

# Minutes

## Cabinet

27<sup>th</sup> November 2006



Present:

<b>Cabinet Members</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor G Butland	Leader	Yes
Councillor M G Gage	Environment	Yes
Councillor N R H O Harley	Economic Development and Transportation	Yes
Councillor M C M Lager	Finance and Assets	Yes
Councillor Mrs W D Scattergood	Planning and Rural Issues	Yes
Councillor Mrs J W Schmitt	Public Protection and Healthy Living	Yes
Councillor S M Walsh	Housing and Customer Services	Yes
Councillor R G Walters	Efficiency and Performance	Yes

<b>Lead Members</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor Mrs J C Beavis	Customer Services	Yes
Councillor Lady Newton	Health and Children and Young People	Apologies
Councillor T S Wilkinson	Management of Change	Yes

Councillors J E Abbott and J E B Gyford were also present and an apology for absence was received from Councillor R A G Tincknell.

**Cabinet Member**

60 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** - No declarations were made.

61 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

62 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME** - No questions were asked or statements made.

63 **STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES WHITE PAPER**

The Leader referred to the Cabinet report and the summary of the White Paper that had been produced by the Local Government Association. It was agreed that a working group be established to look at the implications and opportunities for the Council.

**DECISION:****Leader**

- (1) That a Cabinet Sub-Group be established to review the White Paper and the implications and opportunities for the Council arising from the White Paper;
- (2) That the Cabinet Sub-Group be also tasked with reviewing the Constitution and Member issues identified by the recent Peer Review;
- (3) That the Sub-Group should consist of all political group leaders, the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel and Councillors Mrs Beavis and McCrea and initially report to the next meeting of Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007.
- (4) That the Leader in consultation with the Sub-Group be authorised to respond to the issue of pilots for two tier working, if a proposal is forthcoming from discussions with other authorities prior to the deadline for submissions of 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

**64 PEER REVIEW OUTCOMES**

The Leader referred to the report highlighting the positive feedback from the Peer Review carried out in September 2006. The Leader felt that the report and outcomes from the Peer Review reflected well on the whole Council. He highlighted the points for improvement which would be included within an Improvement Plan leading up to the next Comprehensive Peer Assessment (CPA).

**DECISION:****Leader**

- (a) That the recommendations from the Peer Review be accepted and be incorporated into the Council's 2007/8 improvement plans where appropriate.
- (b) That a report on progress on the recommendations be made to the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

**65 PRIORITIES AND BUDGET 2007/08**

Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, presented a report that contained details of the latest budget projections of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), together with requests for funding (revenue and capital). It was proposed that the contents of the report be used to conduct consultation with partners and stakeholders with the consultation programme building upon that used last year.

The updated MTFS for the General Fund for 2008/09 highlighted a projected shortfall of £500,000. It was noted that in addition, the proposed transfer of the housing stock would, if approved by tenants, have a financial impact on the General Fund. Cabinet was informed that a programme of efficiency reviews would commence early in January 2007. The aim of the reviews would be to achieve a balanced budget for 2008/09 without a significant impact on the Council Tax. The Cabinet Member referred to an additional paper that had been circulated which set out the outcome of discussions by the Cabinet Sub-Group about Capital bids for 2007/08.

**DECISION:**

- (a) That the projected budget position of both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account be noted;
- (b) That this report be used as part of the current budget consultation process;
- (c) That, in consultation with the Finance Director, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, be authorised to determine any increases in fees and charges required prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.
- (d) That the bids for capital funding in 2007/08, classified as priority 1 in the revised schedule attached to the supplementary Cabinet paper, be used as the basis of the 2007/08 budget consultation process;
- (e) That the Council's Asset Manager be requested to undertake a review of the Council's land and buildings with an initial report to be produced by May 2007.

66 **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2006.**

Councillor Walters, Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Performance, presented the second quarterly report for the period from July to September 2006. The Chief Executive explained that the report had been published in a new format using the Covalence software. Unfortunately the new reporting format had not worked as well as anticipated and some of the information was inaccurate. In presenting the report the Cabinet Member explained that, with the exception of one area, all performance indicators were in the upper half, the majority being in the upper quartile and improving. The one area of concern was that of sickness absence. In response to a question from the Chair of Scrutiny, the Leader explained that at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Group held earlier in the day it had considered a programme of employee assistance that it was hoped would be implemented with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. This, together with what the Chief Executive explained were one or two instances of long term sickness, should help to bring down the figures to within the target by the fourth quarter.

In response to a request for Cabinet Members to review their performance indicators, Councillor Gage reported that he had reviewed two indicators concerning abandoned vehicles. This review had highlighted problems with IT and in the Council not having a secure compound. He circulated a briefing sheet that explained the situation more fully.

Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Housing updated Cabinet on the issues of void turnaround and letting sheltered housing. On the issue of void turnaround he challenged the data in the report and on the second issue that of sheltered housing, he explained this was directly linked to the number of affordable housing units released in an area in any given period.

**DECISION:**

- (1) That the second quarterly report be received and the position and reports from Cabinet Members be noted.
- (2) That an updated performance report be issued within four weeks.

All/ Cllr  
Walters

## 67 **STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT**

Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets presented a report that encompassed a review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register by Management Board.

Cabinet noted that the 22 strategic risks on the Risk Register had been reviewed and:

- 4 had received an increased risk rating;
- 3 had received a lower risk rating;
- 10 remained unchanged; and
- 5 had been deleted as no longer relevant, or moved to operational and recorded at a service level

The four risks with a risk rating of C2 eg significant likelihood and critical impact, were highlighted as being:

- Tenants vote 'No' to the proposed transfer of the housing stock to Greenfields Community Housing Association;
- Achieving a significant improvement in customer satisfaction levels over the next three years;
- The availability of capital resources to fund capital investment in future years; and
- The achievement of significant savings over the next three years as identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and as a consequence of housing transfer.

### **DECISION:**

- (1) That the latest review of the Council's Strategic Risks undertaken by Management Board be endorsed,
- (2) That the change to the Risk Management process of an improved information flow between operational and strategic risks be noted.

**Cllr Lager**

## 68 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Councillor Mrs Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Healthy Living, presented a report that set out the outcome of discussions with partners and a suggested response to the recommendations of the Public Safety Policy Development Group. The report set out the response from the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership. Councillor Mrs Schmitt urged all Councillors to liaise with local Police on a regular basis on all local matters of concern or ideas for improvements, as this was often the best way to finding a solution and tackling issues rather than developing formal policies and statements.

**DECISION:** That Cabinet acknowledge and support the formal response received from the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership in relation to the recommendations made by the Public Safety Policy Development Group and to agree that some of these recommendations will be progressed in line with forthcoming Guidance / Legislation.

**Cllr Mrs Schmitt**

69 **INVEST TO SAVE ROUND 9 – SMART ARTS**

Councillor Mrs Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Healthy Living, presented a report on the application to the Treasury for funding from Invest to Save Bid Round 9 made in partnership with Nacro.

Members were informed that the project would aim to target groups of young people who are causing, or are at risk of causing, anti-social behaviour (ASB), and their parents to reduce incidences of ASB.

**DECISION:** That Cabinet support the bid for the ‘Smart Arts’ project to Invest to Save, Round 9

**Cllr Mrs Schmitt**

70 **BRAINTREE DISTRICT FUTURES 2025**

The Leader presented the report Braintree District Futures 2025 written by Cambridge Econometrics. The report presented an overview of the current position of Braintree and set out three visions for the District up to 2025. The Leader wanted to hear what other Councillors had to say and this matter would be a substantive item on the agenda for the Council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

**DECISION:** That the report be noted and forwarded to Council for a full debate.

**Leader**

71 **DELEGATED DECISIONS**

Members noted that the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Healthy Living had approved the final Code of Practice for Black and Minority Ethnic, Voluntary and Community Groups on behalf of the Council.

72 **REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ON ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO THE CABINET’S ATTENTION**

(1) **Scrutiny Panel Review into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Traffic Management Liaison Panels.**

Councillor Harley referred to the above investigation and, in particular, comments that had been made by the Area Highways Manager from Essex County Council.

**DECISION:** (a) That the Braintree Traffic Management Liaison Panel be invited to determine whether it wished to increase the frequency of its meetings from two to three to coincide with the other Area Panels. (b) That the agendas and minutes be made available on the County Council’s or this Council’s, Web Site to assist Parish Councils to access the information more freely.

**Cllr Harley**

(2) **Renewable Energy Leaflet.** Councillor M Gage, Cabinet Member for Environment, informed Cabinet of a leaflet that had been developed in partnership with B and Q. He would be circulating this to all Councillors.

**Cllr Gage**

### **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**DECISION:** That under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Act.

*Whilst the following items of business were discussed in private session, the minutes do not contain any confidential information and are therefore admissible in the public domain.*

### 73 **\*\*PREMATURE RETIREMENTS**

The Leader presented a report that set out details of two requests for premature retirement, in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Premature Retirement Policy.

**DECISION:** That both applications for premature retirement, as set out in the report to Cabinet, be supported.

**Leader**

### 74 **REFERENCES FROM AREA COMMITTEES, PARTNERSHIP BOARDS AND OTHER GROUPS (PRIVATE SESSION)**

**\*\*Braintree Area Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006. - Asset Management**

The Committee considered the report and recommendations from the Braintree Area Committee concerning the options for the disposal of land in Finchingfield.

**DECISION:** That

- (a) the property be declared surplus to requirements;
- (b) the Asset Manager be authorised to dispose of this property on the open market with vacant possession on terms and conditions as agreed by the Asset Manager;
- (c) the capital receipt be expended on future Affordable Housing Decent Homes Related Schemes within the District.

**Cllr Lager**

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.35pm.

G BUTLAND

(Leader)