



***THE
BRAINTREE DISTRICT
PARISH PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT***

The Braintree District Parish Charter

22nd March 2006



**Braintree Association
of Local Councils**



BRAINTREE DISTRICT PARISH PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

1 Introduction

- 1.1 With the increasing importance attached to partnership working Braintree District Council and the Braintree Association of Local Councils have agreed to publish a parish partnership agreement which sets out how we aim to work together for the benefit of local people. This is the result of discussions held locally to establish a new way of working and to confirm existing good practice.
- 1.2 In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Parish and Town Councils make decisions that affect their communities. They may be more suited to operate some functions better. In turn, they recognise the strategic role of the District Council.
- 1.3 This parish partnership agreement reflects the increasing importance of partnership working and supports the development of quality status for Parish and Town Councils.
- 1.4 Part 1 of the agreement applies to all Parish and Town Councils in the area. It will be monitored annually.
- 1.5 Part 2 of the agreement will apply to those Parish and Town Councils that achieve Quality Parish Council Status. Part 2 will set out the additional services that Braintree District Council may agree to delegate to Parish and Town Councils that achieve Quality Status, and the financial provisions, which will apply to such agreements.
- 1.6 The Parish Partnership Agreement will be fully reviewed every four years in line with the Parish and Town Council election cycle.

PART 1

2 Aim

To enhance a framework for Braintree District Council and Parish/Town Councils to work in partnership to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

3 Promoting the role of Parish and Town Councils

- 3.1 Parish/Town Councils and Braintree District Council will endeavour to work in partnership for the benefit of the local people while respecting their mutual rights as separate democratic bodies.
- 3.2 Parish/Town Councils and Braintree District Council aim to promote active citizenship and community participation across all age groups.

- 3.3 The differences between small and larger Parish/Town Councils in terms of ability to handle information and resources will be respected.
- 3.4 Braintree District Council will ensure staff have a good understanding of the role and function of the Parish/Town Councils and vice versa.
- 3.5 Braintree District Council will hold regular liaison meetings with Parish and Town Councils.
- 3.6 Braintree District Council and Parish/Town Councils will work together to help administer and limit the costs of holding Parish and Town Council elections.
- 3.7 Braintree District Council will recharge election costs according to the policy agreed with Parish and Town Councils, which is in place at the time.

4 Community Plans And Local Strategic Partnerships

- 4.1 Braintree District Council will involve Parish/Town Councils in developing and implementing Community Plans to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.
- 4.2 The Braintree Association of Local Councils will represent all Parish/Town Councils (non members included) on the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) Executive, the Braintree Local Strategic Partnership.
- 4.3 Braintree District Council will continue to encourage and support the development and implementation of Parish Plans and Town Centre Health Checks, and will take account of these in developing Community Plans.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Braintree District Council will consult Parish/Town Councils on those issues which are likely to directly affect their area.
- 5.2 Braintree District Council will build early consultation into plans for statutory policy & strategy development, ideally allowing 12 weeks (but a minimum of 8 weeks), for written consultation where possible and where not possible giving the reasons why.
(For example Braintree District Council has to comply with statutory requirements and Government targets for consultation on planning issues (See Appendix A for specific arrangements for consultation on planning issues).
- 5.3 Parish/Town Councils will endeavour to take part in consultation exercises and respond within the given period. Parish/Town Councils will notify Braintree District Council if there is to be a late response when its not possible to respond within the timescale.
- 5.4 Briefing sessions or workshops will be held for groups of Parish /Town Councils on complex consultation issues.
- 5.5 All Parish/Town clerks will be given access to Agendas for Cabinet, Area Committees prior to the meetings. Reports to these meetings will be available by email and the Braintree District Council's Website.

- 5.6 Parish/Town Councils will send copies of Parish Agendas and papers to Braintree District Council Ward Councillors.
- 5.7 Officers and Councillors of Braintree District Council will be given the opportunity to speak at Parish/Town Council meetings on matters of mutual interest if invited by the Parish/Town Council.
- 5.8 Parish/Town Council representatives will be given the opportunity to speak at Braintree District Council Area Committee meetings on matters of mutual interest.
- 5.9 Parish/Town Councils and Braintree District Council will work in partnership to seek the views of residents on issues of common interest.

6 Communication

Methodology

- 6.1 Plain English will be used in written communication.
- 6.2 Braintree District Council and Parish and Town Councils will make best use of the information technology available to promote quick and efficient communication. Where possible information will be provided electronically.
- 6.3 An extra four days will be allowed for communication sent by conventional mail so as not to disadvantage Parish/Town Councils not yet equipped with IT.
- 6.4 Braintree District Council will produce a regularly updated contact list which includes email addresses of Braintree District Council Officers and Members.
- 6.5 Parish and Town Councils will provide the clerks e-mail address and contact information to Braintree District Council to allow the compilation of the directory of Parish/Town Council email addresses and up-to date contact details.
- 6.6 Braintree District Council Officers or Members will make every effort to attend Parish/Town Council meetings when invited.
- 6.7 Parish and Town Councils will make every effort to attend meetings/events run by Braintree District Council in which they may have an interest.
- 6.8 Braintree District Council will communicate with Parish and Town Councils and all households in the community by distributing "Contact" a quarterly publication and also through other relevant newsletters and local promotional material as they become available.

Performance Standard

- 6.9 Parish/Town Councils will provide substantive answers to letters, emails and faxes which need a reply in accordance with the provisions of their respective customer service standards.

- 6.10 Braintree District Council will send a full substantive reply or an acknowledgement to correspondence within 10 working days (for letters) or within 3 working days (for emails and faxes). If an acknowledgement is sent, the full substantive reply will be sent within 10 working days, or within a time frame agreed by both parties.
- 6.11 If a Parish or Town Council is dissatisfied with Braintree District Council actions, the response to a request for information, or a failure to consult, the Parish or Town Council may make a formal complaint to the Corporate Complaints Manager.

Sharing Information

- 6.12 Braintree District Council will develop Parish Information pages within the Braintree District Council Website to provide an easy access point to relevant information for Parish and Town Councils with links to relevant organisations' websites.
- 6.13 Braintree District Council will provide a link on its website to websites created by parish/town councils.
- 6.14 Parish and Town Councils, where possible, will provide a link to Braintree District Council's website on their websites.

7 Standards Committee

- 7.1 Both Braintree District Council and the Parish and Town Councils have adopted codes of conduct, based on the national model code of conduct. The Parish and Town Councils will work with Braintree District Council Ethics and Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.
- 7.2 Braintree District Council has consulted and agreed the following arrangements with the Parish and Town Councils for the appointment of representative(s) to the Ethics and Standards Committee:
- Two: Parish Representatives
 - Three: District Council Representatives
 - Four: Independent Representatives

8 Delegating functions/services currently provided by the Braintree District Council.

- 8.1 Braintree District Council will consider all requests from individual Parish and Town Councils who wish to take on functions/services currently provided by Braintree District Council and will provide comprehensive information to allow parish/town councils to make an informed decision.
- 8.2 Having received comprehensive information from Braintree District Council, Parish and Town Councils will consider whether they wish to take on the relevant function and will notify Braintree District Council of their decision.

9 Financial Arrangements

Where it is agreed that a Parish or Town Council will take on the provision of any District Council function or service, the level of funding will be agreed by Braintree District Council and the relevant Parish and Town Council based on the cost of the service defrayed by the District Council in the preceding council financial year.

10 Local Community Life

- 10.1 Braintree District Council will promote local community life through its work on community involvement. This includes, encouraging and supporting community - led plans, community safety initiatives and our statement of community involvement for the new Local Development Framework. Working in partnership, Braintree District Council will help to deliver local projects
- 10.2 Braintree District Council will work with communities to ensure that full advantage is taken of available grants.

11 Practical Support

- 11.1 Parish and Town Councils will be offered the opportunity to participate in training programmes where these support the training needs of the Parish and Town Council members and their employees. (For such courses there will be charges on an at cost basis).
- 11.2 Braintree District Council will make available information on training opportunities as they arise.
- 11.3 Braintree District Council will sponsor Parish and Town Councils whose work is supportive of a shared interest with the Council, by offering access to their printing services, at cost price. Parish and Town Councils should apply for sponsorship to the Braintree District Council officer with whom they are working on a particular project or service.

12 Monitoring and Review of this Parish Partnership Agreement.

Views will be sought and exchanged on the practical application of the partnership each year. The Parish Partnership Agreement will be reviewed every four years in line with the Parish /Town Council election cycle.



APPENDIX A

PLANNING ISSUES

Braintree District Council has to comply with statutory requirements and government targets for consultation on planning issues therefore specific arrangements for planning issues are that: -

1. Braintree District Council will:

- a. Consult parish/town councils on all applications for planning permission
- b. Allow 21 days for the submission of representations by Parish/Town Councils. (the statutory minimum is 14 days).
- c. Notify Parish/Town Councils of any significant amendment to a planning application and allow a further 14 day period for representations to be made before a decision is taken on the amended plan. (Significant amendments are those considered by the case officer to materially affect the planning application, but not to require a new application).
- d. Report the views of Parish/Town Councils to Members of the relevant committee, in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation.
- e. Notify Parish/Town Councils of all planning decisions.
- f. Provide Parish/Town Councils with copies of the Area Committee agenda items on request.
- g. Endeavour to make officers available to attend meetings of Parish/Town Councils to clarify the details of significant or controversial applications.
- h. Provide periodic training courses for local councillors and/or Parish/Town clerks to aid an understanding of the planning process and the matters which have a material bearing upon the determination of a planning application.

2 Parish/Town Councils will:

- a. Acknowledge that Braintree District Council will not always be able to accede to the requests of parish/town councils.
- b. Respond within the given timescales in writing to all planning applications received from Braintree District Council.
- c. Comment on planning applications on planning grounds, and specify as fully as possible the reasons for an objection to, or support for, a particular application.
- d. Attend meetings, briefings and training to gain a better understanding of the planning process.

3 Local Development Framework

- a. There will be two periods of formal consultation on Development Plan Documents: at the preferred Options Stage and at the Submission Stage. Although the period for making representations will be limited to the statutory six-week period, whenever possible the Council will publish documents before then to give Parish and Town Councils a longer period in which they can be considered.
- b. For Supplementary Planning Documents there will be one formal consultation stage with a statutory period of 4 to 6 weeks and again whenever possible we will publish the documents before the statutory period begins. At these times the Council will publish its documents, both in hard copy and electronically and invite representations on them.



For further information please contact
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Thanks to Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC) and a small working group of Parish/Town Representatives and BDC Officers involved in the development of this Parish Charter



Declaration of Commitment to

THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT PARISH PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

(PARISH CHARTER – PART 1)

Date: _____

Name of Parish/Town Council: _____

Representative of the Town/Parish Council:-

Name: _____

Title : _____

Signature : _____

Braintree District Council

Representative of Braintree District Council

Name: Wendy Scattergood

Title: Cabinet Member for Planning and Rural Issues

Signature: _____

Together we can make a difference





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