNERSHIP

STATUTORY PLANNING

A one-day course – 29th November 2007 hosted by Essex Association of Local Councils in partnership with Rural Community Council of Essex for the Essex Rural Partnership.

This course is aimed at Parish and Town Clerks and Councillors:-

- Statutory Planning
- Community Strategy
- Local Development Framework
- Community Led Plans
- Linking Parish Plans to Community Strategy
- Shaping Development Plan Documents
- Village Design Statements and Parish Plans

Contact EALC/ETP – County Training

Officer – Alison East

Tel: 01371 879722

Email: Alison.east@ealc.gov.uk



DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE

Blocked Drains - Who is responsible for a 'blocked drain'? - This depends upon where the blockage has occurred in the sewer network serving your property. Firstly, it needs to be established if the blockage is in a public sewer or a private drain.

Public Sewer Blockage: Anglian Water is responsible for public sewers and sewers serving dwellings which were built before the **1st October 1937**. Contact **Anglian Water** on free phone 08457 145 145. (To report a water leak 0800 771 881)

Private Drain Blockage: You are responsible for private drains serving your dwelling. If the private drain serves more than one dwelling, collective responsibility will lie with you and your neighbours.

The Council has no responsibility for the clearance of blockages in private drains or public sewers other than in very specific circumstances when there is a risk to public health.

How do I arrange to clear the blockage if I am a **Council Tenant** or I live in a **property formerly owned by the Council**? The responsibility rests with Braintree District Council Tel: 01376 552525.

The blockage is in my private drain, what do I do? Arrange to lift the inspection chamber cover to see if sewage is backed-up. The blockage may only affect your property but check that your neighbours are not also affected.

How do I arrange to clear the blockage? - If it's your dwelling, call out a specialist drain clearance company if you can't resolve the problem yourself. You should find these companies listed in your yellow pages. If you are a private tenant, get your landlord to sort out the problem. If he won't, contact the **Environmental Health** Department.

How do I know which drain clearance company is reputable? Unfortunately the Council cannot give recommendations. Make sure you understand what is included within the price. For instance, do they charge travelling time or just for the time on site.

I have checked with my neighbours, I am not the only property affected. What do I do? - Agree with your neighbours to share the bill if you call in a company to clear the drain. Remember the company will bill the person who calls them out so you will have to seek reimbursement from your neighbours.

My neighbours are affected but some won't agree to pay or I can't contact them or we don't know which houses are connected to the private drain. What shall I do? –

Contact **Environmental Health**. The Council may be able to mediate a solution. Alternatively, it may be necessary for Environmental Health to arrange to clear the blockage and recover the cost from the householders involved. The Council's expenses will be added to the bill so it's better for households to resolve the work themselves.

The private drain serving my dwelling and my neighbour's keeps blocking. What should I do? Most drainage companies also operate CCTV camera systems to go into drains to investigate problems.

If you require advice or further information, you can contact us:

Tel: 01376 551414 ext 2221

Fax: 01376 557767

Email - csc@braintree.gov.uk





EVENTS DIARY – PARISH EVENTS

In the August edition of the newsletter, we suggested parishes contact us when setting fete/event dates. By keeping a central database it may just help you to avoid a clash of dates with nearby parishes.

Our Tourism Office has already set up a record of dates and parishes can either email information to them at: tic@braintree.gov.uk or call on 01376 550066. These dates will be included on the BDC Tourism website www.enjoybraintreedistrict.co.uk.

Would you like your posters displayed? Take them or post them to The Tourist Information Centre, The Town Hall Centre, Market Square, Braintree, Essex, CM7 3YG.

A MESSAGE FROM THE RURAL TEAM

The Rural Issues and Parish Liaison Team would like to wish you all a happy and safe, Christmas and New Year.

Thank you for your support this year and we're looking forward to working with you again in 2007.



Answers to Cracker Jokes:

Joke No: 1
 Answer: Because your teeth chatter.
 Joke No: 2
 Answer: Eat it!
 Joke No: 3
 Answer: Claustrophobic!
 Joke No: 4
 Answer: It's Christmas Eve!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (Newsletter items)

Tree Warden Event – 14th December 2006 – Page 8

Closing date for online questionnaire about Children's Services – 15th December 2006 – Page 8

Housing Ballot closes at noon on 15th December 2006 – Page 4

No refuse and recycling collections between 23rd December and 2nd January – Normal service resumes Monday 8th January 2007 – Page 7

Precept forms to be returned by 19th January 2007 – Page 3

Statutory Planning – half day course – Planning for the future of your Village (or Community) – 24th January 2007 (also 25th May and 9th October) – Page 10

Clerks Network meeting – 22nd February 2007 – Page 2

PSG and Precept 1st installment paid on 27th April 2007 – Page 3

Statutory Planning – one-day course 29th November 2007 – Page 10

Village Core programme – funding for rural shops – closing date 30th July 2009 - Page 10

Have you any ideas for future articles in the newsletter? Perhaps your parish is involved in a project and you would like to share your experience/success with other parishes/towns? Contact Linda Hadley – Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2343 or Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk