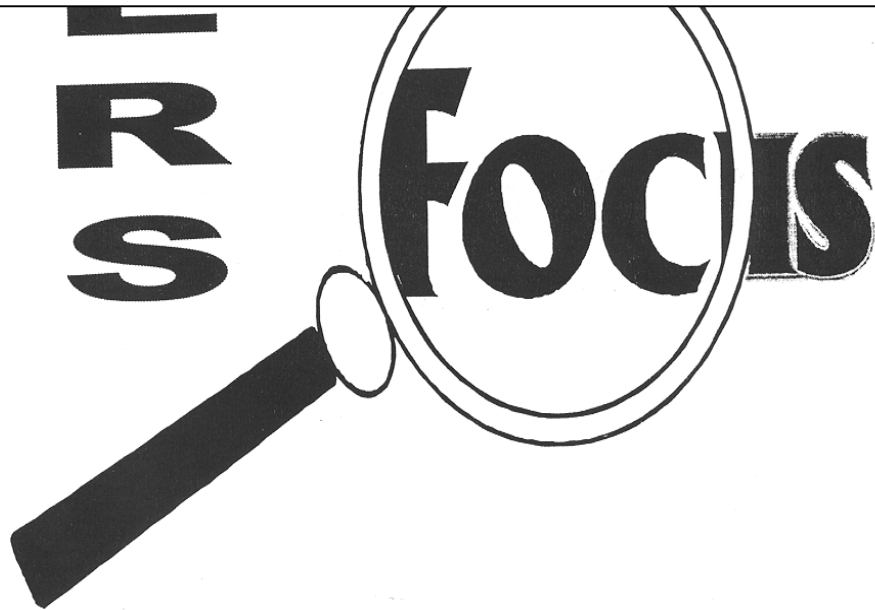


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*Members' Focus is available on-line at www.braintree.gov.uk
- Choose "Council & Democracy" from the menu on the left,
then "Members Focus".*

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Focus

February 2007

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MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Community Safety and Development

Date: 13th February 2007

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Meeting Community Needs

SUBJECT: Being Safe Project	CONTACT OFFICER: Janet Peatling Community Safety & Development Officer
TEL/EMAIL No.: Ext 2344 janpe@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>The Being Safe project is being developed and coordinated by the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership (CDRP). It has been agreed this project will be piloted at the Ramsey School in Halstead on 6th March 2007, as this is where other interlinking CDRP projects have been piloted. Aim – To raise and address diversity issues in Schools.</p> <p>The target audience is year 8 students, and will compliment the citizenship element of the curriculum and also PHSE and RE. The programme will consist of one day of intensive workshops delivered to 140 students covering the four themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anti-bullying• Homophobia• Racism• Anti-social Behaviour <p>Consistent messages will be continually re-enforced throughout the day.</p> <p>Project leads: Mr Murry Head Teacher, Ramsey School Diane LeCount – Teacher in Charge, Central Behavioural Support (Secondary) Lindsay Pattle – Central Behavioural Support (Secondary) Tone Skeet – Action for Men Team Clive Mardner – Hate Crime Panel Chair Helena Goodwin – CDRP & BDC</p> <p>Out line of workshops</p> <p><u>Anti-social Behaviour</u></p> <p>‘I have a choice’ workshop</p> <p>Aim: To create a greater understanding of anti-social behaviour in order to equip young people with the information enabling them to make their own choices.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

- Develop their own definition of anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Raise awareness and understanding of ASB contracts. Explore the range of agencies available to support them with specific needs for example: Essex Youth Service, Youth Offending Team etc
- Raise awareness and understanding of the roles of the various agencies in dealing with and addressing anti-social behaviour and the extent of information sharing across agencies.

Homophobia

'Gender, Sexuality and Homophobia' workshop

Aim: To raise awareness of the gender differences, sexual identities, and homophobia. Our objectives are:

- To illustrate how "gender" can play an important role in gender violence and separation between males and females.
- To outline different forms of gender behaviour and forms of expressing sexuality.
- To raise awareness of how gender behaviour and sexual identities can be linked to homophobic abuse.
- To illustrate the repercussions on young people of homophobic abuse and to give alternatives to prevent and to confront it.

Anti-Racism

Racial Discrimination' - workshop

Aim: understanding racial discrimination

- What is Racial Discrimination -understanding the meaning of racial discrimination.
- The effects of racial discrimination. How racial discrimination occurs and help to give all students support.
- How to challenge racism, focus on responsibilities of all to ensure that racial discrimination is challenged and what the law says.

Anti-bullying

"I'm OK you're OK" workshop

Aim: To stop bullying and stay safe

- Through discussion and experiential learning develop an understanding of feelings associated with bullying.
- Revision of the different roles people play in bullying (Perpetrator, Bystander and Target).
- Equip students with strategies and solutions for the role of bystander.

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- Raise awareness of the Support Group Approach as a strategy for stopping bullying.

If the pilot is deemed successful the project will be rolled out to all secondary schools across the Braintree District.

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AREA: Community Safety & Development (February 2007)

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Meeting Community Needs

SUBJECT: CCTV Vehicle	CONTACT OFFICER: Jayne Wakeling
TEL/EMAIL No.: Ext 2330 jayne.wakeling@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Braintree District Council has recently purchased a CCTV Vehicle for the District. Braintree District Council and the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership (CDRP) funded the vehicle. The vehicle is managed by the Community Safety Team and will be tasked across the district to specific 'ASB hotspot' locations according to priority on an evidence need basis. This is primarily via the three Police Community Safety Tasking Groups.</p> <p>The vehicles surveillance equipment will be used both overtly and covertly to prove and disprove Anti Social Behaviour across the district. The vehicle is fitted with 'state of the art' digital surveillance equipment. The surveillance equipment has the ability to act as a permanent record of events taking place within targeted locations.</p> <p>The CCTV Vehicle will provide the necessary evidence to support positive action and possible prosecution of offenders and provide evidence in supporting intervention and enforcement in addressing Anti Social Behaviour, whilst also acting as a deterrent to potential offenders.</p> <p>The CCTV vehicle aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Prove and disprove allegations of Anti-social Behaviour○ Act as a serious deterrent to Anti Social Behaviour○ Collect evidence necessary for implementing ASB legislation○ Collect supporting evidence to enable successful applications for Anti Social Behaviour Orders and successful prosecution of breaches.○ Reassure members of the public and wider community○ Help build public confidence○ Raise the profile of the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership <p>Braintree District Councils Community Safety Team will manage and coordinate the CCTV Vehicle across the district. A range of Braintree District Council staff are being selected to carry out CCTV surveillance using this vehicle. Selected staff will need to undertake driver assessments, training in the use of the CCTV equipment and relevant legislation e.g. Regulatory Investigative Powers Act (RIPA). A program of training is underway with anticipated completion June 2007.</p> <p>The vehicle will be double crewed during surveillance operations with one person nominated as driver and one as crewmember. Staff will undertake surveillance on a rotation system although consideration will be given to match appropriate staff in accordance with the area in need of surveillance and the nature of the problem.</p> <p>Areas in need of surveillance will have previously been raised as an 'ASB Hotspot' through the relevant Area Police Community Safety Tasking Groups. Accordingly all CCTV vehicle surveillance exercises will be monitored via the relevant Community Safety Tasking Groups.</p>	

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All requests for the CCTV Vehicle surveillance should be submitted using the relevant CCTV Request Form. A Line Manager can only submit forms. Guidance and CCTV Request Forms will be available on the Public Protection & Healthy Living Intranet Page or directly from the Community Safety & Development Team. All requests should include details of the area in need of surveillance, the nature of the problem, evidence of other intervention and a completed RIPA Authorisation Form. Requests will be subject to approval from the Community Safety & Development Manager &/or ASB Liaison Officer.

Outcomes from every use of the vehicle will be recorded and tracked. For further information, please contact Helena Goodwin or Jayne Wakeling.

**PREPARED BY JAYNE WAKELING - ASB LIAISON OFFICER EXT 2330;
HELENA GOODWIN – COMMUNITY SAFETY & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER,
EXT 2756**

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Environment

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Caring for the Environment

SUBJECT: Environmental Protection	CONTACT OFFICER: Colin Batchelor
TEL/EMAIL :No.Ext 2219 colba@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
<p>INFORMATION: On 25th January 2007 the Environmental Protection team received a complaint regarding dust from a construction/demolition site in Witham. On investigation the problem was identified as being from a mobile concrete crusher, which is required to be permitted under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 by the local authority in which it is based. Enquiries of the other local authorities by whom it was alleged to be permitted determined that it was not permitted after all. It was requested that the concrete crusher ceased operation until such time as a permit was obtained and that suitable dust suppression was adopted. On 31st January a call was received from the operator of a permitted mobile concrete crusher to notify the Council of its movement, as is required by the terms of the permit. The operator advised that his crusher was to be located at the site in Witham, which was identified as being the same one from which the previous operator had been evicted.</p> <p>A local business complying with the legislation has therefore benefited from the intervention of the Environmental Protection team against an operator from outside the district who was not. The team are also assisting the other local authority with their investigation and have provided witness statement to them to aid their proposed prosecution of the rogue operator.</p> <p>The local operator was himself prosecuted by this local authority for operating his crusher without the necessary permit. Since then he has obtained the appropriate documentation and has been complying with the terms of it.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Environment

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Caring for the Environment

SUBJECT: Waste Disposal/Recycling	CONTACT OFFICER: Garry Philp
TEL/EMAIL :No.Ext 2228 garph@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
INFORMATION: <p>At Chelmsford Magistrates Court on Monday 5th February 2007 Mr Craig Sanders pleaded guilty to the illegal deposit of waste on land on the former Ridgewell Airfield near Great Yeldham. The prosecution follows a complaint received by the council on the 11th September 2006 where a large amount of waste had been dumped on farmland between Ashen and Tilbury Juxta Clare.</p> <p>On investigation evidence was gathered of a large amounts of waste being dumped including light fittings, cardboard, paving slabs, general waste and three witness statements from the land-owners and the Environment Agency. On the 14th November 2006 Mr Craig Sanders attended a tape-recorded interview at Causeway House. During the interview he admitted that he had deposited the waste shown in the photographs on Ridgewell Airfield and that the waste had come from his property. He stated that he had taken the waste to the tip at Sudbury but the was a long queue so he returned and dumped the waste on the airfield.</p> <p>At the hearing he was fined £1000, reduced from £1500 due to his early plea and ordered to pay our costs of bringing the prosecution of £585.38.</p> <p>In mitigation Mr Sanders stated that he was very sorry for what he had done and regretted it, however the Magistrates were clear in that the fly tipping happened because he couldn't be bother to wait at Sudbury tip.</p> <p>The case also generated press interest from the Haverhill Echo.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: Environment

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Caring for the Environment

SUBJECT: Waste Disposal/Recycling	CONTACT OFFICER: Garry Philp
TEL/EMAIL :No.Ext 2228 garph@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
INFORMATION: <p>At Chelmsford Magistrates Court on Monday 12th February 2007 Mr Dean Harris pleaded guilty to the illegal deposit of waste on land adjacent to 1 Hillside Gardens, Braintree. The prosecution follows a complaint received by the council on the 17th July 2006 where a large amount of waste had been dumped on council land in Hillside Gardens.</p> <p>On investigation a large quantity of waste was found and photographs were taken. Mr Harris was written to regarding the waste and asked to remove the waste on three separate occasions, which he refused to do. Mr Harris was also invited in for a tape-recorded interview on two occasions but again he refused to co-operate. Eventually the land was cleared at cost to the council as the land owner.</p> <p>Mr Harris had failed to attend the court on two previous occasions and a warrant had been issued for his arrest. Mr Harris was then bailed to attend the court hearing. At the hearing he was fined £300, reduced from £450 due to his early plea!! and ordered to pay a contribution towards our costs of bringing the prosecution of £300.</p> <p>Also under a new power brought in under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 the council also made an application for the costs incurred for the removal of the waste. Mr Harris was ordered to pay £200 in compensation to the council. This is the first use of the power by Braintree District Council and this may also be the first use within Essex.</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: All

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: **Help People to Feel Safe and Well**

SUBJECT: Heart and Sole Health Walks	CONTACT OFFICER: Tony MacDonald, Leisure Development Officer
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 552525 ext 2313 tony.macdonald@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p>Following a successful pilot programme of Health Walks in Coggeshall, Halstead and Witham, Braintree District Council's Leisure Development Team have placed these walks on a permanent footing.</p> <p>The walking scheme called "Heart and Sole" encouraged ten people to volunteer as walk leaders. They have been trained in first aid and walk leading and are now ready to commence regular walks starting in March.</p> <p>Walkers meet once a week for the free, 30 minute walks which are a great way to meet new people. Walking is a proven way to reduce blood pressure, reduce cholesterol and aid weight loss, as well as tackling obesity.</p> <p>The Heart and Sole walks start at the following places:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mondays, 10am, Elizabeth Courtauld Surgery, Halstead (first walk 5th March)• Tuesdays, 10am, Bramston Sports Centre Witham (first walk 6th March)• Wednesdays, 10am, Coggeshall Memorial Garden (first walk 7th March)• Thursdays, 10am, Elizabeth Courtauld Surgery, Halstead (first walk 1st March) <p>Walks are led by a walk leader and take place along pre walked routes to ensure that the route is safe and has been risk assessed.</p> <p>The team are now keen to find volunteers to lead the walks in other parts of the District. Volunteer Walk Leaders will be trained as Walk Leaders and will also receive training in first aid.</p> <p>For more information or enquiries contact: Tony MacDonald, Leisure Development Officer 01376 552525 ext 2313. walking@braintree.gov.uk</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Bin crews in the pink

Page 1 of 1

Refuse crews will be in the pink raising money for breast cancer charities.

Braintree District Council is hiring a special pink truck for three days while its more usual vehicles are being serviced.

Fiveways Municipal Vehicle Hire Ltd has added a pink truck to its fleet, which highlights the company's support for Cancer Research UK's campaign to raise awareness of breast cancer and funds for research into the disease.

All hire fees for the pink truck are being donated to the charity, raising thousands of pounds.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for environment, said: "Braintree District Council is delighted to take the chance to support this very worthwhile campaign. "Few escape being touched by cancer in their lives and with breast cancer affecting more than 41,000 women in the UK each year it is vital funds are raised to continue research into it.

"Seeing the unusual pink truck doing the rounds in Braintree and Witham will raise awareness of the importance of this work."

- The pink truck will be in Witham on Monday February 19 and in Braintree the following two days.
- Cancer Research UK Charity Registration No. 1089464

ENDS

For more press information, contact Ros Alam on 01376 551414

Issued by: Braintree DC PR February 12 2007

February 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Bin the butts and gum!

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Special bins have been put in town centres in the Braintree district to try to stop gum and cigarettes being discarded in the street.

It is hoped people will be encouraged to use the bins, made specifically for gum and butts, which are being put in Braintree, Witham and Halstead town centres.

If the initiative proves a success and the bins are well used the scheme could be extended to other areas.

They are being put in places where people stand about, such as bus stops and taxi ranks, and the aim is to get people using them ahead of the new law being introduced on July 1 banning smoking in all enclosed public places. It is feared this will lead to an increase in smoking in the street.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said:

“Discarding chewing gum and cigarette butts in the street makes our town centres look unsightly. It is also very expensive to remove the gum.

“The council is providing these bins to combat this scourge and I really hope they are well used and our town centres become much cleaner.”

ENDS

For more press information, contact Tania Roberge on 01376 551414.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 29 January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Don't feed the birds!

Page 1 of 1

Bird lovers who feed their feathered friends in public places are being urged to stop.

Officials at Braintree District Council say the habit is encouraging rats, which are keen to take advantage of left over food.

The bird seed being thrown down for them is causing other problems once it has been scattered around by the birds. A flower bed at Witham Memorial Gardens now has grass growing where there should be a colourful display of pansies.

Seed is also being left at Mayland Road car park in the town – another area where rats have been a problem in the past.

Warning signs urging people not to feed the birds as it attracts rats have been put up at both sites.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said people should stick to feeding birds in their gardens, although at the risk of creating a rat problem for themselves.

“Public places are for everyone to enjoy and it is not right that a few individuals should spoil it for everyone else. I'm sure their intentions are good but they have not thought of the consequences of feeding the birds.

“ It is especially important in the Memorial Gardens where we spend a lot of time and money in an effort to have a well tended garden for people to visit.”

ENDS

For more press information contact Simon Taylor on 01376 551414

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 24 January 2007

February 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Paintings in new collection

Page 1 of 2

More than 50 oil paintings from Braintree District Museum have been published together for the first time.

They form part of an ambitious project to record the UK's complete collection of oil paintings in public ownership.

The Public Catalogue Foundation, a registered charity, aims to give the public access to them through a series of affordable catalogues and, at a later stage, free internet access.

The latest in the series is a 306-page catalogue featuring Essex and the 2,135 publicly-owned oil paintings in the county.

Braintree Museum's collection of 54 includes work by local artists such as Olive de Horne Vaizey of Bocking (died 1970), Des Choate (1916 to 2001) and nationally-acclaimed Great Bardfield artist John Aldridge (1905 to 1983) as well as pictures commissioned by important local industrial patrons such as the Courtauld family and Crittalls Windows.

William Julien Courtauld commissioned a series of eight murals from Maurice Greiffenhagen (1862 to 1931), a member of the Royal Academy. The copper panels were hung in the council chamber of the Town Hall and depict scenes from the history of Braintree.

These include King John granting the Market Charter to the bishop of London in 1199 and William Pygot, a Protestant butcher being burned at the stake on the site of the Town Hall.

Greiffenhagen also painted the two large portraits either side of the Town Hall staircase of William Julien Courtauld and George Bartram.

The long history of the silk industry, which shaped the industrial development of many Braintree district communities, is illustrated in a mural, commissioned in 1957 by Courtaulds Ltd from Anna Zinkeisen (1901 to 1976).

Engineering was also an important local industry and Crittall Manufacturing Company Ltd commissioned the Old Iron collection of 47 known portraits of

MEMBERS' FOCUS

their employees between 1928 and 1931. So far 22 have been located and museum staff are keen to hear from anyone else who has one of the series.

Robert Rose, collections and heritage manager, is delighted with the catalogue and said future collecting was dependent on the generosity of donors and funding bodies.

“This catalogue is an example of one way the museum’s collections can be made more widely known.”

Councillor Wendy Schmitt, cabinet member for cultural strategy, said: “This will have huge benefits not only in improving the profile of Braintree District Museum’s oil paintings but in raising funds for the conservation of this important local collection for the future enjoyment of residents and visitors to Braintree District.

“The project should be of enormous help and inspiration to students of art and to members of the general public with an interest in art.”

The catalogue is available from the museum shop priced £20 paperback and £35 hardback, half of which is invested back into the museum’s art collection.

ENDS

CAPTIONS: 1: King John presents the Charter to the Bishop of London by Maurice Greiffenhagen

2: H Walford by Robin Guthrie, Old Iron series

3: Iorwerth Williams CBE by Francis Desmond Choate

4: The Evolution of the Textile Industry by Anna Katrina Zinkeisen

5: The Orchard, The Place House, Great Bardfield by John Aldridge

6: Old Six Bells Inn, Church Lane, Bocking by Olive de Horne Vaizey

For more press information, contact Robert Rose on 01376 325266 or 07970 993705.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 24 January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Recycling record

Page 1 of 1

Residents in the Braintree district have set a new record for recycling.

Latest figures show 40.2 per cent of waste was recycled during November – the largest amount ever collected.

It was the first full month since a wheeled bin refuse and recycling collection scheme was extended to a further 20,000 households in the district.

Council officers are encouraged by the response and particularly pleased that the levels of recycling were high in all sections from garden waste to bottles.

It is the first time recycling has topped the 40 per cent mark across the whole district and brings the rate for the year to 35 per cent to date, compared with 30.5 per cent the year before.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said he was delighted with the results following the extension of the waste and recycling collections scheme.

“Twenty years ago that 40 per cent of waste now being recycled would have ended up in landfill sites. It is vital that everyone does the best they can because so much more waste is being produced.

“As residents get more used to the new high diversion systems I hope to see our recycling figures going even higher.”

ENDS

For more press information, contact Peter Chisnall on 01376 551414.

Issued by: Braintree DC PR 22 January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Rubbish collection warning

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Residents are being urged to be wary of people charging to take away large items of rubbish. It follows the case of one householder in Braintree who was left with rubbish piled up in his garden after the collector failed to return to pick it up.

The smartly-dressed man had offered a collection service at varying prices dependant on the number of items. After agreement with the householder, rubbish from a number of nearby homes was left piled up in her garden for collection later. No-one returned, leaving the householder with responsibility for getting rid of the rubbish.

New legislation last year means there is now a legal duty of care on householders to ensure that they only allow their waste to be taken by a registered carrier. If their waste is found dumped, whether they were responsible or not, they could be held liable.

Braintree District Council offers a special service for larger items. More details and prices, including concessionary rates, are available from the customer service centre on **01376 552525**.

Councillor Michael Gage, cabinet member for the environment, said: "It is the responsibility of householders to make sure they dispose of rubbish through a registered waste carrier. "Any kind of fly-tipping is a criminal offence and a blight on the community. We are determined to continue our crackdown on culprits, who should be warned that the penalties are very severe. I would ask anyone who knows of such activity to report it because all taxpayers end up paying for the consequences."

ENDS

For more press information contact Colin Batchelor on 01376 551414

Issued by Braintree DC PR February 7 2007

News

Boost for Witham businesses

Page 1 of 2

A five-year project to tackle issues such as theft, criminal damage and vandalism on Witham industrial sites is being backed by Braintree District Council.

Members of cabinet supported a proposal to set up a Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) project in partnership with Witham Industrial Watch Group. (WIWG) The council will put around £100,000 into the initiative between now and its conclusion in 2013.

BIDs enable local authorities to raise a levy, in addition to the business rate, which is then invested locally on a specific project. These must address the Government's cleaner, safer, greener communities policy and can provide initiatives for transport, security, environmental improvements and crime reduction.

WIWG, a partnership of local businesses, Essex Police and Witham Chamber of Commerce, was set up in 2005 to tackle problems on industrial sites in the town.

It has since identified a number of crime hot spots and is working closely with the police to raise awareness of crime prevention measures with the aim of reducing vandalism and criminal activity.

Agreement to a BIDs project means the group can now spend the next six to nine months carrying out a full audit of businesses and trying to raise funds for high profile projects.

The early focus of the group will be on crime prevention and it is expected businesses will initially opt for major capital investment in monitored CCTV systems.

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Councillor Nigel Harley, cabinet member for economic development and transportation said: "This five-year project will make a real difference to the key industrial areas in Witham.

"The Witham Industrial Watch Group has already seen a significant reduction in crime through a number of innovative projects, and I know their steering group is anxious to drive forward other plans to improve the environment and infrastructure on the Freebournes Road estate, and Crittall Road and Eastways business areas. I'm now working hard to encourage all businesses to sign up to the project".

Sally Carpenter, chair of Witham Chamber of Commerce said: "The chamber is delighted that Braintree District Council is supporting the business improvement scheme in the town and we will continue to give the scheme our practical support.

"The thriving industrial areas in Witham attract a wide range of manufacturers and service providers, employing lots of local people. If the BIDs scheme is adopted by local businesses everyone in the area would benefit."

WIWG will work on a five-year business plan to deliver the project with a view to it being launched in April 2008

ENDS

For more press information, contact Russell Everard on 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 7 February 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

Budget briefing

Financial Proposals 2007/08 – Key Points

- Budget of £17.22m (increase of £750,680) leading to: -
- Council Tax increase below inflation at 3.8%
- Capital Programme of £16.8m (including £9.1m on Housing)
- Council House Rents raised by an average of 5% (in line with Government targets)
- Increase in service charges minimised by phasing in actual costs
- Increased resources directed to the Council's priorities such as Recycling, Community Wardens and Leisure. Money also provided to speed up Planning service
- Majority of fees and charges increased by 3% or less
- No increases proposed for Car Parks and Community Transport
- Capital resources provided to: -
 - Complete Braintree Swimming Pool
 - Complete refurbishment programme of Community Halls
 - Continue the programme of play area refurbishment
 - Improve the condition of cemeteries
 - Carry out essential works on the Council's building
 - Commence a programme to improve parks and open spaces
 - Replace a Community Transport Mini Bus
- Existing resources re-allocated to: -
 - Provide a street washing and chewing gum removal service
 - Increase the number of litter bins
 - Raise awareness of impact of littering, fly tipping etc
 - Improve the cleanliness of Braintree bypass
 - Employ additional Enforcement Officer
 - Improve the Housing Benefit service
 - Improve the Building Control service
- Process agreed to deal with projected future financial shortfalls and the impact of the Housing Transfer

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Businesses back recycling

Page 1 of 1

Businesses in the Braintree district have responded positively to the idea of a recycling collection for trade waste.

Braintree District Council asked all businesses in the district to take part in a survey about waste and recycling to assess the demand for such a service.

Of those who responded – 517 from 4,495 contacted – 11 per cent already had a trade waste recycling service but overall 68 per cent said they would be interested in taking part in a trial. Of these 65 per cent said they would prefer a kerbside collection rather than having a central site where the waste could be taken.

A third of the businesses said they were interested in environmental awareness training for their staff.

The three most prevalent wastes were paper, cardboard and plastics, followed by wood, glass, green waste, metals and pallets.

As a result of the survey officers at the council are now looking into ways of financing a recycling trial.

ENDS

For more press information, contact Peter Chisnall on 01376 551414 – just say the name.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 6 FEBRUARY 2007

News

Recycling survey

Page 1 of 1

Doorsteppers are out across the Braintree district to find out what residents think of recycling.

A team of six canvassers from Enventure, which specialises in waste issues, will be carrying out the survey over the next few weeks.

It is part of Braintree District Council's externally-funded Waste and Resources Action Programme recycling communication campaign.

At the end of the campaign the survey will be repeated to see whether attitudes have changed and awareness of recycling issues has been raised.

The canvassers are currently in Bradwell, Halstead, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon and Panfield and will be moving into the Braintree and Witham town areas from February 1.

They will be in uniform with identification photographs with the Braintree District Council and Enventure logos and phone numbers.

ENDS

For more press information, contact Ros Alam on 01376 551414.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 24 January 2007

News

Fears over changes to plan

Page 1 of 2

Councillors are being urged to make representations to Government in a bid to safeguard future investment in the Braintree district.

The cabinet is being recommended to make a series of responses to the Government following the publication of proposed changes to the draft East of England plan.

Members of cabinet will be discussing it on Monday February 5 when they are being recommended to accept the representations as a basis for the council's response and for further discussion.

The number of new houses to be built between 2001 and 2021 remains unchanged at 7,700 but the new proposals affect the district's neighbours.

Chelmsford and Colchester have been added as key centres for development. The Cambridge sub-region and Harlow are also identified as growth areas. This poses a danger that the Braintree district will be overlooked for investment.

Cabinet members are being asked to call for representations to be made to ensure the contribution the district has made to meeting the region's housing needs is recognised with appropriate investment in infrastructure and employment.

There is also general concern that the overall levels of growth now proposed for the region are too high and will not be matched by infrastructure.

On transport there is a call for the upgrading of the A120 between Braintree and Marks Tey to be listed as part of the Trans European Road Network and for the plan to be more specific in supporting improvements to rail services.

MF

MEMBERS' FOCUS

A new chapter on carbon dioxide emissions and renewable energy is welcomed, with a recommendation the policies should be backed up with changes to building regulations.

Councillor Wendy Scattergood, cabinet member for planning and rural issues, said: "We must make sure the Braintree district does not miss out on vital investment as a result of these changes to the draft plan.

"The district must not be allowed to fall behind neighbouring areas as a result of proposed changes in growth levels.

"Forty four per cent of housing provision required for the Braintree district has already been built and this should be recognised with appropriate investment in infrastructure and employment."

ENDS

For more press information, contact Paul Munson on 01376 551414.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 31 January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

web issued 5 Feb 2007

Warner Textile Archive in top ten for UK's largest arts prize

Braintree District Museum's Warner Textile Archive has been listed in the top ten for The Gulbenkian Prize for museums and galleries. The Archive joins nine other UK museum and gallery projects to compete for the coveted £100,000 prize.

The long list is as follows:

- Braintree District Museum for the Warner Textile Archive, Essex A unique record of the manufacture and design of textiles over the past 200 years, housed in the original 19th century mill where most of the textiles were created.
- De La Warr Pavilion for its re-launch, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex One of the world's finest examples of Modernist architecture, now a leading centre for contemporary art, architecture, education and live performance.
- Horniman Museum for their new Aquarium, London An inventive and innovative display of exotic fish and other sea creatures, aimed at young museum visitors. It has attracted over 110,000 visitors in its first five months.
- Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum for their New Century Project, Glasgow A £28m project to restore and re-display Glasgow's magnificent civic art gallery and museum, creating a universal space for the 21st century.
- Kew Palace, Historic Royal Palaces, Surrey Restoration of King George III's country retreat and Britain's smallest royal palace, revealing rooms that have not been seen for 200 years.
- Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, West Sussex Contemporary building space combined with a Grade I listed Queen Anne townhouse to exhibit one of the world's best 20th century British art collections.
- Scotland & Medicine: Collections & Connections, Edinburgh This partnership brings together Scotland's major collections of specimens, models, surgical instruments and paintings to tell the story of how medicine has changed our lives.
- V&A for The Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, London This stunning gallery displays some 400 objects of exquisite beauty. This is one of the most extensive and renowned collections of Islamic art in the world.
- Weston Park Museum, Sheffield Victorian treasure-house highlighting the best from Sheffield's archaeology, natural and social history, visual and decorative art collections.
- The Women's Library for the exhibition, 'Prostitution: What's Going On?' London Metropolitan University, London A provocative exhibition and events programme marking the centenary of the death of Josephine Butler, the Victorian social reformer and campaigner for the rights of prostituted women.

The Gulbenkian Prize for museums and galleries is given annually to one museum or gallery anywhere in the UK, and is open to a wide range of projects, both large and small. This year's list includes engaging art and design, exceptionally high-quality collections, and substantial specialist archive holdings, demonstrating the range of the Prize and the fact that it places as much emphasis on scholarship as on popular display.

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Francine Stock, Chair of the 2007 judges comments: "This year's long list shows great variety and contrast – from a textile study collection to a substantial metropolitan museum, from a dedicated library and a spectacular National museum exhibition to a stylish and enterprising arts centre – and we were hugely impressed by the way these entries seek to engage audiences. This is a truly inspiring long list and the next stage of our judging process will be a really tough challenge."

The four short-listed museums for the 2007 prize will be announced in early April. The winner will be announced on Thursday 24 May at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London during Museum and Galleries Month 2007.

Six out of the ten projects have been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), demonstrating how lottery funding is central to transforming the UK's museums and galleries.

www.thegulbenkianprize.org.uk

Issued: 02 February 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

News

Community Wardens take to the road

Page 1 of 2

Newly-appointed Community Wardens are introducing themselves to residents in a series of roadshows.

Following their official launch in December in Braintree, Witham and Halstead the team are now off round the parishes. Residents will have the chance to chat to them, find out more about the service and raise any issues they have locally.

It is hoped a Police Community Support Officer will also be on hand and the roadshows will be held in the police mobile unit office.

There is a team of ten wardens, helping to resolve local problems throughout the district. They work days, evenings and weekends according to the need in each area.

Councillor Wendy Schmitt, cabinet member for public protection, said: "The wardens will be involved in almost anything of concern within neighbourhoods, from cutting litter and tackling nuisance behaviour to encouraging people to join in community events.

"If an area has a fly tipping hot spot they will get involved with clearing the litter. By getting involved with the local communities they will learn of specific problems and help to resolve them.

"It is also good to see our partnership with the police continuing in this venture, which is so important to make a real success of the scheme."

Roadshow dates are:

- Monday February 5: Village hall, Rivenhall, 10.30am to 11.45am; The Green, Feering, 1pm to 2pm; Stoneham Street car park, Coggeshall, 2.15pm to 4pm
- February 6: Bedells Avenue, Black Notley, 10.30am to noon; The Street, Bradwell, 2.45pm to 4pm

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- February 7: Village hall, Stambourne, 10am to 11.15am; outside church, Birdbrook, 11.30am to 12.45pm; village hall, Steeple Bumpstead, 2pm to 4pm
- Tuesday February 13: Village hall, Rayne, 10.30am to 12.30pm; The Green, Finchingfield, 2pm to 3.05pm; public house, Cornish Hall End, 3.15pm to 4pm
- February 14: Village hall, Foxearth, 10am to 11am; The Green, Pebmarsh Road, Colne Engaine, 11.30am to 12.30pm; Swan Street, Sible Hedingham, 1.45pm to 4pm
- Monday February 19: The Dismals, Terling, 10.30am to 11.45am; Hadfelda Square car park, Hatfield Peverel, 1pm to 2.15pm
- February 20: Onley Arms, Stisted, 10.30am to noon; Cricketers, Great Notley, 1.15pm to 2.30pm; Jeffreys Road, Cressing, 2.45pm to 4pm
- February 21: Colchester Road, Bures, 10am to 11.15am; The Green, Alphamstone, 11.30am to 12.45pm; High Street, Earls Colne, 2pm to 4pm
- Monday February 26: Outside Co-op; Silver End, 10.30am to 12.30am; outside Co-op, Kelvedon, 1.45pm to 4pm
- February 27: Village Hall, Wethersfield, 10.30am to noon; Brook Street, Great Bardfield, 1.30pm to 2.30pm
- February 28: The Street, Toppesfield, 10am to 11am; The Bell, Castle Hedingham, 11.15am to 12.30pm; Alexandra Road, Sible Hedingham, 1.45pm to 4pm

ENDS

For more press information, contact Claire McAneny on 01376 551414.

Issued by Braintree DC PR 31 January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: PLANNING

SUBJECT: Planning Appeals	CONTACT OFFICER: Linda Brown
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 551414 Ext. 2604 linda.brown@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: Nil
INFORMATION: To provide details of recently lodged planning appeals and appeal decisions.	

INFORMATION: APPEALS LODGED

Appellant: Mr & Mrs Fugeman
Site: Thatched Cottage, Gambles Green, Terling
Development: Replacement of dead boundary hedge with 1.8m high close boarded wooden fence
Application No. 06/01077/FUL
Start Date 22nd December 2006

Appellant: Mr & Mrs M Mansbridge
Site: Pot Kiln Lodge, The Old Potteries, Pot Kiln Chase, Gestingthorpe
Development: Change of use of land and building for residential purposes (variation to conditions of permission for use of site for recreation purposes)
Application No. 06/00976/OUT
Start Date 10th January 2007

Appellant: Mr C Chapman
Site: 46 Buckwoods Road, Braintree
Development: Erection of bungalow and garages
Application No. 06/01894/FUL
Start Date 23rd January 2007

Appellant: Mrs S J Bingham
Site: 1 Greenwood Court, Mill Chase, Halstead
Development: Retrospective consent for the erection of fencing to rear and side boundaries
Application No. 06/01190/FUL
Start Date 29th January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

INFORMATION: APPEAL DECISIONS

Appellant: Mr J P King, King & Co
Site: Woodstock, Pods Lane, Dunmow Road, Rayne
Development: Extension of retail opening hours: Sundays and Bank Holidays
10.00am – 4.30pm
Application No. 06/00732/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 26th January 2007

Appellant: Mr & Mrs M Salmon
Site: 1 Church Cottages, Long Melford Road, Liston
Development: Erection of two storey side extension and alterations
Application No. 06/00798/FUL
Decision and Date: DISMISSED – 30th January 2007

MEMBERS' FOCUS

AREA: ALL

CORPORATE THEME HEADING: Helping People Feel Safe And Well/A Better Place to Live, Work and Play.

SUBJECT: Report on Private Water Sampling Undertaken in 2006	CONTACT OFFICER: Lee Crabb															
TEL/EMAIL No.: x 2227 lee.crabb@braintree.gov.uk	BACKGROUND PAPERS: None															
<p>INFORMATION:</p> <p><u>Background</u> Under Section 77 of the Water Industry Act 1991 Braintree District Council has to check the quality of all water supplies in their area. As part of this function private water supplies e.g. wells and boreholes are routinely monitored to detect excess levels of chemicals, pesticides and bacteria. Below is a summary of the water sampling carried out last year (2006) across the District.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All programmed statutory water samples and request for water samples were taken as required. A total of 57 samples were taken as follows; <p>31 Statutory samples (23 from food premises) <i>(Reduction of 12 as a result of Tanners Dairy closing)</i> 17 request samples (where owners have asked us to sample) 9 other reasons (repeat samples, where poor results obtained)</p> <p><u>Results</u> These are based on the statutory or request samples taken, (repeat samples are not included as they, by their nature, are investigating problems and would skew the results).</p> <p><u>Food & Catering Premises</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Large Turkey producer</td> <td>12 samples</td> <td>75% compliant</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class 5 supplies</td> <td>7 sites sampled</td> <td>2 failed on first sample</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">(One premises took immediate remedial action and was satisfactory on resampling. The other premises is installing a UV unit)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Class 4 supplies</td> <td>2 sites sampled</td> <td>75% satisfactory</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>(Resampling produced satisfactory results)</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Domestic premises</u> (Classes D, E & F)</p>		Large Turkey producer	12 samples	75% compliant	Class 5 supplies	7 sites sampled	2 failed on first sample	(One premises took immediate remedial action and was satisfactory on resampling. The other premises is installing a UV unit)			Class 4 supplies	2 sites sampled	75% satisfactory			(Resampling produced satisfactory results)
Large Turkey producer	12 samples	75% compliant														
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(One premises took immediate remedial action and was satisfactory on resampling. The other premises is installing a UV unit)																
Class 4 supplies	2 sites sampled	75% satisfactory														
		(Resampling produced satisfactory results)														

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23 sites visited and samples taken

Bacteriology:

Fully compliant with regard to coliforms
 Non-compliant but less than 10 coliforms
 Greater than 10 coliforms or E.coli present

Samples	2006	2005	2002
14	82%	52%	43%
2	9%	10%	27%
2	9%	38%	30%

Chemistry: 18 samples taken for chemical analysis:

Fully compliant
 Nitrate failures
 Iron failures
 Turbidity failures (linked to iron)
 Manganese failures
 Potassium failures
 Conductivity failures

Samples	2006	2005	2002
6	33%	73%	35%
8	44%	4%	20%
5	28%	23%	35%
5	28%	27%	35%
1	5%	8%	10%
1	5%	4%	45%
1	5%		

Note

Different parishes are sampled each year and the underlying geology influences the chemistry of the water. This year more shallow wells were sampled so the nitrates are higher but the greater incidence of UV lamps being installed by premises owners, has improved the bacteriology.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

DOES YOUR SPORTS CLUB PAY BUSINESS RATES?

Business Rate Relief for Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs.

This relief came in to effect from April 1st 2004 and enables the local authority to grant Mandatory Rate relief of 80% to sports clubs that have registered with the Inland Revenue as **Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)**

Many amateur sports clubs will be able to register as CASCs without making any changes to the way they operate. However, they must be able to satisfy the following:

- Is membership of the club open to the whole community?
- Are all the club's facilities available to members without discrimination?
- Does the clubs constitution prevent profits of the club being distributed amongst its members (i.e. any profits must go back to the club)?
- Does the club provide facilities for and encourage participation in eligible sports (one that is capable of improving health and fitness)?
- Does the club's constitution provide that on dissolution of the club, any net assets are to be applied for approved sporting or charitable purposes?

If you can answer Yes to all five questions it is likely that you will be able to apply to register as CASC without making any changes. In some cases you may need to make some changes to the way the club is organized.

If you cannot answer Yes to all five questions it is unlikely that the club will be able to register without making significant changes. You may wish to consider making the necessary changes before applying for registration.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

The Council has the ability to grant Discretionary Charity Relief and it may be possible for your club to receive an additional 20% off your Rates using the Council's new criteria for granting Charity Relief.

Should your club not qualify for registration as a CASCs, then it is still possible to receive some Discretionary Relief under the new criteria.

- The advantage of being registered as a CASC ensures that should the Council reduce the amount of Discretionary Relief granted, your club is guaranteed 80% Mandatory Relief as a registered CASC.

For further information on CASCs and their entitlement to Rate Relief, please visit the Inland Revenue's dedicated web page at <http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/casc/index.htm> or www.cascinfo.co.uk

OR

E-mail to helpline@cascinfo.co.uk

OR

Telephone on 0845 3020203 to the H M Revenue and Customs Helpline

OR

Contact Mrs M. J. Kingston, Revenue Manager at Braintree District Council on 01376 557847 for additional information.

MEMBERS' FOCUS

NNDR RURAL RELIEF SCHEME

VILLAGE SHOPS.

Rural Relief came in to effect from 1st April 1998.

The basis of the scheme is that the Local Authority must identify a list of settlements, within designated rural areas, which have a population of not more than 3,000.

Within these settlements a property qualifies for 50% Mandatory Relief if it is:

- a) Within the qualifying settlement**
- b) Has a Rateable Value of not more than £7,000**
- c) Is used, in whole or part, as a General Store, food store or a Post Office.**
- d) Must be either the only General Store, food store or the Post Office in the settlement.**

Local Authorities may, if they wish, grant further discretionary relief to total up to a maximum of 100%. They may also grant up to 100% discretionary rate relief to any rural business provided that:

- a) It is within the qualifying settlement**
- b) It has a Rateable Value of not more than £14,000**
- c) It is used for purposes which are of benefit to the Local Community.**
- d) It is reasonable for the authority to make such a decision having regards to the interests of the Council Tax payers.**

VILLAGE PUBLIC HOUSE AND FILING STATIONS

Within these settlements a property qualifies for 50% Mandatory Relief if it is:

- a) Within the qualifying settlement**
- b) Has a Rateable Value of not more than £10,500**
- c) Is used, in whole or part, village public house or filing station.**
- d) Must be either the only village pub or filing station in the settlement.**

Local Authorities may, if they wish, grant further discretionary relief to total up to a maximum of 100%. They may also grant up to 100% discretionary rate relief to any rural business provided that:

- a) It is within the qualifying settlement**
- b) It has a Rateable Value of not more than £14,000**
- c) It is used for purposes which are of benefit to the Local Community.**
- d) It is reasonable for the authority to make such a decision having regards to the interests of the Council Tax payers.**

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SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME

From 1st April 2005 the Government introduced a new way to reduce the rates payable by small businesses.

In accordance with the scheme, relief will be granted to any ratepayer who occupies a single business property within England, where the Rateable Value (RV) is less than £15,000 or where a ratepayer occupies a main property with an RV of less than £15,000 but occupies other properties with RV's of less than £2,200 each.

In this instance the total of all properties must total less than £15,000 and relief will only be applied to the one main property.

Eligible properties with a Rateable Value of up to £4,999 or less will get 50% rate relief. This will decrease on a sliding scale of approximately 1% for every £100 up to £9,999 Rateable Value.

The bill will be calculated using a new small business non-domestic rating multiplier. Eligible properties with Rateable Value from £10,000 to £14,999 will not receive Small Business Rate Relief but their bill will be calculated using the small business non-domestic rating multiplier.

The property must meet the qualifying conditions on 1 April and on every chargeable day in each chargeable year.

The relief is only available to ratepayers with either:

- One property with a rateable value less than £15,000, or
- one main property and other additional properties, providing those additional properties have Rateable Values less than £2,200, and
- the total value of all properties remains under £15,000.

Other factors are:

- The relief will only be awarded to one property.
- The rating threshold of £15,000 will be based on the location of the eligible property, not the location of any additional properties.
- The charge on the additional properties (under RV of £2,200) will be based on the higher non-domestic rating multiplier.

Change of Circumstances.

If circumstances change and the ratepayer no longer meets the qualifying conditions, the relief will be cancelled from the day they are no longer eligible. Failure to notify the local Authority within 4 weeks of any changes will mean that the ratepayer will no longer be entitled to the relief. If the ratepayer notifies the authority after the 4 week period, the ratepayer would lose the relief from the day after the date of the change until the day on which the authority is notified. SBRR is only granted to business properties that are occupied.

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Examples of changes of circumstances which may affect entitlement to Small Business Rate Relief are:

- If the Rateable Value of your property changes, either by an increase or decrease.
- If you occupy another business property in England.
- If you vacate any business property in England.

You will not qualify for Small Business Rate Relief if you receive some other types of relief, such as:

- Mandatory Relief (for example Charitable Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief).
- Unoccupied properties (which are eligible for empty rate relief).

After the application for the year starting 1st April 2007, new arrangements will apply. From this time provided that circumstances do not change, the ratepayer will not be required to make a further application for the SBRR until the financial year 2010/2011, that is to say the application will not have to be renewed until the next revaluation of non-domestic premises which happens every five years.

Application for SBRR can be made up to 18 months after the start of the financial year to which it applies, that is to say that for the year 2006/7, applications can be made up to 30th September 2007.

For further information on Small Business Rate Relief you can visit the following internet sites;-

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/busrats1.htm>

or

<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat-draft.htm>

or

www.voa.gov.uk

OR

Contact the Revenue Section of Braintree District Council on 01376 557755 or e-mail to csc@braintree.gov.uk

OR

If you have any queries concerning your Rateable Value, please contact the District Valuer by telephoning 08456 021507

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AREA: Whole District

CORPORATE THEME HEADING:

SUBJECT: Ward Members and Scrutiny	CONTACT OFFICER: Linda Morgan
TEL/EMAIL No.: 01376 551414	BACKGROUND PAPERS:
INFORMATION:	
<p>In the following article, taken from the IDeA website, Lucy de Groot, the IDeA's Executive Director discusses the IDeA's work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) which aims to equip frontline councillors with the skills to represent their ward residents.</p>	
<p><u>Bringing local governance closer to the people</u></p>	
<p>Holding the executive to account is the classic function of the legislature in a representative democracy, even though that was never quite the language used in local government. But that is changing, as the humble ward councillor is handed no lesser task than renewing our political culture.</p>	
<p>The Local Government Act 2000 led to the creation of cabinet government in most councils. Executive power was concentrated in the hands of a few members and at a stroke did away with the traditional committee structure, which involved members across a myriad of committees and subcommittees.</p>	
<p>So what to do with this newly created army of backbench councillors? 'Scrutinise policy and executive decisions' became the pragmatic answer to the problem of finding a role for non-executive members. Some non-executives felt that sounded like job creation.</p>	
<p>But increasingly scrutiny is being recognised as a vitally important role that enables public services users to shape the services they receive. Backbenchers are calling themselves frontline councillors to reflect this rediscovered role as community advocates, who work specifically to see their locality through the eyes of their ward residents. The frontline role empowers non-executive members to act on behalf of their community, by rooting their responsibilities firmly in that community.</p>	
<p>As part of his review of local government powers and financing, Sir Michael Lyons has indicated the importance of an enhanced role for councillors using their scrutiny role to get closer to the communities they represent. In his interim report published in May, Sir Michael said:</p>	
<p>"The role of back benchers now needs attention in order to build stronger local accountability for authorities and to ensure that local government is as effective as it should be in engaging with local communities. There may be</p>	

MEMBERS' FOCUS

scope for further development of the scrutiny role and its extension of other local public services.”

And the scrutiniser's beady eye need not be limited to local government; it can also range across the performance of other public service providers. For instance, Cannock Chase District Council – which is a Beacon council for its work on developing a healthier community – has used its health scrutiny committee as a key way to develop healthy community partnerships. Cannock Chase has a shared director of public health with the primary care trust (PCT) and was one of the first areas to create a totally integrated post.

In an era of partnership working and attempts to join up government, scrutiny can cut across organisational boundaries. By picking issues – such as anti-social behaviour or the quality of the local environment – that resonate with residents' actual experience; scrutiny committees can bring local governance closer to people. Formal council procedures are being supplemented with informal discussion in language and places that are more accessible to the public.

The Local Government Association (LGA) recently published its devolutionary manifesto, 'Closer to people and places', which emphasised the importance of user involvement. “We should support and develop local councillors to be the pivotal link between the council and local people... Local councillors should know and be known by all key local public services, community organisations and institutions. They should bring people together, broker solutions and be the advocate for their residents.”

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are mechanisms that enable councils to work with other organisations in their area, and connect those partnerships to the Government's sustainable communities strategy. Scrutiny committees offer a way to see the impact of multi-organisation working from the perspective of service users and citizens, rather than service providers.

The IDeA is working with the CfPS to equip frontline councillors with the skills they need to represent their ward residents. We see the design and delivery of public services as the key area where greater user involvement can improve quality, and frontline councillors should play a leading role to make that happen.

Frontline councillors will also increasingly need to act as the bridge between the communities they represent and the political institutions that provide and commission services. That means scrutinising on behalf of their communities, but also explaining decisions taken by the executive that may create losers as well as winners.

One of the tensions in the role of frontline councillors is managing if not resolving the tension between their roles as community advocates, as elected members of the council, and as members of a political party. All three interests do not necessarily coincide, and in reality will sometimes conflict. But as elected politicians, frontline councillors have special local legitimacy that can

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help them manage those tensions.

As a result of the need to help flush out competing interests and determine legitimate priorities, councils are using innovative approaches to public engagement. For instance Copeland Borough Council experimented with a 'question time' format to allow the public to question experts for their reviews of tourism and cycling policy.

And London Borough of Waltham Forest's education committee has held its meeting in different schools, and in each case has triggered a discussion of an issue of specific importance to that particular school, such as truancy or admissions policy.

More and more councils are taking the view that if scrutiny is rooted on a good understanding of the community, it makes sense to do the scrutinising away from the town hall.

It would be optimistic to imagine that scrutiny could reverse the long-term trend of political disengagement overnight. But there are causes for optimism as councils report that scrutiny activities are generating real public interest and practical results.

Frontline councillors need to tool up to challenge and scrutinise on behalf of their constituents, the local community.