

# Minutes

## Cabinet

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2007



Present:

<b>Cabinet Members</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor G Butland	Leader	Yes
Councillor N R H O Harley	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Infrastructure	Yes
Councillor Mrs J C Beavis	Community Support and Engagement	Yes
Councillor M C M Lager	Resources and Performance	Yes
Councillor Mrs J W Schmitt	Public Protection and Healthy Living	Yes
Councillor R G Walters	Environment and Sustainability	Yes

<b>Deputy Cabinet Members</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Present</b>
Councillor N G McCrea	Leader's Portfolio	Yes
Councillor T S Wilkinson	Enterprise and Infrastructure	Yes
Councillor Mrs E Edey	Community Support and Engagement	Yes
Councillor J McKee	Resources and Performance	Apologies
Councillor W Rose	Public Protection and Healthy Living	Apologies
Councillor R G S Mitchell	Environment and Sustainability	Yes

The following Councillors were also present as invitees of the Leader

Councillor J E Abbott, Leader of the Green Group  
Councillor Dr R L Evans, Leader of the Labour Group  
Councillor M G Gage, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Leader of Halstead Residents' Association

Councillors E R Lynch, D Mann and Mrs R O'Shea were also in attendance.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillor T J W Foster, Chairman of the Witham Local Committee and Councillor S M Walsh, Chairman of the Braintree Local Committee.

At the commencement of the meeting, the Leader indicated that as part of a pilot project the meeting was being recorded by web casting equipment. The meeting would not actually be broadcast via the web, but the opportunity was simply being taken to test the new equipment and to train staff.

#### 40 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs J W Schmitt declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11 – Disposal of Housing Land in Braintree as she had been a Committee Member of Colchester Quaker Housing Association which had since been taken over by Family Mosaic Housing

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Those minutes identified by the prefix \*\* may be the subject of the "call-in" provisions of the Constitution within 6 working days of the publication of these minutes. Any decisions made and not "called in" by this date and time will become effective. For further information regarding these minutes please contact Alison Webb, Member Resources, on 01376 552525 or email [alison.webb@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:alison.webb@braintree.gov.uk)

Association. Councillor Mrs J W Schmitt remained in the meeting for the consideration of the item and voted on the matter.

41 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

42 **QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

43 **\*\*BRAINTREE JOINT OFFICE AND CUSTOMER ACCESS FACILITY**

The Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance presented a report, prepared by consultants DTZ, setting out an outline business case for a new build joint office and customer access facility for Braintree District Council and Essex County Council in Braintree.

The report concluded that there was a sound business case for the Councils to implement joint office planning in Braintree by means of a single, new-build redevelopment of a Council owned site, probably Tabor House. This would take into account local circumstances and drivers; offer the opportunity to capture the operational and organisational benefits of office consolidation; and allow the Councils to introduce modern, flexible working. The net cost of the scheme which was to be funded would be £12m. However, there would be an expected revenue improvement of just under £1m per annum. It was considered that this scheme would deliver better value for money than competing projects and that it would be the most feasible prospect.

In discussing this item, it was reported that an initial Project Group would be established and that the minority Groups would be invited to appoint representatives to this. Final decisions on the overall project would be made by full Council.

**DECISION:**

(1) That Braintree District Council confirms that its vision in respect of this project is the provision of: -

- (i) a shared, multi-agency front office customer access facility
- (ii) a shared back office with Essex County Council with some additional capacity for other public sector partners

and that Braintree District Council seeks a clear vision statement from Essex County Council and confirmation of its commitment to proceed with this project.

(2) That Braintree District Council confirms its agreement to the procurement of a new build shared back office and customer access facility on the Tabor House site in Braintree, with the redevelopment site to include the Braintree Register Office (the intention would be to relocate this facility to the Town Hall Centre in Braintree) and any small fringe areas of Weavers Park, as appropriate to the redevelopment.

(3) (i) That further discussions be held with Essex County Council regarding the

composition of the Programme Board and it be proposed that Councillors Mrs Beavis, Butland and Lager be appointed as Braintree District Council's representatives.

- (ii) That Members authorise the Programme Board to: -
- (a) approve project governance arrangements
  - (b) approve the project plan
  - (c) approve the design/project brief and instruct design work to be undertaken
  - (d) approve all other project related matters through to the procurement stage

**RECOMMENDED to Council:-** That an additional £100,000 be included in the Capital Programme to fund this project through to the receipt of planning consent, with costs to be shared equally with Essex County Council.

#### 44 **\*\*PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2007/08**

Councillor Harley, Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability, presented a report on the Planning Delivery Grant for 2007/08 and proposals for expenditure.

It was reported that for 2007/08, the Council had received Planning Delivery Grant of £363,000. This was the highest allocation to an Essex District Council and was within the top 10% of planning authorities nationally. The grant rewarded improved performance in Development Control, good progress on the Local Development Framework and e-planning, and the continued high level of housing completions in the District. It was stated that investment in consultants had paid dividends with regard to improved performance and financial reward. Staff were also to be congratulated on the turnaround in performance.

It was proposed that the 2007/08 Planning Delivery Grant should be used to address priority areas including the Local Development Framework, the maintenance and improvement of Development Control performance and to progress e-government and Customer First initiatives. Details of proposed projects were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Those projects set out in list 'A' were priorities, whereas those in list 'B' were options which could be funded either from the Planning Delivery Grant or the general revenue budget.

In discussing the report, Members highlighted the importance of planning enforcement and they agreed that greater emphasis should be given to it. In noting the 'B' list Witham Heritage Scheme, which was to be considered by Witham Local Committee on 11th September 2007, it was suggested that consideration should also be given to townscape character and it was proposed that this point should be pursued by the Local Development Framework Panel.

#### **DECISION:**

- (1) That expenditure of the 2007/08 Planning Delivery Grant on the projects set out under the 'A' list be approved and that the projects in the 'B' list be approved in principle, subject to Witham Local Committee giving a satisfactory response to the Witham Heritage Scheme.

- (2) That a report on proposals for increased intervention with respect to planning enforcement be presented to the next meeting.

*Action Point: That the issue regarding townscape character be referred to the Local Development Framework Panel.*

45 **HOUSING TRANSFER PROGRAMME BOARD – 22<sup>nd</sup> AUGUST 2007 - RECOMMENDATION**

Consideration was given to the recommendation set out in Minute 3 of the Minutes of the Housing Transfer Programme Board's meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007. The recommendation related to the revised valuation of the housing stock and followed joint discussions between the Council and Greenfields Community Housing on the way forward. It was reported that the Board of Greenfields Community Housing had endorsed the proposal.

It was noted that the Chief Executive would be carrying out a review of the valuation process and that a report would be presented to Cabinet as soon as it had been completed.

**DECISION: That it be RECOMMENDED to Council:-**

- (1) That Council agree to the principle of setting up a fund that will contain 50% of the net capital receipt and which can only be spent with the agreement of both the Council and Greenfields Community Housing on projects which deliver both organisations' objectives/priorities, examples of which are described in the Minute of the Programme Board.
- (2) That the details of how the fund is to be established, maintained and used, be the subject of separate negotiations and a report to future meetings of Greenfields Community Housing and the Council.

46 **ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2007**

Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, presented the draft Asset Management Plan 2007.

The Plan set out the Council's strategy for managing its property resources in order to improve and enhance service delivery, to improve efficiency and reduce costs and to support corporate priorities, goals and objectives. The Plan summarised the Council's asset management achievements in 2006/07 and set out the milestones and objectives for 2007/08. In discussing the Plan, it was suggested that no further action be taken with respect to Rickstones Community Hall, Witham until a review of all Witham community assets had been completed.

With reference to the paragraph headed 'Street Scene' under Section 3 of Appendix 3b, it was suggested that the sentence 'look after Council play areas and open spaces' be amended to read 'manage Council play areas and open spaces'.

**DECISION:** That the draft Asset Management Plan 2007 be approved, subject to the amendment outlined above, and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance be authorised to sign-off the Plan.

*Action Point: That the delegated authority be recorded on the Forward Plan and Business Calendar*

47 **QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER 1 – 1st APRIL 2007 TO 30<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2007**

Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, presented the Quarter 1, Quarterly Performance Report covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007. It was noted that the format of the report had been amended and that performance indicators were now categorised according to the Council's key objectives.

**DECISION:** That the Quarterly Performance Report covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007 be noted.

48 **BUSINESS EFFICIENCY REVIEWS**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Efficiency Programme Board held on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2007 were received and noted.

The Leader reported that discussions would be taking place on how Braintree District Council and Colchester Borough Council might work together more closely and it was anticipated that this would have an impact on efficiency and performance. A detailed report would be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting.

**DECISION:** That the report be noted.

49 **CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

Councillor Mrs Beavis, Cabinet Member for Community Support and Engagement, presented a report on the progress made in establishing a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme. It was noted that the scheme was now under way, but that appropriate Member involvement would be required to ensure that decisions were taken quickly and effectively.

**DECISION:**

- (1) That Braintree District Council's participation in the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme be agreed.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Community Support and Engagement be authorised to make relevant decisions as the scheme proceeds.

*Action Point: That the delegated authority be recorded on the Forward Plan and Business Calendar*

50 **BRAINTREE SWIMMING CENTRE SUB-GROUP - 16<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2007 -  
RECOMMENDATION**

Councillor Mrs Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Healthy Living, presented the Minutes of the meeting of the Braintree Swimming Centre Sub-Group held on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2007. Particular reference was made to the recommendation contained therein.

**DECISION:**

- (1) That the Head of Public Protection and Healthy Living be authorised to discuss with the Freeport site owners the renaming of the pool to 'Freeport Pool'.
- (2) That swimming prices be increased to £3.50 for adults and pro rata for other groups (excluding clubs) until March 2009.
- (3) That, as part of the 2008/09 budget process, a contingency sum be approved to meet the additional operational costs of the new pool, subject to further discussions with DC Leisure and discussions between the Council and the Freeport site owners regarding service charges.
- (4) That DC Leisure be permitted to invest in and develop a new gym facility at Braintree Leisure Centre, subject to final agreement with the Council regarding the operation of the pool.
- (5) That no creche facility be provided at the pool and the space allocated for this be utilised for other purposes in order to raise further income.

51 **REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ON ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE BROUGHT  
TO THE CABINET'S ATTENTION**

There were no reports.

**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.*

52 **ASSET MANAGEMENT - DISPOSAL OF HOUSING LAND IN BRAINTREE**

Councillor Mrs Beavis, Cabinet Member for Community Support and Engagement, presented a report outlining a proposal to retain an area of land in Braintree at the point of transfer of the housing stock in November 2007. It was proposed that the land be transferred to a Housing Association, subject to the Association being successful in their bid to the Housing Corporation for funding.

**DECISION:** That the area of land in Braintree, as identified in the report, be retained by the Council at the transfer of the housing stock and transferred to the Housing Association identified, subject to them obtaining funding from the Housing Corporation.

53 **REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ON ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO THE CABINET'S ATTENTION (PRIVATE SESSION)**

There were no reports.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.32pm

G BUTLAND

(Leader)