



This is the first Parish Update

'Flyer', which includes information you may wish to include in your next Cluster agenda or use for reference purposes.

Contact details are on the back page and an updated Diary of Events on page 5.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Census

Cluster Meetings

Customer Service

Housing Options – Transfer Proposal

Local Development Framework

Performance Indicators

Tourism

PARISH CLUSTER MEETINGS

Please contact Helen Riches as soon as you have set your date or if you would like help and advice.

Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2005, or

email: helen.riches@braintree.gov.uk

IMPORTANT - CANCELLATION

The Business Continuity Management Presentation scheduled for 29th March 2006 at 7.15 pm at Causeway House has unfortunately had to be cancelled.

Notification has been sent to Parishes.

COMING SOON

PARISH/TOWN CHARTER – Thank you for your helpful responses to the consultation on “The Braintree District Parish Partnership Agreement”, our Parish/Town Charter, which has been developed in partnership with the Braintree Association of Local Councils.

You will all have received a letter from Cllr Scattergood inviting you to sign the Partnership Agreement with Braintree District Council at the Parish Forum Evening (Planning Applications Update) on 20th April.

There will be other opportunities to sign the partnership with us if you are unable to make this meeting or would like more time to consider. For further information, contact details for Kitty Barrett are on the back page.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Essex Police will restructure into 5 Territorial Divisions on 1st April. As part of the restructure each Local Authority Area will have its own District Commander. Chief Inspector Mark Schofield will take the Braintree District Commander role. One of the first challenges is to implement Neighbourhood Policing Teams across the District. **Chief Inspector Schofield or one of his Area Inspectors would be pleased to speak to parishes about the Neighbourhood Policing Teams and your next Cluster meeting would seem to be an ideal opportunity to discuss the changes.** If this would be of interest, please contact him direct either by email: mark.schofield@essex.pnn.police.uk or telephone: 01376 556201.



RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

All eligible rural Parish Councils will soon be receiving information about the next round of Braintree District Council's Rural Communities Development Fund. This will be sent out in our Parish Council Mailing during the week beginning 27th March. If you would prefer to receive this information, electronically then please email Angela Verghese on angve@braintree.gov.uk

TOURISM

Marie Orpe is the Tourism Manager for Braintree District Council and would be very happy to attend your Cluster Meetings and talk about tourism in the District. Her projects include a walking guide, with information on pubs and restaurants, a shopping guide and organizing coach trips from villages to various attractions in the district. If you would like Marie to come along to your next meeting you can contact her on 01376 551414 or email: marie.orpe@braintree.gov.uk

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Customer Service Centre:

At Causeway House we have now integrated the telephone switchboard with the Customer Service Centre and as a result most callers now get what they want with the first person they speak to without being passed onto someone else. The customer advisers have access to a wide range of information and can answer queries on 131 different subjects, ranging from pest control to advice on the Freedom of Information Act. Advisers can make appointments for many services and if a customer has called before, they'll know when, why and what is needed to be done. The customer service centre now takes around 380,000 calls a year and most callers get what they need there and then.

The telephone number for all Council enquiries is 01376 552525.

Texting service:

Last December Braintree Council went live with a new system offering customers a service where they can receive a text message to remind them of an appointment they have booked, for example, a quick reminder the night before to put out items for their special collection, or of dates and times of their housing repair visits. In the long term, the system will offer the option for residents to be alerted of any changes to refuse collections as a result of unforeseen circumstances.

Anyone can now also text in to the Council about any issue. The text number to remember is: 07797 803 203 and the request will be processed by the Customer Service Centre.

First Floor Reception move:

Earlier this month after over twenty years of customers having to walk up to the **first floor** reception at Causeway House, all enquiries can now be dealt with on the ground floor. This means we are one step nearer meeting our aim of providing a one-stop shop on the ground floor.

New look at Witham Library:

From April 3 Essex County Council and Braintree District Council will be working side by side to provide a combined service under one roof at Witham Library. This new improved service will provide an easy, more direct access to Council information and to a greater number of Council services.

The aim of the move is to provide customers with access to a wider range of both Essex County & Braintree District Council services and to resolve more customer queries first time at the first point of contact. Staff at the Library will have access to a joint information system and will be able to help solve customer queries quickly, on the spot.

For more information about any of the above contact Roger Bramwell, Head of Customer Service on 01376 551414 – Just say the name.



CENSUS AND RELATED INFORMATION

Braintree District is situated in the north of Essex. It covers some 61,168 Ha (236 square miles) of largely rural land and has a population of approximately 136,200 (2004 estimate). The town of Braintree is one of England's growing market towns and the surrounding rural areas are dotted with more timber-framed buildings than anywhere else in the country.

Currently the electoral register for the District contains approximately 103,500 names.

On Census Day 29th April 2001 – the population of Braintree District was recorded as 132,179. The next census will be in 2011.

If you would like to have any information on Ward Population or other statistic breakdowns for your Parish, please ring **Helen Riches on extension 2005**.

HOUSING OPTIONS – TRANSFER PROPOSAL

The Council is currently undertaking the second phase of its Housing Options project. As a reminder, the Government required all authorities that own Council housing to conduct an Option Appraisal. The Option Appraisal for Braintree District resulted in the Council supporting a recommendation to consult with its tenants and leaseholders on the transfer of its homes to a Housing Association.

The recommendation was initially proposed by tenants involved in the Option Appraisal process. Government approval for the option selected was given in August 2005.

Why was this option chosen? Transferring all the council homes to a new Housing Association will:

- Provide the money needed to improve all council homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- Provide additional money to keep homes up to this Standard for the next 30 years,

and allow improvements to be made to neighbourhoods

- Create the opportunity to provide new affordable homes
- Give tenants and leaseholders the chance to really influence the management of their homes

The council is working closely with tenant and leaseholder representatives. It has been agreed that the new Housing Association should be a 'stand-alone' Association (ie not part of a group structure). A 'Shadow Board' for the new organisation is to be established by the end of April. It will have tenant and leaseholder representatives as well as Independent and Councillor representatives.

Tenants will have the final say about whether to transfer to a Housing Association in a ballot. This is expected to take place towards the end of the 2006/07 financial year. An 'Offer Document' will be sent to all tenants and leaseholders prior to the ballot to explain the details of the proposals. A simple majority of those voting must vote for a Housing Association for a change of landlord to take place (ie more than 50% of those voting must support the change).

Copies of all Newsletters, *Better Homes, Brighter Future*, to tenants and leaseholders will continue to be sent to Parish Clerks throughout the project to keep Parish Councils advised of local events and progress.

BRAINTREE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Under the new planning system introduced in 2004 the Council has to prepare a local development framework. This will replace the Braintree District Local Plan Review, which was prepared under the old system and was adopted in July 2005. This provides guidance for the development of the District for the period up to 2011. It will be progressively replaced as parts of the local development framework are completed.



Rather than the single document that the Council prepared under the previous system the Local Development Framework will consist of a number of documents. The Council is making good progress with the preparation of the new documents.

A **Local Development Scheme** has been prepared and approved by the Government Office. This sets out the documents to be prepared under the new system and a timetable for their preparation.

An **Annual Monitoring Report** has been submitted to the Government Office. This sets out information about the character of the District and sets out progress in implementing certain policies and proposals of the Local Plan and progress on the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The report covers the period 1.4.04 to 31.3.05. The Council will have to submit the second Annual Monitoring Report to Government covering the period 1.4.05 to 31.3.06 by the end of December 2006.

The Council has carried out consultation on its Draft **Statement of Community Involvement** and prepared a revised version, which has been submitted to the Secretary of State. This sets out the Council's proposals for involving the community in both the preparation of the local development framework and in the consideration of planning applications. It examines the different kinds of community involvement and the circumstances in which they might be used. It identifies community and stakeholder groups that are relevant and explains how we will deal with representations received. The period for making representations on the Submission Statement of Community Involvement runs from 27th January to 9th March 2006. Representations will be considered by an independent Inspector as part of the examination of the document. The Council has to accept the recommendations of the Inspector before it can adopt the document. The examination is expected in April or May this year.

The Council has published a **Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document** and an accompanying sustainability appraisal. This provides further guidance on how the Council will implement the affordable housing policies set out in the Review Local Plan. The consultation period runs from 1st February to 15th March 2006. The Council will consider any comments made, before it is adopted.

The Council will be carrying out consultation this year on issues and options for the Local Development Framework **Core Strategy**. This will consider the future development of the District for the period to 2021 and beyond. The Council intends to combine this consultation with the review of the Community Strategy and partners' strategies. It is intended that meetings with **Parish Councils** about this will take place in the summer. Preparation of an **Allocations Document**, which will include the identification of any sites that are required for housing and employment for the period to 2021, is planned to start next year.

The Local Plan Review, the Local Development Scheme, the Annual Monitoring Report, the Submission Statement of Community Involvement and Draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document can all be viewed on the Council's website at www.braintree.gov.uk

For further information please contact Paul Munson, Head of Forward Planning or Eleanor Dash, Planning Policy Manager.

Corporate Performance Indicators

Quarter 3 – October to December will be available on the Council website from first week in April. For more information contact: Ian.Orton@braintree.gov.uk or Tel: 01376 551414.



DIARY OF EVENTS

March

Week commencing 27 th March	Information will be sent to Parishes on the Rural Communities Development Fund	Angela Verghese 01376 551414 Ext: 2329
29 th – 7.15pm	Business Continuity Management (NOW CANCELLED)	Donna Walton 01376 551414 Ext. 2675

April

20 th – 7pm	Planning Applications Update “What makes a valid planning objection?”	Margaret McCloud 01376 551414 Ext. 2540
	Signing of the Parish Charter	Kitty Barrett 01376 557746
8 th - 10 am – 2 pm	Dog micro-chipping day - Witham Public Hall, Collingwood Hall	Andy Potter – Dog Warden 01376 551414 Ext. 2217
5 th and 13th 10 am 2 pm	Sensory Walk, Nature Trail Great Notley Country Park Fairview/Bocking End	Angela Norton - 01376 347134 or 07970 993624

June

1 st – 7 th	National Volunteer Week	Angela Norton – 07970 993624
date to be advised	The Opening of Fairy Wood Great Notley Country Park	Angela Norton – 07970 993624
25 th	Essex History Fair – 20 th Anniversary - Braintree	Linda Goodrich Cultural Services 01376 325266

October

5 th	Parish Evening – Fete	Kitty Barrett – Rural Policy 01376 551414 Ext 2746
-----------------	-----------------------	--

General

First Thursday and first Sunday of each month At 10 am	Practical Volunteer Tasks Discovery Centre, Great Notley Country Park	Angela Norton 07970 993624
--	---	----------------------------



A FOCUS ON RURAL ISSUES AND PARISH LIAISON

The Council continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting and working with its rural communities. In the last few months there have been a number of initiatives, which demonstrate that commitment.

One of these has been to form a small team to co-ordinate rural policy issues and events, publish a "Braintree District Council Rural Policy And Action Statement" and work with partners to continue developing relationships with rural communities and Parish/Town Councils.

Meet the Team



From left to right: Kitty Barrett, Linda Hadley, Jan Cole, Councillor Wendy Scattergood

Many of you will have met **Councillor Wendy Scattergood** who is a member of the Council's Cabinet and has responsibility for Planning and Rural Issues.

Tel: 01787 269881

Email: wendyscattergood@btconnect.com

Kitty Barrett is the Policy Development Officer and much of her work is around Rural Policy identifying any national, regional or county initiatives, which may have implications for rural areas. It also includes, monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Braintree District Council's Rural Policy and Action Statement.

Tel: 01376 557746

Email: kitty.barrett@braintree.gov.uk

Linda Hadley is the Parish Liaison Officer, who is the main point of contact with Parish Councils, continuing to improve communication and response rates relating to specific issues.

Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2343

Email: linda.hadley@braintree.gov.uk

Jan Cole is our Fieldworker, who is jointly funded by Braintree District Council and The Rural Community Council of Essex to help promote community participation, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements. Jan also provides advice to communities on progressing issues identified in their action plans.

Tel: 01245 352046

Email: jan.cole@essexrcc.org.uk

Or write to one of the team:

Rural Issues and Parish Liaison Team
Development Services
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB

Or contact the Customer Services Team

Tel: 01376 552525

Email: csc@braintree.gov.uk

