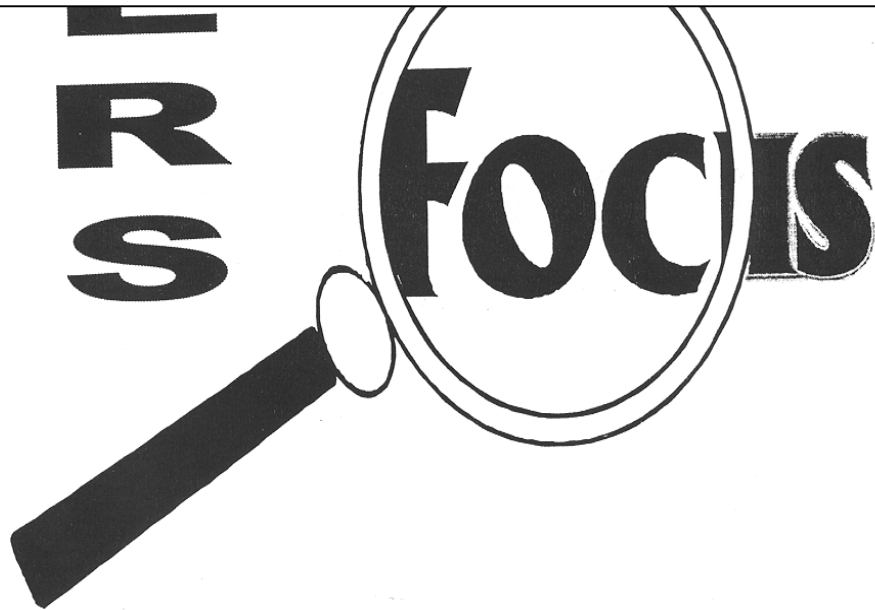


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*Members' Focus is available on-line at www.braintree.gov.uk
- Choose "Council & Democracy" from the menu on the left,
then "Members Focus".*

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Focus

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

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MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: ALL

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Helping People Feel Safe And Well/A Better Place to Live, Work and Play.

SUBJECT: European Health and Safety week 2006 – Preparing Young people from the risks of the workplace	CONTACT OFFICER: Lisa Buckland
TEL/EMAIL No.: x 2212 lisa.buckland@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>The topic for this years' European week for Safety and Health (23-27th October 2006) was '<i>preparing young people for the risks of the workplace</i>'.</p> <p>This is an important topic as in the last five years, over 50 under-18s lost their lives in UK workplaces, and nearly 13,000 were badly injured. Across Europe, young people have 50% more accidents than older workers. Generally this is because they are less skilled, don't have the same understanding of the workplace and aren't aware of the hazards that they face. Usually they also lack the confidence to challenge those who may ask them to do something that is potentially dangerous.</p> <p>The campaign was called 'Safe Start' and was coordinated by the Health and Safety Executive.</p> <p>The Health Protection contacted the Child Employment Team at Essex County Council who confirmed that they would be grateful if we could include their contact details on any campaign promotion that we did. A letter was sent to all secondary schools in the district and Braintree College enclosing a campaign pack (produced by HSE). The pack contained promotional material including leaflets (include separate advice for young people and for parents), posters and booklets and details of where to find further advice.</p> <p>Schools were asked to promote the campaign in whatever way they could, to make this easier a letter was enclosed which could be photocopied and sent home with pupils.</p> <p>The team issued a press release which featured in the Braintree and Witham Times on 1st November 2006 and the Essex Chronical on 2nd November 2006.</p> <p>The councils webpages were updated with a new page on work advice for young people, which contains many links including a link to the child employment pages of Essex County Council (the page can be found by clicking on Environment/Health and Safety/Work advice for young people)</p>	

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Causeway House

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Housing / Council Tax Benefit

SUBJECT: Access into Causeway House.	CONTACT OFFICER: C. McCloud
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 557850 chrmc@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
INFORMATION: <u>To remind Members of the protocols relating to access areas at Causeway House.</u> In order to avoid any embarrassing situations, identification badges must be worn at all times, as officers are required to challenge persons not wearing badges in non public areas and it is impossible for all officers to recognize all members. Regarding use of the member's room unrestricted access is available through the double doors. Members are requested however, to challenge anyone around this area not wearing a BDC badge or visitors label they do not recognize. Access to areas before the number lock doors is unrestricted. For access past the key lock doors, members should sign into the visitor's book on main reception and wait for an officer to escort them to their meeting/ appointment. The key number restricting access is regularly changed for security reasons and as such will not normally be notified to members.	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Reality Roadshow

A series of roadshows helping young people to make important lifestyle decisions has been hailed a success.

For the fourth year Braintree District Council has run the Reality Roadshow at each of the district's eight secondary schools for year nine pupils aged 13 and 14.

To begin the day-long event the pupils watched a drama unfold, performed by students from Rickstones Sixth Form College. They created the play themselves to incorporate the themes running through the roadshow. The pupils then took part in six different sets, moving round them all. This year the Essex Fire and Rescue service looked at hoax calls and arson and Essex County Council's road safety section concentrated on the throwing of bricks and other objects from bridges and the dangers out in the street for young people distracted by mobile phones or listening to music. Braintree District Council's set concerned antisocial behaviour and the police dealt with knives and theft among other issues. A session on drugs with a reformed addict, now an outreach worker, and discussion on alcohol and its associated problems with school nurses completed the workshops. To finish off the event the students watched the play again – this time with a different ending, showing what happened to the actors later on. **Councillor Lady Patricia Newton**, lead member for children and young people, said: "I am really pleased that every secondary school in the district has taken part in Reality Roadshow.

"It clearly demonstrates that we all must share responsibility for ensuring that our young people have the necessary information and confidence to keep themselves safe and to make choices which will not blight their lives."

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact: Tony MacDonald, community safety and development officer on 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by Braintree DC PR November 6 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Recycling roadshows

A series of roadshows has been lined up to highlight the importance of recycling – particularly over the Christmas period.

The huge seasonal increase in packaging, wrapping paper, bottles, tins, cans and aerosols makes it even more important that the message gets through to as many as possible.

The eight roadshows are being organised by Braintree District Council at venues across the district and council staff will be on hand to offer advice and answer questions.

They will also be giving away reusable shopping bags and Christmas wrapping paper.

Figures released by Essex County Council in July showed residents in the Braintree district recycled more of their waste than any other part of the county but the district council is determined to do even better.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said residents should be proud to lead the way in recycling but there was always more which could be done.

“The amount of waste we generate at Christmas really brings home the need for all of us to recycle as much as we possibly can. Please make sure the wrapping paper, bottles, tins and other recyclable waste are put out for collection and take advantage of our special collection points for real Christmas trees once the festivities are over.”

On January 7 Christmas tree recycling points will be set up in Braintree, Halstead and rural areas where residents can take their real trees once Twelfth Night has passed.

Roadshow venues:

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Date	Venue	Opening Times for Trailer	
25th November 2006	Cressing Temple Barns	10.30am - 17.30pm	
26th November 2006	Cressing Temple Barns	10.00am - 16.30pm	
2nd December 2006	Sainsbury's, Braintree	09.00am - 15.00pm	
6th December 2006	George Yard, Braintree	09.00am -17.00pm	
8th December 2006	Grove Shopping Centre, Witham	10.30am - 15.00pm	
9th December 2006	Morrisons, Witham	09.30am - 14.30pm	
12th December 2006	Halstead Weavers Court	09.00am - 16.00pm	
14th December 2006	Marks Farm, Braintree	09.15am - 16.00pm	

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact Ros Alam or Jenny Nice on 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by: Braintree DC PR November 7 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Award for sports project

A sports project involving young people across the Braintree district has come out top at an awards ceremony. The main focus of the Nacro Braintree Community Sports Project's work is in places which have been highlighted as areas of deprivation and where youth nuisance and crime are highest. Within these areas the scheme's aim is to develop football and sports-based sessions for the young people.

Its value was recognised at the Essex, Southend and Thurrock sports awards when it won the category for an innovative scheme. It will now go forward to the regional awards in the New Year. From 2001 to 2006 the project has worked with 2,200 individual young people, made more than 11,000 contacts with them and worked with 69 volunteers providing accredited training and qualifications.

Project co-ordinator Brendan Walshe said taking part in sport steered the young people away from antisocial and criminal behaviour. "The project sessions improve the self esteem, self confidence and feelings of self worth of young people while improving physical fitness and health. The volunteers play a crucial role in this process, developing positive relationships with young people and giving them a positive role model to follow."

Councillor Wendy Schmitt, cabinet member for community safety strategy said: "I am delighted the project has received the recognition it so richly deserves. It is working with young people in the heart of the community and reaching those who can gain huge benefits from taking part in the scheme." Nacro is the country's leading crime reduction charity and runs more than 50 youth activity units dedicated to changing lives and creating opportunities for young people.

The Braintree project, which works with five to 19-year-olds, began in November 1998 with an initial three-year grant from the Department of Health and Braintree District Council. This was followed by a five-year funding grant from the Football Foundation with match funding by the council. It recently secured a grant from the Essex Children's Fund, which will enable the project to continue in Braintree and also to expand into the Tendring area. Braintree and District Athletic Club was shortlisted at the awards in the team or club of the year category.

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact Brendan Walshe on 01376 551414 – just say the name.
Issued by Braintree DC PR October 25 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Vehicle amnesty

Page 1 of 1

Got an old vehicle taking up space on the drive until you can get rid of it?

An amnesty is being held to try to rid the Braintree district of unwanted vehicles by allowing residents to dispose of them responsibly and free of charge.

Throughout November the usual fee of £25 for this service will be waived by Braintree District Council.

Any vehicle, including cars, trailers, caravans, boats and even buses will be collected by appointment.

All residents have to do is to call the council and book an appointment. Proof of ownership will be needed to ensure completely environment-friendly disposal of the vehicle and all its parts.

This includes the tyres, coolant, oil, brake fluid and other parts which less scrupulous dealers will often dump rather than pay the cost of disposal, causing pollution and environmental hazards. The system also ensures that the vehicles do not find their way into the wrong hands and end up being driven on public roads in a dangerous condition.

Councillor Michael Gage, who is responsible for the local environment, said it was an ideal opportunity for people to get rid of unwanted vehicles and tidy up areas where they have been left to rot.

“The real bonus is that through this scheme the vehicles are disposed of in an entirely environment-friendly way and residents can be sure, for example, that the tyres from their scrap vehicles will not end up being dumped nearby. Hopefully this amnesty will rid the district of these unnecessary eyesores.”

Anyone who wants a vehicle taken away should contact 01376 552525 extension 2312.

Issued by Braintree DC PR September 25 2006.

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Schools' winning ways of recycling

Page 1 of 2

Youngsters at Bulmer Primary School and St Andrew's C of E Primary School in Halstead have each won £300 for their schools by collecting Yellow Pages directories in a recycling competition. Over the last six weeks, 5,139 pupils at 17 schools across the district have taken on the Braintree Yellow Woods Challenge - the simple, educational and fun environmental campaign for schools run by Yellow Pages, working in partnership with the Woodland Trust and Braintree District Council.

The schools have been collecting old Yellow Pages directories for recycling and a total of 4.8 tonnes will now be recycled into cardboard by Essex Reclamation. Bulmer Primary School has won the local Gold Oak title and the top prize money of £300 for collecting 3.18 directories per pupil.

St Andrews C of E Primary School receives this year's Silver Birch and wins £200 for collecting 2.67 directories per pupil and also wins the £100 bonus prize for collecting 614 directories, the most in total.

Bocking Church Street Primary School receives the Bronze Beech title and wins £100 for collecting 2.16 directories per pupil.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said:

"Residents of this district have an impressive record on recycling and it is encouraging to see the youngsters following in their footsteps.

Congratulations to them all."

All participating schools will automatically be entered into the UK Finals, where they could win a top prize of £2,000 cash.

For every pound awarded to schools in prize money, a matching pound is given to the Woodland Trust to support its new Tree For All campaign, which aims to help plant 12 million trees over the next five years – one for every child under the age of 16 in the UK.

As additional support for the campaign, Yellow Pages is awarding native tree saplings to the top three winning schools and to Ridgewell Primary School, Wethersfield C of E Primary School and Silver End Primary School for achieving fourth, fifth and sixth place in the local Yellow Woods Challenge.

Kirk, the Yellow Woods Challenge mascot, will join pupils from Bulmer Primary School and St Andrew's Primary School on Friday 20 October at the Bulmer school to congratulate them on winning the Braintree Yellow Woods Challenge 2006.

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact: Tania Roberge, Braintree District Council, on 01376 552525 ext 2209 or Anne Codling, Yell PR Department, on 0118 950 6724.

Notes for editors

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Yellow Woods Challenge

The Yellow Woods Challenge is run by Yellow Pages, working with the Woodland Trust and local authorities across the UK. Kirk, the campaign mascot, is a cartoon characterisation of a woodland creature - he is a 'minibeast' that recycles leaf litter.

The Yellow Woods Challenge 2006 aims to recycle old *Yellow Pages* directories and save landfill; educate children about the environment and support the Woodland Trust's 'Tree For All' tree planting campaign.

Schools collecting the most Yellow Pages directories per pupil win cash prizes and for every pound given to schools in cash prizes, a pound will be given to the Woodland Trust. For further details, visit: www.yellow-woods.co.uk, email: yellow.woods@yellgroup.com or call 0118 950 6999.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust: The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. It has 300,000 members and supporters. The Trust has four key aims: i) No further loss of ancient woodland; ii) Restoring and improving the biodiversity of woods; iii) Increasing new native woodland; iv) Increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). Access to its sites is free. Further news can be found at www.woodland-trust.org.uk/yell

For media enquiries contact: Natalie Clark, corporate, PR & communications officer on 01476 581112, email natalieclark@woodland-trust.org.uk or the Woodland Trust Press Office on 01476 581121, e-mail media@woodland-trust.org.uk

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

A120 to A12 link should be a priority

A new call for the upgrading of the A120 from Braintree to Marks Tey to be reinstated as a priority has been backed by Braintree District Council. In its State of the Nation 2006 report the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) warns that if there is a failure to upgrade transport provision in the East of England it will bring dire consequences for the region.

It says economic viability will be threatened if action is not taken, particularly with planned new housing and jobs and the expansion of Stansted airport. Its call for investment in east-west road links includes the A120 Braintree to A12 link to improve traffic flow between Stansted, Colchester and Ipswich. A Braintree to Stansted rail line is also highlighted as another priority. Councillor Graham Butland, leader of Braintree District Council, said he welcomed ICE's report, which echoed the council's view.

"We are united in our view that there has to be an improvement to roads, rail and public transport to ease current congestion and to provide for future needs.

"We face huge challenges with the proposed growth of the region in the coming years. The Braintree district is ideally placed to take advantage of the economic opportunities which will arise but only if there is substantial investment in transport.

"It is vital that pressure on the Government is kept up to secure more resources for this region to support the new development."

The State of the Nation 2006 report has also won the backing of the East of England Regional Assembly, which has been lobbying the Government for significant investment in transport and other public services to support the thousands of new homes due to be built over the next 15 years.

NOTE: As a professional body ICE provides expertise in the infrastructure and the State of the Nation report is compiled by more than 500 of its members. Its aim is to highlight action which should be taken to improve that infrastructure.

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact Peter Crofts, director, on 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by: Braintree DC PR November 13 2006

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Council in first green partnership with school

Page 1 of 1

On Monday 30th October at 11 am, representatives from Tabor Science College will sign a partnership agreement with Braintree District Council to help keep the school and surrounding area looking clean and attractive.

The science college will promote joint working to encourage the children to take more pride in their local community. The children will be actively involved in keeping the school clean and tidy by carrying out litter picks and removing fallen leaves where appropriate. The school will also liaise with the Council for equipment plus the prompt removal of fly tips and graffiti.

Cabinet member Michael Gage comments: "Giving young people the opportunity to take responsibility for their surroundings is a positive step, not just for Tabor Science College but also for the future of the District. Having a sense of pride in one's surroundings is at the core of the council's aim to create a better place to live, work and play. This is our first environmental partnership with a local college and I hope other schools will be encouraged to work with us to help make the district a more pleasant place to live."

ENDS

For more press information, contact: PR Section 01376 557752

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 26 October 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Buying into a bargain

Page 1 of 2

An ambitious pilot project, one of the first in the country, is making huge savings for Braintree District Council's taxpayers.

Thanks to a new consortium of councils who buy goods and services together money will be saved on a whole range of products.

Braintree, which is running the scheme in partnership with five other councils, is leading the way with the amazing achievement of being able to buy a computer for half the price it used to cost, due to the collective buying power. Increasing efficiency in the way goods and services are bought will bring benefits to residents and taxpayers by reducing costs. Savings will be made by analysing the spend of each authority and identifying areas where joint working and contracting would drive down costs and increase efficiency. It is the first full-scale service solely provided by one authority on behalf of others in the country and two extra staff have been taken on to help run it.

Councillor Roger Walters, cabinet member for procurement strategy, said: "We are proud that Braintree District Council, with other forward-thinking councils, is pioneering a new way of working together to ensure better value to council tax payers. By working in partnership we have been able to improve our purchasing power and achieve greater economy. Individually, we were all looking for the best deal we can get for our money, by working together we can secure even better deals.

"This form of partnership working will grow and is the way forward for councils to deliver better value and make their limited resources go further. This is an exciting approach to improving services and working together."

Uttlesford, Colchester, Castle Point, Epping Forest and Maldon have already signed up to the scheme.

The official launch of the Essex Procurement Hub was on Tuesday October 24 at Braintree Town Hall with representatives from all six of the councils involved.

Also there were representatives from The Regional Centre of Excellence East, which is handing over £70,000 towards the first year's running costs. It is involved in promoting collaboration on buying throughout the 52 local authorities in the east.

After hearing Braintree's business case it decided the project deserved a cash handout.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Mike Worrton, regional director, said: "The RCE-East is proud to be associated with, and to support, the Essex procurement hub. This is demonstrated by the seeding funding which we are providing to encourage the hub in its formation and expansion.

"The RCE-East see this type of arrangement as an efficient and sensible path to better procurement for all the councils involved. We envisage the project expanding and the contracts used in the hub being used by a wide variety of authorities across the region and beyond."

There was also a speaker from the Procurement Agency for Essex, which played a big part in setting up the new project.

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact John Wickes 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by: Braintree DC PR October 2006

ENDS

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Your vote counts!

Residents in Braintree are being urged to pick up the phone and vote to win lottery cash for their town's public gardens.

A project to improve Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens is a finalist in a television series which gives viewers the chance to vote for the scheme which they think should get a £50,000 grant.

If successful the money would be used to rethatch the bandstand and to build new toilet facilities with disabled access in the gardens.

On Wednesday November 15 a representative of the public gardens' trustees will be up against one from a playground in Weeting, Norfolk, in a bid to win the public over to their cause.

Wendy Schmitt, clerk to the trustees, will be the one in the hot seat, with just two minutes to argue her case.

She said: "It is a pretty daunting prospect but I am determined to do my very best to make sure the people voting decide we deserve this desperately-needed grant.

"The gardens provide a haven for wildlife and for the many visitors, from office workers in their lunch hour to mums with young children. The improvements will make it more accessible to a wider group and I appeal to everyone – pick up the phone and vote!"

The two bids will compete during About Anglia between 6pm and 6.30pm, when a telephone number will be given for viewers to vote for their favourite.

The telephone number will also be on

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/peoplesmillions.

The result will be known the next day and campaigners are hoping people from across Essex, not just Braintree, will ring in to support their county.

NOTES: Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens, in Bocking End, Braintree, were given to the people by Sidney Courtauld in 1888. At one time the gardens belonged to his house.

They have many features, including a war memorial, bandstand, two tennis courts, large pond and a play area for the under-12s. There is also a large wildlife area, which is home to many birds and squirrels.

The gardens are owned by the Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens Trust and run by the trustees.

ENDS

For more press information or enquiries contact Councillor Wendy Schmitt on 01376 345363.

Issued by Braintree DC PR November 13 2006.

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: PLANNING

SUBJECT: Planning Appeals	CONTACT OFFICER: Linda Brown
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 551414 Ext. 2604 linda.brown@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: Nil
INFORMATION: To provide details of recently lodged planning appeals and appeal decisions.	

INFORMATION: APPEALS LODGED

Appellant: Mr R V Cottrill
Site: Land rear of Dordell Court, Church Lane, Toppesfield
Development: Demolition of existing metal profile barn and erection of a single storey dwellinghouse
Application No: 06/00870/FUL
Start Date: 12th October 2006

Appellant: Mrs W I Brown
Site: Land rear of 26 Nunnery Street, Castle Hedingham
Development: Demolition of existing garage and erection of 1 no. one bedroom bungalow
Application No: 06/01317/FUL
Start Date: 16th October 2006

Appellant: Mrs D Page
Site: 36 Friars Close, Sible Hedingham
Development: Retrospective application – erection of conservatory
Application No: 06/00088/FUL
Start Date: 5th October 2006

Appellant: Brand Developments (Essex) Ltd
Site: The Cottage, Brockwell Lane, Kelvedon
Development: Demolition of existing cottage and erection of 2 pairs of semi-detached cottages linked by carriage arch
Application No: 06/01503/FUL
Start Date: 19th October 2006

Appellant: Chelmsford Cars & Commercials
Site: North Side BP Filling Station, London Road, Rivenhall
Development: Change of use from petrol filling station to vehicle sales premises
Application No: 06/00115/COU
Start Date: 1st November 2006

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

INFORMATION: APPEAL DECISIONS

Appellant: Mr & Mrs J MacTaggart
Site: 15 Sycamore Grove, Braintree
Development: Erection of single storey rear extension and repositioning of boundary wall
Application No: 05/02558/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 20th October 2006

Appellant: Mr A J Seaman
Site: White Gates, 227 Upper London Road, Black Notley
Development: Demolition of existing house and garage and erection of 3 no. detached houses with garages
Application No: 05/02086/OUT
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 20th October 2006

Appellant: Mr & Mrs Betts
Site: Land rear of 215 Rayne Road, Braintree
Development: Erection of bungalow
Application No: 05/02562/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 23rd October 2006

Appellant: Mr G Redman
Site: Land rear of 8 Abels Road, Halstead
Development: Erection of one pair of semi-detached dwellings and off road parking
Application No: 05/01563/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 26th October 2006

Appellant: Mr M Bronze
Site: Former Swimming Pool, Parsonage Street, Halstead
Development: Infilling of 2 No. carport spaces to create additional bedrooms to Cottage C, provision of 3 no. additional car spaces with parking area
Application No: 06/00133/FUL
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 26th October 2006

Appellant: Mr P Hammond
Site: 1 Bramble Road, Witham
Development: Erection of two-storey side extension, single storey rear extension and roof dormer
Application No: 05/02362/FUL
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 26th October 2006

Appellant: Mr & Mrs A Steele
Site: 30 Beatty Gardens, Braintree
Development: Erection of front extension

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Application No: 06/00059/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 27th October 2006

Appellant: Hutchison 3G UK Limited
Site: Land Opposite Queenborough Meadows, Queenborough Lane, Braintree
Development: Installation of 15m slimline monopole incorporating 3 no. 1.7m antennas, 1 no. 200mm transmission dish with NEC Node B equipment and ancillary development

Application No: 05/00818/T56
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 27th October 2006
Costs Application DISMISSED – 27th October 2006

Appellant: Mr & Mrs J Meadows
Site: Sugar Lane Farmhouse, Sugar Lane, Sible Hedingham
Development: Demolition of existing garage and stables and erection of a new garage and granny annexe

Application No: 05/02483/FUL
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 2nd November 2006

Appellant: Kamlin Ltd
Site: Land adjoining 3 Church Hill, Earls Colne
Development: Erection of one new chalet bungalow and associated garage

Application No: 06/00032/FUL
Decision and Date: ALLOWED – 6th November 2006

Appellant: Mr C M Cheng
Site: 17-19 Manor Street, Braintree
Development: Retrospective application – retention of altered windows and door to front elevation of premises

Application No: 06/00525/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 8th November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Corporate

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

<u>SUBJECT: IDeA launches 'Frontline' – Britain's first radio programme exclusively for councillors</u>	CONTACT OFFICER:
TEL/EMAIL No.:	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: <p>The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) is launching a radio programme produced exclusively for councillors. It will explain and promote the role of frontline councillors by inviting them to tell their own stories in their own words.</p> <p>Called 'Frontline', it is a weekly, one-hour programme hosted by Pascoe Sawyers, director of the IDeA's Leadership Academy. It will go on air at 8.00 pm on 13 November and is scheduled for an initial run of 12 programmes. It can be found on Sky Channel 94 and online at Colourful radio station's website.</p> <p>Sawyers said:</p> <p>"We're always looking for new and innovative ways of helping councillors connect with the people they represent. 'Frontline' gives local government a great opportunity to do that.</p> <p>"Each 'Frontline' programme will open with a review of topical issues by a journalist who specialises in local government. This will be followed by an interview with a frontline councillor about their approach to the job and the music that sustains and inspires them. The final part of the programme will look at hot topics, with a senior figure discussing the major challenges facing local government in the years ahead."</p> <p>The first programme features Councillor Marhoof Hussain from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Ted Cantle, one of the country's leading thinkers on community cohesion issues.</p> <p>Experts lined up to take part include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul Wheeler from the Political Skills Forum• Ben Page from MORI on leadership• Professor Jo Silvester on the Political Skills Framework. <p>'Frontline' will be recorded and used as an information sharing and learning tool for councillors and community leaders outside the local government sector. Recordings of the programmes will also help promote democratic engagement and a better understanding of the role of frontline councils in schools and colleges.</p> <p>Colourful is the UK's newest national digital talk radio station, focusing on the 18-45 age group. It is part of the Colourful Network, the UK's largest African-Caribbean focused media company.</p> <p>For press enquiries please contact paul.bailey@idea.gov.uk or call 020 7296 6529.</p> <p>Press release issued 30 October 2006.</p>	

November 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Scrutiny Bulletin	CONTACT OFFICER:
TEL/EMAIL No.:	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: This is an article from an online magazine "Inside Housing":	
<p>CORPORATION CONTEMPLATES SCRUTINY POWERS FOR COUNCILS By Rebecca Evans Published: 20 October 2006</p> <p>Local authorities could be given much stronger powers to hold housing associations to account under plans unveiled by the Housing Corporation. The corporation's new <i>Neighbourhoods and communities strategy</i>, published for consultation last Friday, revealed the regulator is considering subjecting associations' work to interrogation by local authority overview and scrutiny committees.</p> <p>The strategy also proposes that associations should consider swapping their stock to reduce the number of landlords operating in an area. The corporation's own traffic lights assessment system could be changed to 'take account of the quality of housing associations' wider asset management strategies'. Associations warned that it was vital that any extra oversight of their work by councils would not lead to more regulation.</p> <p>National Housing Federation head of neighbourhoods and sustainability Helen Williams told <i>Inside Housing</i>: 'We need to work with local authorities to find ways in which communities can have more of a say... but I think the issue is that it's done in a way that does not lead to a double regulatory burden.'</p> <p>Keith Exford, chief executive of Affinity Sutton Group, described the push towards rationalisation as 'a bit of an obsession with tidy mindedness'. 'If tenants are happy with their landlord and are satisfied they receive a good service, why is it any business of the regulator to say that they should be tidy about it?'</p> <p>But the corporation defended its plans. Matt Leach, director of policy and communication, told <i>Inside Housing</i>: 'If associations' patterns of stock holding are such that perhaps their ability to deliver... the highest possible services to their tenants and value for money is compromised then we would expect them to look very hard at issues around rationalisation.'</p> <p>The corporation also announced its intention to consult on relaxing a rule that means 51 per cent of an association's business must be social housing. Andrew Heywood, senior policy advisor at the Council of Mortgage Lenders, warned: 'I think that there are issues about housing associations going off in the direction of non-core activity when they may not have the skills and experience to do so.'</p>	

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