

Spring 2009



After a snowy start to the year, we're looking forward to warm spring days and, to continue that theme, we would like to give you a warm welcome to our 'Parish in Spring-time' event. This is for Town and Parish Councils in the District on Thursday 19th March at Causeway House and you may call in from 4 pm to 9pm, refreshments will be from 6 pm.

You will have already received an invitation with details of the stands and those contributing. Members and officers will be attending from Braintree District Council with representatives from Essex County Council, Police, Essex Fire and Rescue, Health Authority and others, such as EALC and RCCE.

Our Parish Publication Competition will be 'voted' for during the event and your Parish or Town Council still has time to enter a parish publication in any of the following categories:

- Parish Magazine or Newsletter
- Parish Walks Booklet/Footpath Map; or
- Calendar or Diary of Events

Entry Forms from Linda Hadley
 Tel: 01376 551414 or by Email:
Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk

We look forward to seeing you all on the 19th.

Items included in this issue:

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- Essex Fire and Rescue Service – home visits – *page 9*
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- RCCE Diary Dates and Competitions – *page 2 and 8*
- Town and Parish News – *pages 10 and 11*

Braintree District Town and Parish Clerks' Network

Hosted by Braintree District Museum, the February meeting was a great success, mostly due to a 'lesson' Victorian style!



(All standing up straight?)

For more pictures take a look at the Parish Information Pages – www.braintree.gov.uk.

Coming Soon

Braintree District Council - Events

'Parish in Spring-time' – a 'drop-in' event for Town and Parish Councils – 19th March 2009 – 4pm to 9pm – invitations have been sent with a competition entry form.

Rural Services Network – Rural Summit – 26th June 2009 – hosted by Braintree District Council at Causeway House – more information on programme and speakers will be sent to all parish councils.

Rural Community Council of Essex

31st March - Village of the Year and Best Kept Village Competition entries

24th April - Best Green Village Competition entries

28th & 29th April - Training for Transition, 9am – 4.30pm (*see opposite column for further information*)

14th May- Introduction to Community Led Planning, 7pm – 9.30pm

27th June - Linking Community Led Planning to Policy and Strategy, 10am – 12.30pm

2nd July - 80th Anniversary Event at the High Sheriff's Garden Party

9th July - Annual General Meeting

www.essexrcc.org.uk
 Contact Jan Cole 0844 477 3938
jan.cole@essexrcc.org.uk

Training for Transition

Rural Community Council of Essex is hosting a 2-day "fundamentals" course for those wishing to know how to set up, run, and maintain a successful Transition Initiative, on Tuesday 28th and Wednesday 29th April 2009 at RCCE office in Feering. The cost for the two days is £120 per person (including lunch, tea/coffee, cold drinks).

A **Transition Initiative** is a community working together to see how it can reduce the amount of energy used without compromising quality of life. It looks at how a community can become resilient and self reliant for the greatest possible number of its needs.

To book a place on this course, contact Stella Meesters on 0844 477 3938 or email stella.meesters@essexrcc.org.uk

Town and Parish Events

Will you be holding an event in your parish this year? The BDC Tourist Information Office is very keen to hear about these and, if you wish, will publicise them on the Enjoy Braintree District website.

Contact: Sarah Cranfield
 Tourist Information
 01376 550066
www.enjoybraintreedistrict.co.uk

The office is open Monday-Friday
 9.30am-5.00pm and Saturdays
 10.00am-4.00pm

Community Achievement Awards



Congratulations
To our 2008/09
Winners!

The awards are to celebrate those who have made an outstanding contribution to the community and to improving the quality of life for others by giving their time, support and care.

We had a fantastic response in this first year of the Awards and received over 75 nominations. The judging panel of Cllr Lady Newton, Chairman of the Council, Cllr Jo Beavis and Mr George Courtauld agreed to award 2 prizes in each category and, at the Chairman's discretion, this year there was a special Chairman's Award.

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor Lady Newton said "The scale of the response took us by surprise which demonstrates how many people generously give their time to make life better for others. We are indeed fortunate to have such people living in our District and they all deserve to be winners."

The winners:



Young Person (11-17) - Melissa Finch (13) and Katie Gibson (16)

Contribution to the Environment and Conservation (young person or adult) - Dr. Ronald Green and Keith Newbitt

Contribution by an individual to a voluntary body or to the community (18 and over) - Bill Norman *and* Georgie Roy

Chairman's Award - Tony Parish

Councillor Jo Beavis, Cabinet Member for Customers & Communication, added "The quantity and qualities of all nominations made judging extremely difficult. They are all winners and true champions within their communities but we finally picked the winners and I look forward to meeting them at the Chairman's Reception. Thanks to everyone who sent in nominations as each nomination gave us a greater understanding of the communities in the Braintree District."

For more information on the Community Achievement Awards please take a look at www.braintree.gov.uk under the Community, People and Living pages. During March, look out for our new Town and Parish pages which will include local service information, links to BDC Ward Member pages, ONS statistics and links to your own websites



A Strategy for People and Places in Braintree to 2025

Planning For the Future of Braintree District – Where We Are and the Next Steps

What we've done

A major consultation exercise was completed just before Christmas, aimed at getting everyone's views on how the Council and its partners should plan for the future of Braintree district.

We took a new approach by linking the Planning Core Strategy and Community Strategy together and we hope you found it useful.

We consulted all Parish Councils and Town Councils as well as residents, businesses and service providers.

Responses to the consultation

We received over 6500 comments in all from over 400 individuals and organisations with an interest in the district. We are pleased that so many people took the opportunity to respond, and the comments made have given us an excellent basis for reviewing the two strategies and deciding how they might be changed.

As might be expected many comments were about the proposed growth locations at Braintree and Witham and the future of Halstead. However we also received many comments about the future of the rural areas and the many villages in the district.

Amongst the many issues highlighted were:

- The need for affordable housing, especially in some of the rural villages
- The amount of market housing that should be built in the villages
- The importance of taking account of local views in deciding the type of development to be allowed in the villages
- Transport and access, especially public transport and the problems with the two main roads (A12 and A120)
- The importance of the district's rural and historic environment
- The need to encourage more local job opportunities in the rural area and the villages, especially in agricultural diversification, tourism and home working
- The importance of protecting and maintaining services and facilities in the villages
- The future of large sites such as Premdor (Sible Hedingham) and Crittalls (Silver End)
- Whether the plans made the best contribution to 'sustainable development' and minimising the impacts of climate change

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What happens to the comments and what is the next stage?

We have recorded all these responses on our database and are analysing them to make sure we are clear about all the points made. As a result of some of the comments, we may need to do more work before we can complete this stage.

We will then think about how the proposals in the Planning Core Strategy and the Community Strategy could or should be altered as a result of the responses.

Whilst we will consider all responses fully and seriously, we cannot guarantee to take them all on board. This is because there have been some issues raised that the Council cannot control or influence, or (because they would conflict with the governments national or regional policies) they would simply not be acceptable to the inspector who will 'examine' the Planning Core Strategy later.

How will the Community Strategy be finalised?

The Community Strategy can however be altered and then agreed by the Council and its Partners in the Local Strategic Partnership without going through the process of an examination. This process will be completed by summer this year.

It will be important however to make sure that there are no conflicts between the two strategies after any changes have been made.

How will the Planning Core Strategy be finalised?

The Core Strategy will be considered at a series of public meetings over the next months by the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) Panel. It will take decisions on any changes that it feels should be made.

As with all committees these meetings will be publicised well in advance and anyone can attend and address the Panel if they wish.

Later in the year (about July) the final version of the Core Strategy will be approved by the full Braintree Council for a final 6 week period of public consultation.

It will then be submitted for examination by the independent inspector.

We will tell you more about the final consultation process and the examination nearer the time.

Any questions?

In the meantime if you have any questions on either of the two strategies or the next stages in the respective processes please contact:

For The Planning Core Strategy:
Planning Policy team on 01376 551414

For the Community Strategy: Sara Moutard or Jo Petchey on 01376 551414

For further information on the People and Places strategy please look at the Council's website – www.braintree.gov.uk under the Planning pages.

Housing Benefits

Help towards housing and or Council Tax Benefit

As you are all aware today's downturn in the economy is making life harder for many people within the district. Our Benefits Section at Braintree District Council are here to help towards rent and council tax payments and we would encourage people to contact us to make sure they have all the financial support they are entitled to.

Why people do not claim?

There are various reasons why someone may be reluctant to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Research shows that although the stigma of claiming and ignorance of entitlement are contributing factors, reasons for not claiming are more complex and due to a combination of related factors.

- Lack of knowledge and awareness
- Lack of personal contact during the claims process
- Uncoordinated activity resulting in failure to reach vulnerable groups
- Complicated claims processes and perception of Government prying

Therefore if you know of any people in your parish who may need help and advice with their rent or council tax please encourage them to call our friendly staff on 01376 557888.

At the 'Parish in Spring-time' Event on 19th March we are launching a Home Visiting Service which is being piloted in the north of the district please come along to find out more.

Home Energy Schemes from Braintree District Council

Save money and improve your home with loft and cavity wall insulation discounted scheme for Braintree residents. Did you know that up to 35% of heat is lost through walls and up to 25% of heat is lost through the roof?

Insulation is a simple solution that could save you up to £175 a year on your energy bills and a £110 rebate on your council tax bill. The special discounted rate with British Gas is available to homeowners and private tenants. We have a separate scheme where cavity wall and loft insulation is FREE if a member of the household is aged 70 or over, or if you are in receipt of certain benefits (subject to survey).

To arrange a free no obligation survey, please call British Gas on 0845 971 7731 and quote reference BEAT CT.

Braintree District Council offers grants of £1000 towards solar hot water and wind turbine installations. A £400 grant may also be available from the Low Carbon Building Programme.

For details of how much you could save on any of the energy saving schemes please call Braintree District Council on 01376 552525, or email beat@braintree.gov.uk

Fly Tipping

It is a continuous challenge to keep the district free of litter and waste, which costs the Council hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to clear. The Environmental Protection team continues to pursue those people that can be identified as being responsible for unlawfully depositing waste or litter.

In the past 3 months the team has responded to and investigated 80 complaints of littering and fly tipping. This has resulted in 3 prosecutions against fly tippers for depositing waste, the issue of 11 fixed penalty notices for littering and 2 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.



The team has also joined forces with other agencies in a combined operation to tackle, amongst other things, those people who are carrying waste without the proper documentation.

This is to prevent waste being taken to unlicensed sites and has resulted in 5 fixed penalty notices being issued.

There have also been targeted campaigns to reduce waste and littering at specific hot spots.

What you can do to help us help you.

1. If you see anyone fly tipping take registration details of any vehicle and any other information and report it to Environmental Protection.
2. Ensure anyone taking waste from your property (other than the Council refuse collectors) should be a licensed waste carrier. A list of licensed carriers is available on the Environment Agency website.
3. Report anyone going door to door offering to remove waste to Environmental Protection as soon as possible.
4. Keep control of your waste. You have a duty of care to ensure your waste does not get into the wrong hands. Only put it out the morning of the collection or the night before at the earliest.

Contact: Hannah Stoneman
Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2223

We welcome four new clerks to the Braintree District:
 Kieron King – Castle Hedingham
 Carol Wilkinson – Coggeshall
 Jean Simmons – Panfield
 Jayne Halfhide – Terling and Fairstead
*(Please notify Linda Hadley if your Parish Clerk's details change –
 Tel: 01376 551414 or
 Email:
 Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk)*

RCCE Village Competitions

Each year, the Rural Community Council of Essex runs competitions to provide some reward for the very best examples of community pride and initiative in rural Essex. Winners are announced at the RCCE Annual General Meeting in July.

Best Green Village Competition

The aim of this competition is for rural communities to demonstrate how they are creating a sustainable future locally under the categories: Saving Resources and Recycling, Travelling Wisely, Shop Ethically, Care for your Area, Reducing Food Miles and Saving Energy. Awards are determined on completion of a questionnaire and a Village Statement to set out how the community is making a difference.

Information and entry forms are at <http://www.essexrcc.org.uk/competitions-bestgreenvillage.asp>

Calor Essex Village of the Year and Best Kept Village Competition



(Rayne 2006 winners)

The aim of this competition is to provide a showcase for the efforts of parish councils, voluntary groups and individual volunteers working tirelessly to improve the quality of life for people in their local community. Awards are not determined simply by the appearance of villages on one or two 'judging days' in the year, but instead reflect the year round commitment and community spirit.

Information and entry forms are at <http://www.essexrcc.org.uk/competitions>

'Do you have a Village or Community Hall in your village? Do you manage a Village or Community Hall?

If the answer is yes, you may like to consider becoming a member of the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) Village Hall & Community Building Service. RCCE has a Village Halls & Community Buildings Adviser who can give support, information and advice on all aspects of managing a hall, administering a charity, funding, and project management.

Amongst the many benefits of membership, members receive a bi-monthly newsletter giving the latest information on successes, funding, legislation and charity news. There are 38 Information sheets on common topics of managing a hall including Trustees Roles and Responsibilities, Fire Risk Assessment, Health & Safety etc, free to members. The RCCE website includes a full section on Village Halls & Community Buildings, and members can advertise their hall on a free webpage which can be viewed at www.essexrcc.org.uk. Membership is available for a minimum fee of £35.

If you would like more details or to join, please contact Sue Sheppard Tel: 0844 4773938 or email: sue.sheppard@essexrcc.org.uk

Essex Fire and Rescue Service



Community
Fire Safety



(Steve Parker and Sharon Blute)

Hi my name is Station Officer Steve Parker and I have just joined the Community Fire Safety team at Uttlesford and Braintree Command, working with Sharon Blute, Community Support Officer. Our aim is to help make our communities safer places to live, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups within our communities.

The UK suffers more than 550 fatalities and 13,000 injuries in over 64,000 dwelling fires each year. Fire devastates whole families to an extent that few crimes will ever match. It can leave victims with injuries that result in a lifetime of pain, permanent physical or mental scars.

If you are asleep when a fire starts and you don't have a smoke alarm to wake you, your chances of surviving are severely reduced. We therefore recommend that at least one smoke alarm is fitted on every level in the home. Smoke alarms can be purchased from any good electrical or D.I.Y store.

In some circumstances for certain high risk groups within our communities Essex County Fire and Rescue Service will provide and fit a smoke alarm free of charge.

If you feel you fall into one of these categories please contact your local fire safety team on 01376 345537 for your free home fire safety visit.

If you feel there are any other worthwhile projects we can get involved with in your local parishes or require any fire safety literature please contact me.

Steve Parker
 Station Officer, Community Safety
 Uttlesford and Braintree Community
 Command
 Tel: 01376 345537
 Email: steve.parker@essex-fire.gov.uk.

Essex Wildlife Trust

Hello,
 In early February I represented Braintree District Council at an event at the Houses of Parliament to celebrate Essex Wildlife Trust's 50th Anniversary.

Overall, the anniversary celebrations will not just focus on looking back at the past 50 years but, more importantly, will focus on the next 50 years.

In 1959 the trust was established with just a handful of members dedicated to protecting Essex wildlife for the future. Today, the trust boasts a membership of over 36,000 members and has become the County's leading conservation charity.

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Look out for the 50th Anniversary Programme packed with 50 events, around our county. The programme's amazing wildlife spectaculars also include, in our own district, the return of the Oxlip to Great Bardfield on the 29th of April at Piper's Meadow - 10.30am start – an invitation to help plant Oxlips in the final year of the project.



(Picture courtesy of Great Bardfield Parish Council Website)

Along with other representatives from authorities all around our county, including many MPs from Essex, I enjoyed an excellent evening warmly hosted by the Trust. For a short moment, we were able to reflect upon the success of the Trust's great work.

Go wild for wildlife yourself! Visit www.essexwt.org.uk. This great organisation attracts and embraces such a diverse spectrum of people, groups and enterprises with one aim: To protect and sustain our Essex wildlife for the future of others.

Congratulation to the Trust and, don't forget, the trust is always looking for new wildlife projects to support particularly in the Braintree district.

Cllr Mrs Joanne Beavis
 Customers and Communication

Town and Parish News

Sible Hedingham - Riverside Walk

Progress on the development of this walk is gathering pace. In 2008 Sible Hedingham Parish Council successfully applied for funding to make improvements to the length of the walk currently accessible to the public.

The money will be used to improve the surface of the existing path, together with the installation of signs, a footbridge, waste bins, seating and planting of suitable native species.

Where possible the work will be carried out with assistance from local volunteers, under the guidance of the River Colne Countryside Project. Offers of assistance have come from 1st Castle Hedingham Scouts and Hedingham School, and there are a number of local residents that have also offered their support.



(Otter 'holt')

As the Walk is intended to benefit the local community we welcome their involvement at every opportunity. Earlier last year over 20 local residents helped to clear litter from the walk and volunteers from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers constructed an artificial otter holt next to the river.

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Surveys have demonstrated that otters are present in the river both north and south of the walk, so we hope that this holt will be well-used!

Local support for the scheme was demonstrated by the strong turnout to a meeting held in December last year. This meeting involved presentations from both the River Colne Countryside Project and the Green Light Trust, an organisation based in Suffolk that assists in the formation of community groups to manage wild spaces.

The meeting was held to encourage support for the formation of such a group to take part in the development and management of the Riverside Walk, ensuring that local residents have a greater stake in the Walk. Feedback from the meeting was very encouraging and further steps towards the formation of this group are expected in the near future.

The Riverside Walk has great potential, with further expansion due soon with the inclusion of open space forming part of a recent housing development. The site has a wealth of wildlife and historical interest, with the scheme aimed at retaining these qualities whilst allowing improved public access.

For further information contact:
 Richard Parmee, Tel: 07702 918980,
 River Colne Countryside Project Officer

The information contained in this newsletter is published in good faith from a variety of sources and may be subject to change.

Flood Alleviation Scheme

A network of lagoons installed just sixteen months ago to protect the Northern side of Sible Hedingham, have proved their worth in the recent flooding.

With up to 35 mm of rain experienced in just a few hours the three new flood lagoons behind the high street were put under strong demand and helped protect local residents and businesses from flooding.



(Photo courtesy of Essex County Council)

Three lagoons were created to store water during extreme weather conditions and prevent flood waters from flowing down into the High Street and allowing it to be stored instead until it can be released safely into the River Colne using hydro brakes.

They protect Wethersfield Road/Church Street and the A1017 Swan Street which used to regularly flood, inundating a number of adjacent properties, including the County Library in Swan Street.

Contact: Scott Wilson, Highways and Transportation Communications Officer
 Tel: 01245 434383, or
 Email: scott.wilson@essex.gov.uk



Traditional Building Skills Courses

Old buildings, whether timber framed or of Georgian or Victorian brick, are important features of the landscape of Essex and its villages and market towns and the county has about 14,000 listed buildings with over 200 conservation areas.

Maintaining this heritage is a challenge: there is a shortage of skilled craftsmen, and modern materials and methods are often harmful or inappropriate when used in historic buildings. Cement, for instance can be extremely damaging to timber and old brickwork.



(Timber Frame Course)

To promote awareness of the need for traditional buildings skills and materials in historic building conservation, Essex County Council's Historic Buildings and Conservation Team has run a series of seminars for over 20 years and practical courses for 12 years. This unique programme of courses is open to everyone from owners of historic and listed properties to builders, carpenters and plasterers who are used to working with modern materials.

The programme for the year ahead was launched in February. It offers everything from long straw thatching, flint walling and timber frame repairs, to lime plaster and wattle and daub courses. Our work shop is at Cressing Temple, the County Council's historic property between Braintree and Witham, though many courses take place at live sites elsewhere in the county, giving students the unique opportunity to learn their new skills by repairing a part of an historic building or site.

The county has a wealth of historic buildings many of which have stood for hundreds of years, sadly the loss of traditional skills and the use of inappropriate modern building methods and materials means that we could lose many features that make those buildings special. Through the courses we aim to promote the use of traditional materials and skills so that future generations will also benefit from the wide variety of 'built' heritage Essex has to offer.

For more information contact:
 Katie Seabright Tel: 01245 437672
traditional.buildingskill@essexcc.gov.uk

Have you any ideas for future newsletter articles?
 Contact Linda Hadley – Tel: 01376 551414, Ext: 2343;
 or email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk;
 or write to Linda at Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Braintree, Essex, CM7 9HB.
 This newsletter is distributed to all town and parish councils in the District. Download a copy from www.braintree.gov.uk – Council and Democracy – Parish Information – Parish Newsletter.