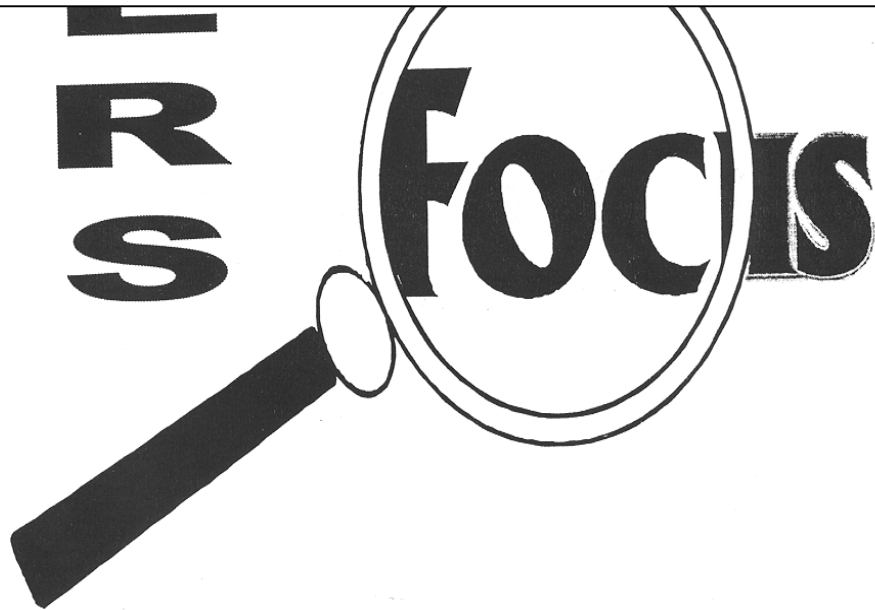


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*Members' Focus is available on-line at www.braintree.gov.uk
- Choose "Council & Democracy" from the menu on the left,
then "Members Focus".*

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Focus

April 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

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MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Community Safety & Development

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Meeting Community Needs

SUBJECT: Braintree Community Safety Roadshow	CONTACT OFFICER: Jayne Wakeling
TEL/EMAIL No.: Ext 2330 jayne.wakeling@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: <p>A further Community Safety Roadshow took place in Braintree during February half term on Wednesday 15th February 2006 under the bandstand in the George Yard Shopping Centre.</p> <p>The Roadshow was extremely well received by members of the public with over 250 people visiting the roadshow throughout the day to peruse over the many displays and information on view. The advice and guidance on Purse theft proved extremely popular and was among the most frequent requests from the public.</p> <p>Members of the public were able to raise any concerns with an officer from either Community Safety, Environmental Services, or Housing, with one representative being on hand at allotted times throughout the day. Police Community Support Officers were also on hand for a limited time during the day.</p> <p>Topical items of concern included:</p> <p>Parking & concern for safety – London Road – A Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) spoke at length with a resident of London Road experiencing problems with lorries parked up and waiting to gain access to a development site. The site manager has been visited and is taking steps to prevent further problems for residents.</p> <p>Progress Court, Braintree – concern for well being of other residents due to persistent targeted criminal damage to a resident's property. Housing & Police aware currently being progress through Braintree Police Community Safety Tasking Group.</p> <p>Cressing Road, Witham – one resident from Witham attended the Braintree Roadshow expressing concern for the safety of a neighbour's children that were often seen running freely at the rear of properties were they were at risk of not being seen by drivers in their vehicles. The neighbouring family are receiving support from a number of agencies.</p> <p>With emphasis this year on educating members of the public on Community Safety & Anti Social Behaviour issues and raising awareness of intervention and enforcement.</p> <p>A broad range of exhibition boards covered the following topics:</p> <p>Intervention and enforcement</p> <p>Noise Abatement Notices – 68 have been issued in the Braintree Area over the last five years.</p> <p>FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2004 – 2005 ENFORCEMENT ACTION WAS TAKEN</p>	

April 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

ON THE FOLLOWING:

Noise Abatement Notices – 13 notices served

Notices served of seeking Possession - 26 notices served on tenants

Housing Possessions - 9 possessions granted by the court.

Flytipping – Two people prosecuted – fined £1000 plus £300 costs.

Dog fouling -10 Fixed Penalty Notices served to Dog owners

Abandoned Vehicles – Two people prosecuted – fined £250 plus £130 costs
'The responsible vehicle disposal scheme costs only £25.00.'

The sale and use of Butt Boxes were promoted during the Roadshow to discourage the dropping of cigarette ends and litter.

ABCs/ASBOs – There are currently 3 ABCs and 4 ASBO in the Braintree area of the district.

Since November 2003 Braintree District Community Safety Partnership have facilitated 49 ABCs and been successful in applications for 14 ASBOs.

MOTOR VEHICLE SEIZURE – SECTION 59 OF THE TRAFFIC ACT ENABLES POLICE OFFICERS TO GIVE WARNINGS TO ANY INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED AS CAUSING NUISANCE RIDING A MOTOR PROPELLED VEHICLE.

Steps that are taken following reports of nuisance behaviour and illegal riding:

- Person identified as causing nuisance
- Owner of the vehicle given first warning of nuisance behaviour
- Upon further nuisance (within twelve months) a second warning given and vehicle seized

There is a cost to the perpetrator for the return of the vehicle.

- £105 per vehicle plus
- Storage - £12 per additional day
- Vehicle disposed of after 21 days

These costs are incurred every time a vehicle is seized.

Other information/projects displayed:

Bicycle thefts – 105 recorded incidents of bike theft in Braintree for the twelve-month period to July 2005 with 6 recorded incidents of bike theft being detected.

Purse thefts - 115 recorded incidents of Purse Thefts in Braintree for the twelve month period to July 2005 there were with the highest number of purse thefts occurring on Wednesday and Saturday in the areas of Market

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Place, Tofts Walk and Sainsbury Supermarket.

NACRO Changing Lives Creating Opportunities - Braintree Community Sports Project. A social inclusion based project that uses sport to engage and divert young people.

Millie Dowler - Promoting personal safety in children and young adults. A variety of postcards and tips were available to encourage safety in young people when out and about in the community.

REALITY ROADSHOW – DELIVERY OF AN ANNUAL EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE TO REDUCE YOUTH OFFENDING AND ADDRESS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR:

- Eight secondary schools across the district.
- 1356 young people took part in this event during October/November
- Held during October/November
- Introductory play depicting Anti-Social Behaviour
- Rickstones school drama students act out plays & scenes

A variety of workshops including the following topics:

- Getting arrested/cautioned
- Road Safety, Arson and Hoax Calls
- Alcohol awareness and teenage pregnancy
- Prison Life and Peer Pressure
- Drugs Awareness
- Consequences of Anti-Social Behaviour.

Crucial Crew – Delivery of an annual educational initiative to promote the safety and well being of young people.

The project aims to

- Raise awareness of dangers likely to be encountered as they advance through life.
- Deliver interactive and participative learning
- Deliver a variety of sets of ten minutes duration
- Provide children with a range of messages to guide them when faced with an emergency.
- Support Teachers with additional information packs to continue Crucial Crew message in school.

Neighbourhood Watch – A Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator was appointed in June 2005 funded by Safer Stronger Communities Fund. The NHW Co-ordinator's primary focus is to expand the NHW across Witham, Castle Hedingham, Cressing and Panfield. Members of the public were encouraged to join a local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to be a vital link between public and police and help to prevent petty crime, vandalism, Bogus Callers and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Outcome & Feedback Publicity on the event.

Photographers and reporters attended during the event to talk to the officers on hand and members of the public stopping to view the variety of information on display.

Photographs and editorial appeared in the following newspapers:

Essex Chronicle

Braintree & Witham Times

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Evening Gazette (2 editions)

Further publicity included promoting the winners of the colouring competition and teen quiz. The teen quiz raised awareness in young people of anti social behaviour, penalties for littering and motor vehicle nuisance with emphasis on the law for the riding of motor vehicles. It is both encouraging and reassuring that the young people visiting the Roadshow throughout the day were extremely interested in the work in addressing anti social behaviour some spending as long as 45 minutes talking with an officer. There was particular interest in the process for seizure of motor vehicles under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002. It is reassuring to know that the decision to include this area as a main theme of the Roadshow was extremely relevant to the current issues surrounding this matter.

Prepared by Jayne Wakeling – ASB Liaison Officer Ext 2330

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Community Safety & Development

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Meeting Community Needs

SUBJECT: Halstead Community Safety Roadshow	CONTACT OFFICER: Jayne Wakeling
TEL/EMAIL No.: Ext 2330 jayne.wakeling@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION: <p>A Community Safety Roadshow took place in Halstead during February half term week on Monday the 13th February 2006 at Weavers Court (outside the Solar Store).</p> <p>The Roadshow was extremely well received by members of the public with over 200 people visiting the roadshow throughout the day to peruse over the many displays and information on view. The advice and guidance on Purse theft proved extremely popular and was among the most frequent requests from the public.</p> <p>Members of the public were able to raise any concerns with an officer from either Community Safety, Environmental Services, or Housing, with one representative being on hand at allotted times throughout the day. In addition, Police Community Support Officers were on hand for a limited time during the day, along with representatives from Essex Young Peoples Drug & Alcohol Service.</p> <p>Topical items of concern included:</p> <p>TRINITY STREET – concerns regarding noise from licensed premises and youths hanging around predominantly residential area – currently being progress by Police Community Safety Tasking Group. Resident has regular contact with the Housing Department - given suitable advice regarding reporting of incidents.</p> <p>KING GEORGE PLAYING FIELD – CONCERNS RAISED BY RESIDENT IN RESPECT OF YOUNG PEOPLE HANGING AROUND OUTSIDE PLAYING FIELD, LOUD NOISE AND POSSIBLE ALCOHOL ABUSE. RESIDENT EXPRESSED INTEREST IN NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME. ADVICE GIVEN REGARDING THE REPORTING OF INCIDENTS AND DETAILS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME GIVEN.</p> <p>Trinity Street – Concerns expressed regarding the loud music coming from Scenarios, resident stated that this is normally well managed by the Manager however problems had arisen recently due to Relief Manager in place. Scenarios had been visited and concerns addressed. Suitable advice given and resident encouraged to report further problems through to Environmental Services.</p> <p>The years Roadshow focused emphasis on educating members of the public on Community Safety & Anti Social Behaviour issues and raising awareness of intervention and enforcement.</p> <p>A broad range of exhibition boards covered the following topics:</p> <p>Intervention and enforcement</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

29 Noise Abatement Notices served in Halstead during the last 5 years.

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2004 – 2005 ENFORCEMENT ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THE FOLLOWING:

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'The responsible vehicle disposal scheme costs only £25.00.'

The sale and use of Butt Boxes were promoted during the Roadshow to discourage the dropping of cigarette ends and litter.

ABCs/ASBOs – There are currently 3 ABCs and 1 ASBO in the Halstead area of the district.

MOTOR VEHICLE SEIZURE – SECTION 59 OF THE TRAFFIC ACT ENABLES POLICE OFFICERS TO GIVE WARNINGS TO ANY INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED AS CAUSING NUISANCE RIDING A MOTOR PROPELLED VEHICLE.

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There is a cost to the perpetrator for the return of the vehicle.

- £105 per vehicle plus
- Storage - £12 per additional day
- Vehicle disposed of after 21 days

These costs are incurred every time a vehicle is seized.

Other information/projects displayed:

Bicycle thefts – 22 recorded incidents of bike theft in Halstead for the twelve-month period to July 2005 with 1 recorded incidents of bike theft being detected.

Purse thefts - 32 recorded incidents of Purse Thefts in Halstead for the

MEMBERS' FOCUS

twelve month period to July 2005 there were with the highest number of purse thefts occurring on Friday and Saturday.

NACRO Changing Lives Creating Opportunities - Braintree Community Sports Project. A social inclusion based project that uses sport to engage and divert young people.

Millie Dowler - Promoting personal safety in children and young adults. A variety of postcards and tips were available to encourage safety in young people when out and about in the community.

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- Support Teachers with additional information packs to continue Crucial Crew message in school.

Neighbourhood Watch – A Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator was appointed in June 2005 funded by Safer Stronger Communities Fund. The NHW Co-ordinator's primary focus is to expand the NHW across Witham, Castle Hedingham, Cressing and Panfield. Members of the public were encouraged to join a local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme to be a vital link between public and police and help to prevent petty crime, vandalism, Bogus Callers and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Witham Parenting & Adolescent Programme – A twelve-week programme with future courses anticipated in Witham and Halstead commencing in May 2006. The aim of the programme to empower parents to take responsibility for their role in supporting their children through adolescence into adulthood.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Five priority outcomes include:

- Increasing positive parenting skills.
- Reducing conflict with teenagers
- Supporting parents and offering reassurance & encouragement.
- Improving family relationships
- Information on drugs and challenges adolescence face.

Spansey Court 'Kick about Area - Anti Social Behaviour had become a growing concern for the residents of Spansey Court and Windmill Lane. A 'kick about area' of land previously used by the youngsters was no longer available.

- A local resident recognised the need for young people to have their own safe play area.
- Research undertaken to identify suitable location.
- Following consultation with a local landowner an area of land was offered for development.
- BDC Community Safety Team made funding applications to three different funding streams all of which were successful. The project was developed and a successful planning application was made.
- Spansey Court "Kick About Area officially opened October 2005 supported by the following agencies:
 - Braintree Community Safety Partnership
 - Braintree District Council
 - Essex Police
 - Youth Service
 - Essex County Council

Outcome & Feedback Publicity on the Community Safety Roadshow event.

Photographers and reporters attended during the day to talk to the officers on hand and members of the public stopping to view the variety of information on display.

Photographs and editorial appeared in the following newspapers:

Essex Chronicle
Suffolk Free Press
Halstead Gazette
Evening Gazette

Further publicity includes promoting the winners of the colouring competition and teen quiz. The teen quiz raised awareness in young people of anti social behaviour, penalties for littering and motor vehicle nuisance with emphasis on the law for the riding of motor vehicles. It is both encouraging and reassuring that the young people visiting the Roadshow throughout the day were extremely interested in the work in addressing anti social behaviour some spending as long as 45 minutes talking with an officer. There was particular interest in the process for seizure of motor vehicles under Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002. It is reassuring to know that the decision to include this area as a main theme of the Roadshow was extremely relevant to the current issues surrounding this matter.

Prepared by Jayne Wakeling – ASB Liaison Officer Ext 2330

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Finance

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: **Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit**

SUBJECT: Housing and Council Tax Benefit Applications from 1st March 2006	CONTACT OFFICER: Juli Rigby Benefits Manager
TEL/EMAIL No.: julri@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: Department for Work and Pensions – CMS A Guide for Local Authorities
<p>INFORMATION: With effect from 1st March 2006, the process for any customers living in Braintree or Halstead, making a new claim for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit has changed. (Customers living in the Witham area are not yet affected by these changes).</p> <p>This is part of a nationwide change in process, being introduced by the DWP that has been delayed due to technical problems on several occasions.</p> <p>The Customer Management System (CMS) is the new Jobcentre Plus's (JC+) information gathering process for all customers (except those age 16-18), who need to make a new claim to Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit, and any associated claims to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.</p> <p>Customers wishing to make a claim for Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit must now telephone the JC+ Call Centre on 0845 6021614 and answer a series of scripted questions (10-15 minutes duration). Information is gathered on behalf of the Benefit Agency and the Local Authority where the customer also requires Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit.</p> <p>Customers are then telephoned back, usually within 24 hours, at a pre-arranged time on an agreed telephone number, to complete the rest of the application form (40minutes + duration).</p> <p>An appointment is then made for the customer to attend the JC+ offices to provide the evidence required to complete the claim and to sign the form.</p> <p>If Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit is payable the JC+ offices will issue an Input Document to the Local Authority. However, this document does not give a decision on any award of Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support/Incapacity Benefit, therefore the Local Authority still have to await confirmation of this from the Department of Work and Pensions.</p> <p>If the DWP can also see and check the evidence for LA benefits they will, however, if the evidence required by the LA is not also required by the JC+, the JC+ will not request it.</p> <p>Therefore, due to the above changes, it is no longer possible for the Local Authority to simply issue a Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit application form to a Customer without firstly checking if a JC+ benefit application is being made.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

The Local Authority is therefore reliant on the JC+ to process the applications efficiently and timely, as delays would inevitably cause hardship to our Customers.

The 30 day deadline for the provision of evidence will be enforced by the JC+ and persons failing to comply will not have automatic recourse to any backdating of benefit entitlement. Exceptions to this could be made” under exceptional circumstances”, there are no details available as to what constitutes “exceptional”.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Time for a District spring clean

Page 1 of 1

Between the 13th to the 24th March environmental clean up teams will be working on the seasonal spring clean of the district's roads and verges in a bid to tackle litter and rubbish problems. In the first three days teams collected 217 bags, weighing 1920kg (2 tonnes).

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.

Cabinet Member Michael Gage comments "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."

ENDS

For more information contact:

PR Section, Katrina Bramwell on 01376 557752

Picture details (left to right):

01 Spring Clean: Mick Galley, Street Care Manager, Environmental Services & Councillor Michael Gage, Cabinet Member for the Environment.

02/03 Spring Clean: Mick Galley, Andy Mitson & Cllr Gage

Issued by: PR Section: 21 March 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

An Ideal Prize for Braintree Recyclers

Page 1 of 1

The Recycling Task Force has been out in strength this week visiting households to ask residents to participate in an awareness survey on behalf of WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) and Braintree District Council. The short interview is to help evaluate attitudes to recycling and establish the success of the 'Recycle Now' campaign.

Residents who participate in the survey are entered into a prize draw for two tickets to the Ideal Home Show, which is open until 2nd April, where recycling is taking centre stage.

The lucky winners will be able to see the whole recycling process for themselves by walking through Recycle Now's Education Alley - a series of huge, interconnected, tin can tunnels, with interactive displays showing materials as they make their way from the shop, into the home, through the recycling process and then back into new products.

Winners so far include Mr. R. Brown, Miss. Gay, Mrs. Moss, Mrs. Newton, Mrs. Nunn, and Ms. Jemison from Braintree.

Ms. Jenny Jemison (pictured supplied) was thrilled to receive her tickets today, "I am a keen recycler and think recycling is very important. I am looking forward to taking one of my family members to see the show."

Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Michael Gage said: "Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all the residents who have taken time to respond to the survey. Recycling is very easy and helps achieve a better environment for everyone"

The Recycling Task Force will be moving into the Witham area very soon giving more residents a chance to have their say and win tickets to the Ideal Home Show.

ENDS

For more information contact: Ros Alam (01376) 551414 x 2203

Picture details : Ros Alam, (left) Recycling Communications Officer presents tickets to Jenny Jemison (right)

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 14 March 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Ideal plot for special new affordable homes provided through the Braintree Housing Partnership

Page 1 of 1

A former council garages site off Bartram Avenue has been neatly redeveloped to provide four bungalows carefully designed by Baily Garner for individuals with a disability or families with a disabled child or adult. Constructed to a high standard by DCH Construction, they feature level access wide doorways and showers, fully accessible kitchens and appliances, wider hallways and height adjusted letterboxes and utility meters.

These properties will be managed by Suffolk Heritage Housing Association, (a member of the Flagship Housing group), and all the new tenants have particular mobility or special needs. Each home has been specifically adapted following consultation with tenants and Occupational Health staff. Advice was also sought from staff and visitors of the Tabor Centre where the building design was reviewed with specific suggestions and improvements incorporated into these and future houses.

Cabinet member Simon Walsh comments: "This scheme has enabled some people who were living previously in unsuitable accommodation to have a greater independence and to stay in their own familiar surroundings."

ENDS

This housing was commissioned and land provided by Braintree District Council through the Braintree Housing Partnership.

For more press information, contact: Community Development Officer John Sones 01376 551414 – just say the name or Chris Trim (01376) 557752.

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 12 April 2006

CONFIRMED BY GOVERNMENT: NO 'FOURTH OPTION' FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has now officially confirmed that there is no 'fourth option' of the Government providing direct investment into council homes.

Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, stated in 2004: "There will not be a so-called 'Fourth Option' for providing direct additional funds for local authorities to meet the Decent Homes Standard", but recent talks by a working committee of the Labour Party have sensationally sparked rumours that the Government may have changed their mind.

Due to this surprising turn of events, The Leader of Braintree District Council, Graham Butland, wrote to MP Yvette Cooper to get clarification of the matter.

Yvette, the Minister for Housing, has consequently stated: "I can categorically assure you that the Government simply cannot afford to provide to authorities the additional investment that is being levered in through transfer."

She continued: "We are not considering any proposal which would involve local authorities being able to match the funding available to bring the homes for stock transfers up to the Decent Homes target."

Graham Butland has said of the Councils' proposal to transfer its homes: "Transferring council homes to not-for-profit housing associations has meant nearly 7 billion has been invested into tenants' homes all over England."

He continued: "If we transfer our homes and housing staff to a brand new housing association, an extra £160 million will be invested in our homes over the next 30 years, enough to guarantee a decent home for each of our tenants."

He added: "If our tenants vote no to transfer in the upcoming secret ballot, services would have to be cut and we still wouldn't have enough money to bring all of our homes up to standard."

Contact: *Amanda Bhavnani*
Phone Number: 01376 552525. Ex 2109
Email: Amanda.bhavnani@braintree.gov.uk
Website: www.braintree.gov.uk

News

£143,000 for skills training in Braintree District

Page 1 of 2

Of the £1million worth of skills funding to come from the East of England Development Agency's Investing in Communities programme (**liC**), people in Braintree District will be able to tap into £143,000 worth of basic skills training. The funding has been made through the Essex Development & Regeneration Agency (**ExDRA**): bringing part of this programme to Braintree District and more could be available next year. This is especially important to the Braintree area where one in four people of working age have no formal qualifications or skills.

In the agency's words, this new money will encourage a new approach to

- a) improving basic skills and qualification levels
- b) developing community assets
- c) building social capital in the voluntary, community and social sector

A range of projects include initiatives in Braintree, Maldon and Harlow to address basic skill levels. For example, contributing to the development of "Science Alive" in Harlow town centre, a unique project through which young people can be encouraged to engage in science and technology in a hands-on and interactive way.

Other projects are being developed and can be announced nearer to their fruition.

Cllr Nigel Harley, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Transportation at Braintree District Council said "I'm absolutely delighted that ExDRA have been successful in securing £1m through EEDA's Investing in Communities programme. We have been concerned for some time about the need to increase our effort in raising basic skills and qualifications in the Braintree district. This funding will, without doubt, have a real impact on learning provision and our partners on the Braintree Economic Development Partnership Board are we are looking forward to working with ExDRA on preparing delivery plans and monitoring the long-term effectiveness of the investment".

ENDS

Notes for Editors on p2

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Notes

1. The key points of the Investing in Communities (liC) programme are:
 - liC is a unique initiative among Regional Development Agencies, fundamentally changing the way public, private, community and voluntary organisations work together to achieve holistic community regeneration.
 - liC relies on joint planning of investment and action to achieve sustainable economic growth.
 - liC will ensure that investment for tackling deprivation and inequality is effective, by basing it on a firm understanding of community needs.
 - Community engagement is fundamental to the success of liC.
 - It is not about short-term fixes to problems, it is about lasting improvements to the way services are delivered.
2. In the East of England the East of England Development Agency has awarded £13 million across the six counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire under the liC programme.
3. The Essex Development & Regeneration Agency was formed in 2004 from the former Enterprise and Regeneration Division of Essex County Council and the Essex Economic Partnership. The Agency works with a variety of partner organisations on a series of programmes and activities to help improve the economic prosperity of Essex.

For more information please contact:

Russell Everard, Economic Development Manager at Braintree District Council Tel 01376 551414 or Stuart Graham, Media and PR Manager, Essex Development & Regeneration Agency (ExDRA) on 01245 702415 or email stuart.graham@exdra.co.uk

ENDS

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 3 April 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Spring Lodge in expanded improvement programme

Page 1 of 1

Witham's Spring Lodge Community Association and Braintree District Council have agreed new proposals for improvements and lease arrangements at the centre in Chipping Hill, Witham.

Following detailed negotiations, improvements to the centre will be deferred 12 months, enabling the association to consolidate its own arrangements in preparation for investment by the Council, which now intends to spend considerably more than the £230,000 originally allocated. The association has also entered a new secure 26 year lease, enabling long term financial planning.

The exact investment cost will be subject to a tendering process and will include: new windows and doors, a new heating system, rewiring and lighting where needed, new flat roof with replacement of existing pitched roof parts with better insulated materials, new ramped access, disabled toilet and provision of children's toilets, redecoration, and new carpets where appropriate.

Centre manager Wayne Gale comments: "Following these negotiations, we now have time to let the situation settle, so that we can all be prepared for the work which needs to be done."

Council leader Graham Butland comments: "For the sake of users of the hall, I'm naturally disappointed that the improvements will be delayed but I do understand that the association needs time to prepare for the works. We do want to work with the association and look forward to a new and modernised Spring Lodge in 2007 and the extra time will allow us to do more than we would otherwise."

ENDS

For more information contact: Chris Trim (01376) 557752
Issued by: Braintree DC PR 28 March 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Major improvements for Braintree Town Hall Centre

Page 1 of 1

Braintree Town Hall is the next building to be modernised as part of the District Council's policy of improving its community assets. Building work has now started to improve access and usability at the Town Hall Centre and will continue for the next 16 weeks. The cost of these improvements are in the region of £133,950 and will include a new fully accessible lift, better and easier access to the foyer/reception area and tourist desk, new toilets, and better security and lighting.

Council Leader Graham Butland comments: "The Town Hall is a remarkable, beautiful building at the heart of Braintree. I am delighted that we are taking steps to improve its accessibility. The improvements will be completed in time for the thousands of visitors that are expected to the town at the end of June for the 2006 Essex History Fair.

These improvements are another part of our very successful policy of investing in our community assets. This policy has seen significant improvements carried out to buildings such as the Braintree Institute, Glebe Hall and the Witham Public Hall.

They have all been financed by making better use of the Council's resources and have not added any cost to the Council taxpayer."

ENDS

Local contractor W.P. Harris Ltd. is working with staff at the Town Hall, to minimise any inconvenience the building works may cause to members of the public, however during this time hall users should be aware that the upstairs toilet will not be available, and there is a possibility that groups may have to be moved to different rooms from those originally booked. There will be reduced parking and an expected level of unavoidable noise. However the building will still be open with business as usual, as far as possible. Centre users can contact the Receptionist, Duty Officer, Premises Manager Geoff Fuller for further information.

For more press information, contact: Chris Trim, on 01376 557752.
Issued by: Braintree DC PR 30 March 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: PLANNING

SUBJECT: Planning Appeals	CONTACT OFFICER: Alison Webb
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 551414 Ext. 2614 alison.webb@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: Nil
INFORMATION: To provide details of recently lodged planning appeals and appeal decisions.	

INFORMATION: APPEALS LODGED

Appellant: Mr S Buckley
Site: Fairview Cottage, Jaspers Green, Shalford
Development: Erection of single dwelling
Application No: 05/02339/OUT
Start Date: 28th February 2006

Appellant: Mr I Jack
Site: Land rear of 45 Panfield Lane, Braintree
Development: Erection of two two-bedroom houses
Application No: 05/01399/FUL
Start Date: 1st March 2006

Appellant: Braintree Leisure
Site: Freeport Village, Charter Way, Braintree
Development: Addition of two uplighters to pylon sign granted consent under
05/01674/ADV
Application No: 05/02249/ADV
Start Date: 14th March 2006

Appellant: Mr and Mrs C Bloomfield
Site: Rose Cottage, Hall Road, Panfield
Development: Erection of two storey side extension (including demolition of
existing modern single storey extension)
Application No: 05/01373/FUL and 05/01374/LBC
Start Date: 20th March 2006

Appellant: Mr and Mrs C Bloomfield
Site: Rose Cottage, Hall Road, Panfield
Development: Erection of two storey side extension and glazed link
Application No: 05/02468/FUL and 05/02469/LBC
Start Date: 20th March 2006

April 2006

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Appellant: Mr M A Kennedy
Site: Thornwood, The Pines, Hatfield Peverel
Development: Conditional consent to undertake work to five Lime trees
Application No: TPO 69/00
Start Date: 3rd April 2006

Appellant: Dr P Mayo
Site: 1 Old Fox Cottages, Church End, Shalford
Development: Erection of one and a half storey side and rear extension, single storey rear extension, porch and detached garage
Application No: 05/01661/FUL
Start Date: 11th April 2006

INFORMATION: APPEAL DECISIONS

Appellant: Marishal Thompson & Co
Site: Oak House, 12 Buttermere, Great Notley
Development: Refusal of consent to fell two oak trees and one field maple
Application No: TPO 3/60
Decision & Date: DISMISSED 10th March 2006

Appellant: Mr D Bayes
Site: Sloe Lodge, Sloe Hill, Halstead
Development: Erection of detached garage and store
Application No: 05/01729/FUL
Decision & Date: ALLOWED 16th March 2006

Appellant: Mr P Everett
Site: 6 Newtown, Coggeshall Road, Kelvedon
Development: Erection of two storey side extension
Application No: 05/01342/FUL
Decision & Date: DISMISSED 23rd March 2006

Appellant: Mr P Smith
Site: 4 Levens Way, Great Notley
Development: Refusal of consent to fell one cherry blossom (crab apple) tree
Application No: TPO 3/60
Decision & Date: WITHDRAWN 20th March 2006 (consent granted to fell, subject to replacement)

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Appellant: Mr and Mrs M Asbury
Site: Countryside, Swan Chase, Sible Hedingham
Development: Retention of existing single storey building and concrete drive, together with comprehensive landscaping works
Application No: 05/00557/FUL
Decision & Date: WITHDRAWN 4th April 2006

Appellant: Persimmon Homes (Essex) Ltd
Site: The Butchers Bar and Grill, Braintree Road, Witham
Development: Construction of 28 no. 2 bedroom apartments with associated parking and landscaped area
Application No: 05/00704/FUL
Decision & Date: WITHDRAWN 4th April 2006

Appellant: Westbury Homes (Holding) Ltd
Site: Land off Bramble Road, Witham
Development: Erection of 128 no. 2 bed apartments, scouts building and St John Ambulance building to rear and west of Spring Lodge Community Centre and Christian Meeting Room building at the corner of Windsor Close and Hatfield Road. All works with pedestrian and vehicular access and associated parking
Application No: 05/01010/FUL
Decision & Date: WITHDRAWN 4th April 2006

Appellant: Mr and Mrs W J Hadley
Site: Little Sixpenny, Colne Park, Colne Engaine
Development: Temporary removal of condition 2 of planning permission BTE/664/83 – lifting of agricultural restriction for 10 years/Enforcement action
Application No: 05/01907/FUL and Enforcement Notice
Decision & Date: ALLOWED/Enforcement Notice Quashed 5th April 2006/Application for Costs REFUSED

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: CORPORATE

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: IMPROVE PERFORMANCE
AND DELIVER BETTER VALUE

<p>SUBJECT: Members rights to call a planning application to an Area Committee and the Code of Conduct</p>	<p>CONTACT OFFICER: P J Dempsey Monitoring Officer</p>
<p>TEL/EMAIL No.: Ext. 2620 patrick.dempsey@braintree.gov.uk</p>	<p>BACKGROUND PAPERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Code of Conduct for Members (Part 5 of the Constitution) • Standards Board for England guide – ‘Lobby groups, dual-hatted Members and the Code of Conduct’
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>On 19 April, Council approved amendments to the Scheme of Delegation for the determination of planning applications. The agreed changes reserve the right for Members to refer an application to an Area Committee on planning grounds subject to such right being exercised in writing setting out the reasons.</p> <p>At the Council meeting, a Member asked whether or not the exercise of the right to refer would create a ‘personal’ or a ‘personal and prejudicial’ interest under the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>In exercising the right to refer, a Member will be subject to the Code of Conduct. If, therefore, a Member has no personal interest in the application then there is no question of a breach of the Code of Conduct. If there is a “personal” interest then this should be declared at the time of referral as well as at the meeting in the usual way. However, if the interest is “personal and prejudicial” my advice is that the Member should not refer the matter to an Area Committee.</p> <p>Even if there is no personal/prejudicial interest in the application, Members must ensure that their actions do not give an indication that they have reached a decision on the merits of the application. This question of pre-determination has always been the case and the Code of Conduct has not introduced new restrictions. The Standards Board for England issued guidance (“<i>Lobby Groups, dual-hatted Members and the Code of Conduct</i>”) which was distributed to all Members in December 2004. The guidance can be found on the Board’s website at:-</p> <p>www.standardsboard.co.uk/TheCodeofConduct/Guidance/Guidanceforlocalauthorities/filedownload,2123,en.pdf.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Page 9 of the guidance is titled "*Have I made up my mind about the issue?*" and reminds Members that they should not reach a final conclusion on an issue before they come to take a decision on it. This doesn't mean you cannot form a view about the matter before the meeting, but if you have formed a provisional view, you must still be willing to consider all arguments presented at the meeting and be open to persuasion on the merits of the case. If you are not, your decision might be open to legal challenge because of the common law concept of pre-determination. This is a legal concept that the Courts have always applied to local authority decision-making. It predates the Code of Conduct and is not altered by it. In the view of the Standards Board for England, the Courts are the appropriate forum for determining if a decision is flawed because a Member was not open to persuasion on the merits of the case.

If you are minded to refer an application to an Area Committee, you should not, in doing so, give the impression that you have reached a final conclusion on it and you must still be willing to consider all arguments presented at the meeting and be open to persuasion on the merits of the case.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: All

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: A better place to live, work and play

SUBJECT: Affordable Housing Development Update April 2006	CONTACT OFFICER: Tim Lucas, Maria Preston
TEL/EMAIL No.:01376 551414 ext. 2124, 2182 timlu@braintree.gov.uk marpr@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

INFORMATION:

Development Programme Update – 2005/06

Site Acquisitions, New Starts and Completions fourth quarter 2005/06 and year end:

Site Acquisitions: three new site acquisitions this quarter: Belchamp Walter: Gestingthorpe Road site transferred to Hastoe Housing Association and Halstead: Abels Road and Tidings Hill sites transferred to Swan Housing Association in March 2006.

New Starts - 11 units: Abels Road, Halstead started on site late March with 7 rental and 4 shared ownership units.

Completions 79 units: **St Michaels Hospital** site in Braintree had 10 rental completions in February and March – this site is part of the Stanstead Area Partnership where our other partners (Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford) share nominations. From these 10 completions 8 units have been allocated to families from Braintree district and two units allocated to partner districts.

Bartram Avenue: this small development of 4 purpose built wheelchair user bungalows completed in January. All residents are extremely happy with their homes, these bungalows have adaptations fitted to meet their needs and enable them to live comfortably. Kitchens and bathrooms have been fitted for wheelchair users and they also have had wooden flooring fitted throughout for ease of wheelchair movement.

Maltings Lane, Witham had 12 rental and 2 shared ownership completions in the fourth quarter.

Gypsy Corner, Braintree had 16 rental and 7 shared ownership completions in the fourth quarter.

Bridge Hospital, Witham completed the 8 care leavers units in January. This will cater for 16 to 18 year olds who are leaving care but still need some support while they find work and then assist them to move onto general housing.

Estuary Homes have only managed to assist with one purchase using the Homebuy scheme within the Braintree district during 2005/06. 8 other applicants had been processed but were not in a position to proceed at the year-end. Estuary have not been allocated funding for 2006-08.

Moat Homes have assisted with 19 purchases within the district for Key Workers during 2005/06 – 3 NHS, 9 Education, 7 Police. Moat have been nominated by the Housing Corporation as Zone Agents for the next 2 years and have funding in place to assist with keyworkers and homebuy purchasers within the district.

New developments currently in progress:

Braintree – St.Michaels Hospital: 48 units started on site January 2005, 16 rental units

MEMBERS' FOCUS

completed during 2005/06. Remaining 32 units estimated to complete by November 2006.
Braintree - Gypsy Corner: 59 units started on site February 2005, 16 rental and 7 shared ownership units completed during 2005/06. Development completion now estimated June 2006.

Witham - Maltings Lane (LP3): 32 units started on site in December 2004, 2 shared ownership units completed March 2006. Completion now estimated July 2006.

Witham - Maltings Lane (LP 6 & 7): 37 units rental and shared ownership. Started on site September 2005. Completions expected by end of 2006.

Steeple Bumpstead - North Crescent: 8 rental units. Completion estimated October 2006.

Witham - Bridge Hospital: 42 units - rental and shared ownership. Completion estimated July 2007

Braintree – Warley Close: 10 units: 8 rental and 2 shared ownership started on site May 2005 due to complete August/September 2006.

Braintree – Coggeshall Road (extra Care scheme): 34 units due to complete October 2006

Halstead – Abels Road: 11 units rental and shared ownership started on sit March 2006. Completion estimated December 2006

Braintree – Mill Hill: 10 rental units due to be handed over by developers as Section.106 agreement. Awaiting confirmation of dates for these.

Housing Corporation funding / RSL funding has been received for the following developments with a start on site during this financial year (2005/06):

Halstead – Tidings Hill: 14 units – 8 rental and 6 shared ownership. Redevelopment of BDC allotment site. Transfer of land March with start on site April 2006. Completion estimated April 2007

Belchamp Walter – Gestingthorpe Road – 4 units shared ownership/equity. Transfer of land March with start on site imminent. 6 houses (2 x 3 bed and 4 x 2 bed) being built on site with 2 outright purchases to enable funding of the shared ownership houses

New Development Cumulative figures 2005/06:

Previously estimated figures for this financial year have been reduced. This is due to the nature of new developments where dates of deadlines can change for various reasons.

Actual Site Acquisitions: 5 sites with 48 units: 1 site with 10 units in 1st quarter, 1 site with 8 units in third quarter and 3 sites with 29 units in 4th quarter

Actual Start on Site: 9 developments with 150 units: 56 in 1st quarter, 33 in 2nd quarter, 50 in third quarter and 11 in 4th quarter.

Actual Completions: 8 developments with 76 units: 2 in 1st quarter, 15 in 3rd quarter and 59 in 4th quarter. Estuary Homebuy had funding for 10 units however only one purchaser managed to complete during this year. Moat Housing Group managed to assist 19 key workers totaling 96 new units over the year.

(Attached database spreadsheet for 2005/06 show developments in detail)

From the above completions to date (4th quarter):

80% of units have been built on brown field sites, 20% on green field site

76% of units have ECO ratings classed as 'good', 21% classes as 'standard'

Housing Corporation funding / RSL funding has been received for the following developments with a start on site during next financial year (2006/08):

£3,242,500 was received for the following developments within the District:

Pebmarsh, Water Lane: 10 units

Witham, Spring Lodge: 30 units - 15 rental and 15 shared ownership

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Witham, Maltings Lane (LP10): 20 units – 14 rental and 6 shared ownership
Sible Hedingham, Summer Fields: 17 units – 13 rental and 4 shared ownership

CURRENT YEAR BREAKDOWN		2005/06		brown/green field (B / G) purchase													Actual totals	ECO ratings	Life Time Homes	Secure by Design
					April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March				
Site Acquired	<i>details from Housing Association or BDC legal services</i>	acquired date																		
	North Crescent, Steeple Bumpstead			Br	Hastoe	8					8									
	Abels Road, Halstead			Br	BHP	11										11				
	Tidings Hill, Halstead			Gr	BHP	14										14				
	Warley Close, Braintree			Br	BHP - Warden	10	10													
	Belchamp Walter			Br	Hastoe	4										4				
					TOTAL	47	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	29	
								10		0		8		29						
Starts on Site	<i>Date of developers contract start date and/or Housing Corporation drawdown</i>	potential start on site			Potential Projection												Actual totals			
Rental	Abels Road	Dec-05	Br	BHP-Swan	7											7	7			
(fully adapted bungalows)	Bartrams Avenue	Apr-05	Br	BHP-Suffolk Heritage	4	4											4			
	Warley Close	Apr-05	Br	BHP-Warden	5		8										8			
(not HC funded)	Maltings Lane LP6 (ML6)	Jun-05	Gr	BHP-Flagship	8					8							8			
	Maltings Lane LP7 (ML7)	Jun-05	Gr	BHP-Warden	6					6							6			
	Maltings Lane LP7 (ML7)	Jun-05	Gr	BHP-Swan	19					19							19			
	Steeple Bumpstead	Oct-04	Br	Hastoe	8							8					8			
(not HC funded)	Bridge Hospital	Jun-05	Br	BHP-Swan	24						24						24			
Shared Ownership	Abels Road	Dec-05	Br	BHP-Swan	4											4	4			
(not HC funded)	Bridge Hospital	Jun-05	Br	BHP-Flagship	18						18						18		24	
	Warley Close	Apr-05	Br	BHP-Warden	5		2										2			
Supported Housing Units	Young Person Leaving Care (Bridge)	Jan-06	Br	Mosaic (New Essex)	8	8											8		42	
	Coggeshall Road, Braintree	Jul-04	Br	Abbeyfield	34		34										34			
				TOTAL	150	12	44	0	0	0	33	42	0	8	0	0	11	150	150	
				Quarterly totals			56		33		50		11			150				
Completions	<i>details from handover information from HA/allocations</i>	Potential Completion date															total			
Rental	Grove Villas	Apr-05	Br	Blackwater	2		2										2			
	St Michael's Hospital	Nov-05	Gr	Blackwater/Anglia	16							6		4	6		16			
(fully adapted bungalows)	Bartrams Avenue	Dec-05	Br	BHP-Suffolk Heritage	4								4				4	standard	No	
	Maltings Lane LP8	Dec-05	Gr	BHP - Suffolk Heritage & Warden	11						3		6	2			11	good	Yes - specific requirements received	
	Maltings Lane LP9	Dec-05	Gr	BHP - Swan & Warden	10					4	2		4				10	good	No	
	Gypsy Corner	Mar-06	Gr	BHP - Suffolk Heritage & W	16							2	7	7			16	good	applied	
Shared Ownership	Maltings Lane LP3	Dec-05	Gr	BHP - Suffolk Heritage & Swan	2										2		2	good	No	
	Gypsy Corner	Mar-06	Gr	BHP - Suffolk Heritage & Warden	7							4	3				7	good		
Starter Homes/Homebuy	Estuary HA - Homebuy homes	Mar-06	Pu	Estuary	1											1	1			
	Moat HA - Starter and Equity Loan	Mar-06	Pu	Moat	19											19	19		20	
Purchase & Repair																				
Supported Housing Units	Young Person Leaving Care (Bridge)	Jan-06	Br	Mosaic (New Essex)	8								8				8		No	
																0			applied	
				TOTAL	96	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	3	8	24	20	35	96		
				Quarterly totals			2		0		15		79			96			96	
STANSTED FUNDING	BISHOPS STORTFORD	01/07/2005 onwards			7															
STANSTED FUNDING	HARLOW	01/03/2006 3 x 2bf rental + 1 2bf s/own)			4															
number/total*100=%	Total completions	1st qtr	2nd qtr	3rd qtr	4th qtr	total														
	Total new build & purchase	2	0	15	59	76														
	% built on brown field land	100%	0%	40%	80%															
	% built on green field land	0%	0%	60%	20%															
	purchased units				20															