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**March 2005**

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

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# MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Community Safety – Anti Social Behaviour

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Implementation of Categories of ASB and Trial for the Recording ASB through Customer Service Centre until June 2005	CONTACT OFFICER: Jayne Wakeling Anti Social Behaviour Liaison Officer
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 551414 Ext 2330	BACKGROUND PAPERS: Categories of Anti-Social Behaviour
<p><b>INFORMATION:</b></p> <p>The BDC Categorising of ASB policy began implementation in December 2004. The introduction of this policy has been very complex as all directorates are involved in addressing Anti-social Behaviour in some shape or form. Since this is the case, the Community Safety &amp; Development Manager has been in discussions with the Customer Service Centre with a view to the calls for their section being centrally received. Previously many calls relating to ASB and Neighbour Disputes have been received by Housing, Policy (Community Safety), Legal and Environmental Services.</p> <p>At the meeting of the Housing Policy &amp; Review Group (HPRG) of Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> March members agreed to support the trial for centrally recording of Anti Social Behaviour through the Customer Service Centre and until June 2005. Members of HPRG recommended that all members be advised of the categories of ASB and the extended trial for recording ASB through the Customer Service Centre.</p> <p>A list of the types of information and the categories for both criminal damage and anti social behaviour being recorded are shown in the attached Appendix 1.</p> <p><b>Anticipated Outcomes</b></p> <p>By having a centrally based recording system for anti-social behaviour a series of benefits are expected, these include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A small percentage of issues and queries can be solved immediately</li><li>• Calls are fielded and referred to the correct directorate / person</li><li>• Research can be undertaken to feedback to the customer by the appropriate Officer / directorate</li><li>• Central statistical information is effectively collated (No. calls; Categories of behaviour etc.)</li><li>• Releases the Anti-social Behaviour Liaison Officer from dealing with adhoc calls – this allows effective programming of workloads and increases productivity</li><li>• Quicker distinction between Anti-social Behaviour and Domestic Neighbour Disputes</li><li>• Increased number of suitably trained Officers to deal with queries across the organisation</li><li>• Increased mainstreaming activity of Community Safety within BDC (Crime &amp; Disorder Act 1998, Section 17 and CPA requirement, and principles of Gershon)</li></ul> <p>Progress to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In December 2004 a meeting was held with the Customer Services Centre Manager.</li><li>• The data sets for criminal damage and anti-social behaviour were agreed (Appendix 1).</li></ul>	

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- The database has now been set up and a trial period agreed until June 2005.
- The Customer Service Centre began recording incidents of criminal damage and anti-social behaviour at the end of February 2005.
- Housing database is currently being assessed.
- Recording of incidents is currently being monitored to ensure the effective referral of those incidents and their related data.

## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The following information is now being recorded.

No. Total Calls

No. Dealt with

No. Transferred

	Transferred	Dealt with	Investigated	Known Area/Issues
No. Category A Calls				
No. Category B Calls				
No. Category C Calls				
No. Category D Calls				

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## APPENDIX 1

### Recording Data for the Customer Service Centre Team

#### Criminal Damage

<b>Questions to be recorded</b>	<b>Incident Categories</b>
Name Address Contact No. What damage Location Time & day of Damage Time & day reported Who property belongs to Details of any witnesses Alcohol or Drug related Estimated cost of damage Reported to the Police	Graffiti Fly-tipping Damage to Motor Vehicle Broken window Other

#### **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

<b>Questions to be recorded</b>	<b>Incident Categories</b>
Name Address Contact No. Location Time & day of Damage Time & day reported Details of any witnesses Alcohol or Drug related Estimated cost of damage Reported to the Police	<p><b><u>Category A – Extreme Anti-social Behaviour</u></b> This category will include cases such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Drug dealing</li> <li>▪ Violence</li> <li>▪ Threats to kill</li> <li>▪ Racial harassment (this would also be referred to the Racial &amp; Homophobic Incident Panel)</li> <li>▪ Homophobic harassment (this would also be referred to the Racial &amp; Homophobic Incident Panel)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Category B – Serious Anti-social Behaviour</u></b> This will include cases of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Threats to cause harm</li> <li>▪ Abusive &amp; aggressive behaviour</li> <li>▪ Frequent serious disturbances</li> <li>▪ Vandalism and damage to property</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Category C – Nuisance Disputes</u></b> This will include cases of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Excessive noise</li> <li>▪ Family disputes affecting neighbours</li> <li>▪ Control of pets</li> <li>▪ Unacceptable behaviour of visitors</li> <li>▪ Infrequent disturbance</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Category D – Minor Disputes</u></b> This category will include for example complaints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stair/bin cleaning</li> <li>▪ Condition of gardens</li> <li>▪ Parking</li> <li>▪ Litter</li> <li>▪ Boundary disputes</li> </ul>

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA:

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

<b>SUBJECT:</b> Braintree, Halstead & Witham Citizens Advice Bureau	<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b> Angela Verghese External Funding & Voluntary Sector Development Manager
<b>TEL/EMAIL No.:</b> 013276 551414 xt 2329 angve@braintree.gov.uk	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS:</b>
<p><b>INFORMATION:</b> This is to advise Members of changes that have taken place to the District's Citizens Advice Bureaux, both of whom received a core grant from this Council under a 3 year Service Level Agreement. Braintree &amp; District Citizens Advice Bureau and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau, have now merged together and re-structured to form Braintree Halstead &amp; Witham Citizens Advice Bureau. This single organisation now provides services for the whole of Braintree District, with the core grant from Braintree District Council being transferred to the new Bureau.</p> <p>Following experiences of Bureaux in other areas, an independent review of the advantages and disadvantages of merging was undertaken by The Cranfield Trust in July 2002. The outcome of that review was a desire to merge and re-structure in order to improve long term viability, and improve efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau. The anticipated benefits of the merger and re-structure include better use and sharing of skills and expertise, wider training opportunities for staff and volunteers, reduction of duplication, streamlining of policies and procedures, and a structure that allows management time to focus on planning and development, the ultimate aim being to maintain and improve the quality of service delivery to clients across the whole District. Work has subsequently been underway to ensure as smooth a transition as possible for staff, volunteers and clients, resulting in the newly formed Bureau becoming fully operational with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004. Due to careful management of the changes involved in implementing the merger and re-structure, the 32 volunteer advisers have continued to offer free confidential, impartial services to residents of the District, with 9,500 enquiries being dealt with during the first 6 months of the new Bureau's operation. The Bureau estimates that it will bring in gains and savings for clients of £300,000 this year, all of which benefits both the individual client and the local economy.</p> <p>The new Bureau will continue to offer services from offices based in Braintree, Halstead and Witham and has maintained existing outreach services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Debt Outreach and Financial Literacy for young people in the Halstead area, funded by The Big Lottery Fund</li><li>▪ Rural outreach service offered at 3 village doctors surgeries</li><li>▪ Home visits to the housebound.</li></ul> <p>It continues to work closely with the Council's Benefits Advisory Service and is beginning discussions on how its services can contribute towards the e-government agenda.</p>	

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The Council's core grant under a 3 year Service Level Agreement, provides vital stability for the organisation, enabling it to plan future developments and secure monies from other organisations to fund planned developments, recent examples of which include:

- £12,000 towards volunteer training (private donor)
- £10,000 to pilot a Disability Outreach Service (Essex Social Services)
- £10,000 to contribute towards DDA alterations to Witham Public Hall (National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux)
- £19,000 towards Witham Debtline (Essex County Council & Witham Town Council)

Members wishing to find out more about the work of the Bureau are welcome to contact Braintree, Halstead & Witham Citizens Advice Bureau Manager, Anne Squires: 01376 515235

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Environmental Services

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Help People to Feel Safe and Well

SUBJECT: No Smoking Day	CONTACT OFFICER: Eve Newman
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 552525 ext. 2231 eve@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

INFORMATION:

## No Smoking Day Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March

Wednesday 9th March was national No Smoking Day. Braintree District Council worked in partnership with the Witham, Braintree & Halstead Care Trust to inform as many people as possible across the District about the benefits of giving up smoking and the help that is available.

On the day itself there was a stand in the reception area of Causeway House where information was available about giving up smoking. The same information was also available in Braintree Leisure Centre, Safeway in Witham, Braintree Library and at Halstead Leisure Centre.

As well as advice on giving up smoking we took this opportunity to display information on smoke free workplaces. Protecting people from second hand smoke whilst at work is a key target of the Smoke Free Essex Alliance and something which is encouraged when Environmental Health Officers carry out health and safety inspections.

Display in Braintree Library



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Display in Braintree Leisure Centre



Display in Braintree Council Reception



## **Smoke Free Essex**

Braintree Council's Environmental Health team is a member of the Smoke Free Essex Alliance and represents the Essex Health and Safety group. Other members of the group include representatives from Trading Standards, Customs and Excise, HM Prisons Service, the Strategic Health Authority and various PCT's across Essex.

The Alliance will be working towards the delivery of tobacco reduction and control strategies linked to Regional and National objectives, that will enhance the environment of those that live, work and visit the County and critically, contribute towards the improved health and well being of the

## MEMBERS' FOCUS

population.

The Charter of the Alliance is as follows:

- ❖ To reduce public and workplace exposure to second hand smoke.
- ❖ To support the implementation of effective no-smoking policies by making these more attractive to business.
- ❖ To recognize and reward the introduction of no-smoking policies.
- ❖ To provide an environment where smokers who wish to stop can be supported and encouraged.
- ❖ To support the reduction of under-age sales and illegal importation of tobacco.

**Every year there are 120,000 preventable deaths caused by tobacco use.**

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## News

### Affordable homes for Atlas Works

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**Braintree Housing Partnership** has welcomed tenants to the 24 affordable homes on the Atlas Works former foundry site in Earls Colne. The properties are built to Lifetime Homes Standard so they can be easily adapted to suit people's changing needs throughout their lives. The new homes are a mix of two, three and four bedroom houses plus two bedroom bungalows built by Countryside Properties Plc, working in partnership with Swan Housing Association. The new homes will be owned and managed by the housing association and the new tenants, nominated by the Council, will be assisted by John Sones: the community development officer employed by the partnership.

The project is managed by consultants, Baily Garner. They specialise in bringing together private and public sector organisations to meet the demands for new affordable homes for local people, within the standards set out by the Housing Corporation, which manages government housing grants.

Atlas Works, which closed in 1988, was formerly a foundry and home to R. Hunt and Company who manufactured agricultural machinery. Over 100 homes are being built on site together with a new health centre. The Grade 2 listed Victorian industrial buildings are being retained for commercial uses and a museum created in the water tower built in 1885.

**Cabinet member Simon Walsh** comments: "The Atlas Works development shows how partnership working can bring real benefits to the local community. A redundant commercial site has been regenerated to provide new, high standard affordable homes while retaining and promoting the historical heritage of the area."

**ENDS**

**Photo opportunity with tenants and partnership representatives: Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March @ 10.00am, Reuben Walk junction with Massingham Drive (enter estate on this road).**

**For more information contact:**

**John Sones, Community Development Officer, 01376 551414 ext 2168**

Note for editors follows on next page

Issued by: PR Section 16 March 2005

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## **The Braintree Housing Partnership**

Braintree Housing Partnership was formed in December 1998, involving both public and private sectors to make the most of investment opportunities and ever rising standards. Braintree District Council, Suffolk Heritage Housing Association (a key member of Flagship Housing Group), Warden Housing (a division of Home Group Ltd), Swan Housing Association (central to the Swan Housing Group) and consultants Baily Garner and developers, agreed to work together to provide housing of various types and sizes throughout the district to meet the demands for new affordable homes.

Countryside in Partnership was the developer in the partnership for the Great Notley Garden Village, which has received national recognition for its holistic approach to developing a community rather than simply building houses. Future new homes may involve other developers.

The council continues to manage their existing housing stock and tenants for new properties built through the partnership are selected from the council housing list. These new properties will continue to be owned and managed by one of the three housing associations.

To assist people moving into a new area, the partnership employs a Community Development Officer based in the Braintree District Council offices. The role is to facilitate sustainable communities, promote social inclusion and provide best value to tenants irrespective of which housing association manages their property.

As part of the continuing review and improvement process, occupants are given the opportunity to complete a survey about their new home and the surrounding area after they have lived there for a few months. The results of these are used so that feedback from earlier phases of building is used to influence the design of later properties.

The Partnership approach is providing truly affordable homes working towards increasing property specification and raising management standards together with promoting sustainable communities.

**ENDS**

**c/o Housing Research & Development**

Causeway House, Braintree, Essex, CM7 9HB (01376) 552525

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

from Braintree District Council

### New service to rural areas for garden waste

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**Braintree District Council has begun a new service**, collecting garden waste from 54 rural villages and parishes throughout the Braintree District – from households which do not have the wheeled bin service. The aim is to reduce the amount of bio-degradable waste collected in household rubbish and buried in landfill sites.

**The new service will visit each village** every four to six weeks throughout the year until October, at a site nominated by the parish council. It should help to cut down on car journeys to household waste sites and although gardeners are encouraged to compost as much as they can at home, the new service recognises that sometimes the nature or bulk of garden material can be too much for the home composter.

**Cllr Roger Walters accompanied** one of the three trucks on the first weekend trial. He says: "We're very pleased that this early in the year, people were coming out with garden waste. The new service gives the rural areas the opportunity to get rid of large amounts of green garden waste, without having to go the civic amenity sites, because we understand that while some people can make compost – not everyone has the capacity to compost everything." He added: "Having now launched the service; come the growing season, this will be a very valuable service to the rural areas. It will also help us to achieve the recycling targets and avoid green waste going to landfill.

#### **Notes to editors:**

Parish notice boards and parish magazines are being used to publicise the collection dates, which will in due course also appear on recycling calendars. District Councils can earn 'compost credits', for every tonne of green waste that does not go into landfill. In time this will earn more than the new service costs to provide, while helping to save the environment and produce high quality compost.

Council parks and gardens waste along with domestic composting is already transported in bulk for shredding and sieving, prior to conversion under factory conditions into high quality mushroom compost.

On the first day, over a tonne of green waste was collected and could rise to over 800 tonnes each year. This will help to avoid surcharges agreed under a European directive starting in the year 2008/9. Braintree District Council aims to encourage better waste disposal habits, before the penalties are brought in.

**Photo caption:** Councillor Roger Walters lends a hand to load some garden waste brought along by Helen Kemp of Gt Bardfield

**For more information:** Carole Love (01376) 551414 x 3375 or Roger Walters (01376) 553927.

Issued by: Braintree District Council - PR Section 1<sup>st</sup> March 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### A120 consultation period extended

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**Council Leader Graham Butland** has welcomed the extension, of the consultation period regarding the proposals for modernising the A120 between Braintree and the A12, by the Highways Agency.

He comments: "Improving and modernising the A120 is a major issue for Braintree District and will affect many people living here. I am aware that there are strong views on both sides of the argument and the extended consultation period will give the Council plenty of time to consider the various views before responding to the Highways Agency."

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, the Highways Agency will present the options to district councillors, who will then consider their formal response at the Council meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> June. The consultation period ends on 17 June this year.

### **ENDS**

**For more information see:**

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/news/articles/7669346.htm>

**or call Chris Trim 01376 557752**

Issued by: PR Section 18 February 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### Freeport bus stop moves to Victoria Street

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**On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February**, the Braintree town centre improvement project takes another step forward when the Freeport bus stop moves from the market place and the **bus park in Victoria Street** becomes the permanent main stop for this free service bus.

There is a sheltered waiting area at the bus park and a raised kerb to help disabled access on to the buses plus inter-change from one bus to another will be much easier. The award winning toilet facilities at the bus park will be improved further during the Spring to provide easier access and meet the Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

The bus park offers passengers a safer waiting area while the market square becomes busier with construction traffic and restricted access as the improvement project moves from area to area. The Freeport bus stop will remain at the bus park after completion of the town centre project to avoid congestion of the narrowed road through the market place.

**Cabinet member Michael Gage** comments: "Passengers can wait in safety at the bus park in Victoria Street rather than be moved from place to place in the market place as the improvement project progresses and the Freeport bus will continue to call at the stop in the High Street"

### **ENDS**

**For more information contact:**

Barry Mills (Project Manager) 01376 551414 ext 2592 or  
Chris Trim / Anne Proudfoot 01376 557752

Issued by: PR Section 31 January 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### High pressure treatment for chewing gum

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**From Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> January until Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February**, High Street and Bank Street in Braintree town centre will be steam cleaned. The Chewing Gum Removal Company from Kings Lynn will be working from 6pm until 6am each night using high pressure power washers designed to combat the sticky mess left by discarded chewing gum on pavements. Over time the gum takes on a dirty grey colour and because it degrades very slowly it can remain stuck to the pavements for many years.

The council has committed £15,000 for the steam cleaning to create cleaner streets and a more pleasant environment. The work is being carried out during the night to minimise the inconvenience to shoppers. A similar clean-up exercise will take place later this month in the centre of Halstead by Intex of Clacton who will then move on to the centre of Witham In March.

**Cabinet member Roger Walters** comments,

“Carelessly discarded chewing gum causes an unsightly, sticky mess on the pavements which is difficult and costly to remove. If you chew gum, please give a little thought for your environment and don't just spit it out. It only takes a moment to wrap the gum in the old foil wrapper and pop it in a litter bin.”

**ENDS**

**For more information contact:  
Paul Partridge, Street Scene Manager, 01376 332353**

Issued by: PR Section 1 February 2005

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## News

on behalf of Braintree District Economic Development Partnership

### Local businesses support council stand

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**A group of local businesses** has spoken out against excessive housing proposals by the East of England regional plan. Their qualified support of the Council's response to the East of England Regional Assembly, rejects assumptions of the need for tens of thousands of new homes throughout Essex.

At the meeting of the Braintree district's Economic Development Partnership board, business leaders called for a proper balance between new housing development and the necessary infrastructure to support assumptions about new employment in the county.

**Chairman of the partnership board** is local businessman Brian Cutmore; who says: "We want to emphasise that the improvements to the A120 and the Witham to Braintree railway are an essential part of any plans for growth in this region." He adds: "The local economy suffers now from transportation difficulties and inadequate skill levels. We need a more sustainable approach."

**Attending the meeting**, Councillor Michael Lager commented: "The housing figures assume unlikely numbers of new jobs and ignore the need for schools, hospitals, transport and other infrastructure investment. We are already seeing traffic congestion, environmental damage and social problems as people travel miles to and from their place of work."

### **ENDS**

**For more information contact:**

**Cllr Michael Lager (01376) 513747 or Brian Cutmore (01376) 320441**

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**Notes:**

The plan forecasts a total of 116,000 new jobs in Essex, in parallel with the building of 124,400 new homes. The plan proposes that this will encourage a more 'sustainable', prosperous and outward-looking region. Housing developments in the Braintree District would be within current trends, but the overall numbers for Essex are 1.5 times those for any neighbouring county, with generally greater numbers in the 'Thames Gateway' and M11 corridor areas. The job creation forecast would imply a share of the national job market increasing from the current 12.5% to 21%, without offering any indication of how that will be achieved. The East of England Assembly itself has suspended its support of national proposals following the latest government indications regarding investment in transport infrastructure. A joint approach by Essex councils proposes limiting the housing numbers by several thousand, easing the pressure on all areas and reducing the Braintree district numbers by about a thousand houses. Even so, councillors and business leaders remain concerned that without local jobs and better public transport, new residents will simply add to the numbers of people who commute by car, in a county which is already experiencing serious congestion.

Issued by: Braintree District Council - PR Section 24 February 2005

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## News

### Further improvements for Flich Way

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**Improvements** to the Flich Way running from Braintree Station to Warner Close Rayne begin on **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> February**. The project will include improvements to drainage, surfacing and the signage of this 3.5 kilometre section of the track. The project has been made possible by a grant of £250,000 from Sustrans as part of its link to schools programme funded by the Department for Transport. The grant is the result of a joint bid by Braintree District Council and Essex County Council who will be managing the project.

The Flich Way forms part of the National Cycleway Network, linking other parts of the network from Witham to Stansted: National Cycle Route 16 (Southend to Bishops Stortford).

**The section between Braintree & Rayne will be closed to the public for safety reasons while the improvements are carried out, opening again when the project is finished in April 2005.**

### **ENDS**

**For more information contact:  
Rachel Stevens, Local Plans, 01376 551414 ext 2577**

**Sustrans** - it stands for sustainable transport - a charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects.

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) (Press office: Tel 0117 927 7555 Fax 0117 930 4149)

Issued by: PR Section 18 February 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### Council needs to spend £98 million to keep housing

Braintree District Council must spend £98 million over the next five years if it is to improve its houses to meet Government guidelines by 2010.

The Council asked an independent consultancy to find out which of the four options made available by Government to meet the **Decent Homes Standard**, would best suit the future ownership and management of Council homes. The consultancy looked at how much it would cost to improve all of the Council homes to the Decent Homes Standard, and if each of the options could meet this cost.

Here are the results:

#### Option 1: Council continues to own and manage its homes

The Council would be able to find £40 million of the £98 million required to meet the Decent Homes Standard, but would be short of £58 million. The Government will not give the Council any money towards this. The report advises the Council should not follow this option.

#### **Option 2: The Council owns its homes, which are managed by an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO).**

An ALMO can apply for Government funding. The report suggests an ALMO may be an option for Braintree District Council.

#### **Option 3: a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) consortium manages some of the Council's homes.**

A consortium of businesses pay for all the improvements and maintenance to sections of Council housing in particularly bad condition, for 30 years. The report advises the Council should not follow this option, as the Council does not own any housing suitable for this.

#### **Option 4: Housing is transferred to a housing association.**

A housing association agrees to carry out all improvements and maintenance to sections, or all, of the Council's housing. The report suggests this may be an option for Braintree District Council.

#### What happens next?

The Council is inviting all tenants and leaseholders to participate in a series of events throughout the district from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March. The sessions promise to be lively, and will give everyone a chance to ask questions and have their say.

**Cllr Simon Walsh, lead member for housing, explains the importance of tenants' and leaseholders' involvement.** "It is important now that our tenants and

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leaseholders begin to understand and engage with the details and implications of this report. Tenants need to consider what is best for them and the wider community. In order to do that, I would encourage all tenants and leaseholders to get out to an event, and chat to the people there. This will help you decide how you wish to shape your future," he says.

In April, a telephone survey of 900 tenants and leaseholders will be carried out to find out which options they think should apply to their homes. The results will be used to help decide which option the Council will follow and recommend as its choice to the Government.

Also in April, tenants and leaseholders are invited to attend one of three events where they will be able to have their say about the future of Council houses in the Braintree District. BBC Essex radio presenter Dave Monk will facilitate these events.

Ends

**For more information about the housing options process, tenants and leaseholders can speak to their Independent Tenant Advisor, Solon Community Network, on freephone 0800 169 4406.**

**For more information about the options events taking place, tenants and leaseholders can contact Jo Petchey, the Council's housing option officer, on 01376 551414 x2120.**

Note to editors

1. The independent consultants that carried out the financial evaluation are Pennington Consultancy. Its full report can be seen on the Council website on [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)
2. The March issue of the Voices 4 Choices newsletter containing further information on this subject will be distributed to tenants and leaseholders in the week beginning Monday 7th March. The newsletter also contains full dates and venues of the forthcoming events. (Please see dates and venues below for use).

## **March 2005: Options events dates and venues**

These two-hour events promise to be lively and entertaining and will give tenants and leaseholders the chance to ask questions and discuss their views about what the options mean for them.

### **Braintree area:**

Monday 21st March, John Bunyan Junior School, Lancaster Way, Braintree 7pm  
Thursday 24th March, Glebe Hall, Glebe Avenue, Braintree 7pm  
Wednesday 30th March, Alec Hunter School, Stubbs Lane, Braintree 7pm  
Saturday 2nd April, Goldingham Hall, Goldingham Avenue, Braintree 2pm

### **Witham area:**

Wednesday 16th March, Silver End Village Hall, Broadway, Silver End 7pm  
Thursday 17th March, Forest Road Hall, Forest Road, Witham 7pm  
Saturday 19th March, Hatfield Peverel Village Hall, Maldon Road, Hatfield Peverel 2pm  
Tuesday 22nd March, Templars Junior School, Cressing Road, Witham 7pm  
Tuesday 29th March, Dengie Hall, Dengie Close, Witham 7pm  
Thursday 31st March, Spring Lodge Community Association, Powers Hall End, Witham 7pm

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**Halstead area:**

Monday 14th March, Sible Hedingham Village Hall, Parkfields, Sible Hedingham 7pm

Tuesday 15th March, Richard De Clare School, Parsonage Street, Halstead 7.30pm

Saturday 19th March, Earls Colne Village Hall, York Road, Earls Colne 10am

Wednesday 23rd March, Ramsey School, Colne Road, Halstead 7pm

The Council will revisit all of the sheltered accommodation that was involved in the first events in January and February.

Issued by: Braintree District Council - PR Section 25<sup>th</sup> February 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### New kitchens & bathrooms for 353 Braintree homes

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**Council tenants throughout Braintree and surrounding areas** have been invited to a special exhibition of kitchens and bathrooms on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February from 10am – 7pm. The exhibition offers tenants choice of the type and style of improvements which they can expect in the next phase of an £8million contract to re-fit 1000 homes throughout the Braintree District. 162 properties in Witham have already been completed, with a virtually total satisfaction rating from residents (94%) – as good as anywhere in the country.

The specially constructed exhibition features complete kitchens and bathrooms, and also offers tenants the opportunity to see and discuss the separate issues of the current 'housing options review', local environment and recycling.

**The display will be at Braintree's St Paul's church hall** in Hay Lane / Cressing Road, where District councillors are also invited to attend at any time throughout the day.

**Cabinet member Simon Walsh** comments: "This is good news for hundreds of families in Braintree and is an important new phase in what has been an exemplary project. A completely new approach has been taken, working openly and closely with contractors to ensure that they have assured continuity of work, resulting in better quality of work for tenants and better value for money for everyone." He adds: "In the first phase, the work was managed very precisely with no property taking more than four weeks. This new approach often means that individual resident's needs can be taken into account and accommodated: eg. nightworkers who need peace during the day."

**ENDS**

**For more information contact: Chris Trim (01376) 557752**

Reporters wishing to visit the displays should advise us beforehand.

Issued by: PR Section 21 February 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### Good news for rural communities

There is good news for people living in rural communities in the Braintree District near Sudbury. Following extensive consultation with parishes across the District, the Council have proposed a list of initiatives to help to tackle rural issues and improve community life.

- For the first time in eight years the funding to parishes will be increased when the **Parish Support Grant goes up by 10%**.
- **The District Council will meet 50% of the costs of parish elections.**  
Parishes struggle to meet the cost of parish elections with the result that people are 'co-opted' on to the parish council. Many parish councils are working hard to achieve quality council status and one of the qualifying factors is that all councillors must be elected.
- Braintree District Council has created a new **Rural Communities Development Fund** to develop the economic, environmental and social well-being of rural parishes. This year a total of £100,000 will be available in grants of up to £5,000 for projects that aim to improve aspects of community life such as improving the appearance of neighbourhoods, reducing local levels of crime, providing opportunities/facilities for children and improving the quality of the parish council services.
- **Parish rangers** will be introduced to keep an eye on local trouble-spots, each ranger would be shared within one of the ten parish clusters in the Braintree District.

**Cabinet member Wendy Scattergood** comments: "I have spent the last 20 months listening to the concerns of our parishes and I believe the measures we are introducing will help to meet those concerns and encourage rural communities throughout the Braintree District to continue to work closely with the District Council."

ENDS

**For more information contact:**

**Cllr Wendy Scattergood, Cabinet Member for Planning and Rural issues, 01787 269881**

Issued by: PR Section 22 February 2005

## MEMBERS' FOCUS

# News

## 1,000 smoke alarms for people at risk

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**One thousand residents** across District are having new ten year smoke alarms fitted in their homes through a partnership between the Council and Essex County Fire & Rescue Service. The smoke alarms are being supplied by the Fire Service at no cost to local residents as part of a national campaign to improve fire safety in the home. 1000 Braintree District Council tenants will have alarms installed free of charge this year with more planned for next year.

The new smoke alarms are easy to fit and are designed with a power pack that will operate the alarm for ten years once they are installed. The ten year smoke alarms will be fitted in homes which are not yet due for re-wiring or where the residents are considered to be at greater risk: some because they live alone or because they are elderly. Council properties which are re-wired have mains powered alarms fitted as standard. Five hundred of the new alarms will be fitted by the end of March and the remaining 500 throughout the rest of the year.

**Cabinet member Simon Walsh** comments: "Experience has shown that householders are twice as likely to escape without injury if their home has a working smoke alarm. The alarms are particularly important for the elderly who are statistically at a far higher risk from accidental domestic fires. The first of these ten year alarms to be fitted are in the parts of the district which are more difficult for the fire service to reach and where every minute counts."

### **ENDS**

**For more information contact: PR Section, 01376 557752  
Jack Sweeney, Assistant Divisional Officer Essex County Fire & Rescue  
Service, 01376 349339  
ISSUED BY: PR SECTION 7 MARCH 2005**

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### Time for a District spring clean

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Three environmental clean-up teams have begun the annual spring clean of the District to tackle litter and rubbish problems ahead of the spring season growth, which would otherwise trap unsightly and possibly dangerous litter, bottles and cans. This year, to improve safety for the cleaning teams, a large flashing warning sign will be used on busy roads to alert drivers to the verge cleaning ahead.

The spring clean improves the appearance of many routes and open spaces while reducing the risk of damage to grass cutting equipment once the new season is under way. It is one of the many ways the local council is working to drive down littering and make the District a better, cleaner place for everyone to live.

Inconsiderate drivers, and their passengers, are the main culprits of the litter on the many rural verges and routes across the District. In the past year 18 fixed penalty notices of £50 have been issued to car owners for litter thrown from vehicles, a further 20 penalty notices for littering on the street and 10 for dog fouling. The District Council has adopted a tough approach to littering of any kind and there are now over thirty officers empowered to issue fixed penalty notices including police community support officers, parking attendants, Environmental Protection and Environment Agency officers.

**Cabinet member Roger Walters** comments: "In the past year the number of litter hotspots in the District have been reduced from 33 to 17, thanks to the quick response of the clean teams and with help from residents. Don't drop litter in the street or throw it from your car window, put it in a bin - cleaning up littering, whether from verges, streets or fly tips, costs council tax payers hundreds of thousands of pounds every year."

**ENDS**

**For more information contact:**

**PR Section, 01376 557752 Anne Proudfoot mobile 07817 334269**

Issued by: PR Section 17 March 2005

## MEMBERS' FOCUS

# News

### Trees to be replaced at the Corner House

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Next week work starts to replace two trees outside the Corner House in Market Place Braintree as the main contract work begins on the town centre improvement project. Two of the three trees in that area will be removed and replaced but the largest, a lime tree, will remain. The area will also be re-paved and re-designed as the work on the trees is completed.

The two new trees will be white barked silver birch trees, chosen because they are very attractive and, more importantly, are much less likely to cause damage to paving in the future. The silver birch trees also have small leaves which allow more light through to the area below.

The two trees to be removed are a sycamore and a field maple, both are causing damage to the paths and are likely to cause structural damage to the buildings in the future. The trees are in poor condition, in particular the field maple is in a very weakened state.

**Cabinet member Michael Gage** comments: "The new trees have been carefully chosen to blend with and add to the attractive, design for the market place to create a safe, welcoming town centre for shoppers and visitors. This phase of the project outside the Corner House will take approximately four weeks, then work will begin on the area outside the Bull public house in March."

### **ENDS**

**For more information contact:**

Barry Mills (Project Manager) 01376 551414 ext 2592 or  
Chris Trim / Anne Proudfoot 01376 557752

Issued by: PR Section 31 January 2005

# MEMBERS' FOCUS

## News

### Council to define Silver End shops redevelopment before sale – public consultation planned

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**The Council owned** shopping and community facilities on Broadway in Silver End are to be sold, once a development brief has been agreed. The brief will set out how the existing shops could be changed and modernised with new investment, while keeping the local surgery and retaining existing services and facilities. It is likely that the proposals will include some housing and a clear aim to improve the way the site relates to nearby open spaces and other buildings. It is all within the Silver End conservation area and subject to planning guidelines and restrictions.

**A display showing the proposals** can be seen for five weeks from 7<sup>th</sup> March in the shop window adjacent to the library in Silver End, or copies of the proposed brief can be seen at the council's Witham area office in Freebournes Court or at Causeway House. On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April (2pm – 6pm) and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April (9am – 1pm), planning staff will be available at Silver End and the comments form available on the proposals should be returned to Causeway House by the 11<sup>th</sup> April.

**With responsibility for local planning issues**, rural affairs, development control and conservation, Councillor Wendy Scattergood is the portfolio holder with a close interest in how this area might be redeveloped and improved. She comments: "This proposal will form part of the council's plan make the best use of the value of council owned property. This year we plan to invest very serious amounts of money in the adjacent Silver End village hall. We shall want to make sure that any future development can make a real contribution to the quality and attractiveness of the area, while safeguarding local facilities that people use every day. The area could have a very bright future and can become an even better place to live."

**Once the development brief is agreed**, it is adopted as a 'Supplementary Planning Document' and is used to guide decisions on any future proposals, for example from developers who might wish to buy the site.

Ends

For more information contact: **Cllr Wendy Scattergood (01787) 269881 or Chris Trim (01376) 557752. A two page briefing note is available on request. The proposal includes a supermarket with service yard, chemist, library, four shops and up to 26 flats without gardens. The existing surgery would remain unchanged and parking would be distributed throughout the site.**

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