Minutes
Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board
24th January 2011

Present

Brian Cutmore (Chairman) Business Council
Brenda Baker Braintree Chamber of Trade
Councillor John Bendall Earls Colne Parish Council
Councillor Jo Beavis (until 7.00pm) Braintree District Council & Business Board
Robert Bucknell (until 7.30pm) W P Bucknell & Son
Sally Carpenter Client Act PR
Councillor John Collar (until 7.55pm) Braintree District Council
Tony Comber Braintree Enterprise Acorn Units
Dave Gronland Micromech
Jon Hayden Braintree District Council
Tony Hayward Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC)
Keith Hughes East of England IDB Ltd
Drew Keavey The College at Braintree
Steve Kirby Halstead Chamber of Trade
Councillor Nigel McCrea Braintree District Council
Councillor Janet Money (until 6.55pm) Braintree District Council
Zoe Myddelton Braintree District/Essex County Councils
Linda Riley Voluntary Sector Training
Chris Trim (until 7.50pm) Braintree District Council

Apologies for absence were received from Jenny Coates, Councillor Nigel Harley and Councillor David Mann.

John Jemison, Vice Chairman of the Braintree Town Centre Strategy Group, was in attendance (on invitation of the Chairman).

Hannah Neve and Alastair Southgate, of the Transport Planning Team at Essex County Council, and Alan Massow of Braintree District Council were also in attendance for the Local Transport Plan.

Action by

23 MINUTES

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board held on 18th October 2010 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24 MATTERS ARISING

INFORMATION: Brenda Baker reported that the Braintree BID continues to make progress.
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Brian Cutmore reported on the visit by the Leader of the Council and the Head of Finance to Business Council on 10th January 2011, to seek the views of the business community to the Council’s proposed Budget for 2011/12. The reduction of government grant had resulted with further savings to those already envisaged and Members of Business Council had provided response on the following issues:

- The Council’s current discretionary redundancy payment scheme of 66 weeks maximum to be reduced to 45 weeks – subject to Trade Union consultation. The 45 week average nationally was supported, to make it comparable to the Private Sector
- the Council was complimented on the waste collection service over the Christmas/New Year period
- that underspends of budget were recognised as a ‘real’ saving
- support for solar energy, and the proposal for a wind turbine at the Discovery Centre, that would realise an improved return on the Council’s capital
- for the ageing sector of the population to be protected as far as possible in relation to concessionary fares tokens; the closure of the cash receipting facility at Causeway House
- an update on Mayland House, Witham and options for the future
- support for a proposed complete ‘freeze’ on Council Tax for a four year period

The Chairman advised of the opportunity for Board Members to comment on these proposals, if they wish to do so.

DECISION: That the response of Business Council to the Budget Consultation 2011/12 be noted.

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Local Transport Plan (LTP) item and welcomed Hannah Neve and Alastair Southgate (who is ‘leading’ on the LTP) of the Transport Planning Team at Essex County Council (ECC), with Alan Massow of Braintree District Council – who is collating the Council’s response to the LTP. Ms Neve gave a presentation on the current position of LTP3 that will become effective from 1st April 2011, and advised that integrated transport funding had been cut by 50% and maintenance by 26% over the next four years. There is no funding for major schemes in the Comprehensive Spending Review and key bids will need to be made to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, as funding is not supplied for major rail, passenger transport or road infrastructure enhancements. These will comprise of small packages under £5m, and larger packages up to £50m, with only one bid being successful per county. The closing date for bids is April 2011.

An overview was provided of previous consultation, the outcomes and Policies of the LTP document and general priorities. Key issues for the Braintree District were

- A120 Improvements
- Braintree branch line
- Braintree Freeport footbridge
- Witham Station footbridge extension
- Motts Lane foot/cycle bridge

For further information regarding these minutes, please contact Eileen Self, Member Services on (01376) 551414 or e-mail eileen.self@braintree.gov.uk
The continuance of footpath and cycle networks
- Town Centre improvements in Braintree and Witham
- Congestion relief at South Street, Braintree
- Public transport links to LDF growth areas and to rural areas
- Bus service improvements

Ms Neve confirmed that ECC are aware of the District’s priorities and they are included within the high level priorities such as ‘Integrated bus and cycling packages for local centres’ and ‘Improving journeys for commuters travelling to London from Chelmsford and Braintree’. Members are encouraged to take part in the consultation on the LTP – that takes place from 13th December 2010 to 11th February 2011 - preferably on the website at www.engag.essex.org.uk

The Chairman stated that matters previously identified by the Board had been included in the priorities. Members raised the following issues:-
- A further detailed explanation of funding was provided by ECC officers
- Although consultation had been undertaken with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) for rural issues, it was recognised by ECC that improved communication was required
- Reference to adverse weather conditions that had gridlocked many areas of the county, and to any change in budget to allow for drainage and flooding conditions, and ice and snow implications. Three major road arteries comprising of the A12, A127 and A13 had all recently been closed due to insufficient hardware and planning; and are now experiencing numerous potholes to the road surface. In response, Mr Southgate referred to the daily maintenance provision, and that ECC now has responsibility for looking at flood risk.
- A further comment was made regarding the late contact with local farmers and contractors on assistance in bad weather conditions, and the poor overall management. Mr Southgate agreed to progress this comment.
- To bring new business into the area the issue of transportation and travel times is important. There is a need to concentrate and focus on new business and produce more positive outcomes, with less complaint to congestion and pollution cases.
- Services in rural areas – to enhance broadband speeds, and to improve transport links so residents do not need to commute out of the district to their work.

Many Members considered that ECC should focus on effective traffic flows and relieving congestion, instead of emphasising on green issues as carbon dioxide emissions and cycleways. In response it was advised that the LTP has to support the economy and by making appropriate networks for transport can provide reliability and predictability of journey times for commuters. However, there was also opinion that environmental issues focus on long term aspirations and provision of cycleways, for example, could discourage car journeys.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input on this topic and encouraged all partners to submit their individual consultation on the LTP.

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

**BRAINTREE BRANCH LINE FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Jon Hayden, the Head of Sustainable Development, presented the progress report on the feasibility study. It was advised that ECC and BDC had requested that
Network Rail integrate further matters into the report and this will be available for Business Council on 14th March 2011 and the next Board meeting on 4th April 2011. These matters relate to two issues:-
- provision of a half hourly service on the branch line, using a static loop. The position of the loop and technical details, together with finance involved will be provided in the final report
- if a twice-hourly service can be provided, the effect to the mainline service, and whether the train timetable could be adjusted to permit the service in peak and off-peak times, is to be investigated.

**DECISION:** That the report on the current progress of the feasibility study and timetable be noted.

29 **TALK OF THE TOWNS AND TOWN CENTRE ‘FUTURES’ PROJECTS**

Chris Trim, the Town Centre Development Manager, provided a verbal report on the ‘Talk of the Town’ project comprising the ‘Loving your High Street’ awards, consultation on improving town centres through the Council’s Contact magazine to all households in the district, and for roadshows in the three main towns and with commuters at local railway stations. The ‘Talk of the Towns’ campaign has a dedicated website at [www.talkofthetowns.co.uk](http://www.talkofthetowns.co.uk) encouraging people to respond. Views on improvements for Braintree town will run parallel with proposals received from two bidders for the development behind Braintree Town Hall including Manor Street and Victoria Street. It was noted that on-street events will take place in George Yard, Braintree and not in the High Street as indicated on the papers circulated at the meeting.

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

30 **BRAINTREE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION**

**INFORMATION:** The Board received a presentation from Jon Hayden on the two design options for regeneration of the Manor Street car park/bus station area behind the Town Hall and library in Braintree. A four-week consultation period had commenced on 22nd January 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme 1</th>
<th>Scheme 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45,000 sq ft retail space</td>
<td>38,000 sq ft retail/restaurant space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 sq ft café space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel space – 54 bedrooms</td>
<td>Hotel space – 60 bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000 sq ft office space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 residential flats</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WC/ public realm</td>
<td>WC/public realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus interchange along Manor Street</td>
<td>Bus interchange between Manor Street and Victoria Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113 parking spaces</td>
<td>250 parking spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive underground service level</td>
<td>Dedicated service yard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both schemes the bidders have envisaged that the proposed development will commence with contract awarded in April 2011 and be operational in 2014. The Council’s consultants are looking into the viability of this timetable. The tender evaluation will commence on 23rd February 2011, and the two schemes will be submitted to Full Council for decision – to support Design 1, Design 2, or neither scheme.

For further information regarding these minutes, please contact Eileen Self, Member Services on (01376) 551414 or e-mail eileen.self@braintree.gov.uk
Brenda Baker made comparison to the 109,000 sq ft development of George Yard, and queried if the space in the two schemes was needed; and whether it was to attract convenient space (for everyday shops) or comparison space (for clothing/big ticket items). The effect to the George Yard complex and other areas of town was also questioned, and whether customers would move from one shopping development, via Market Place (and slope), to the other shopping area. Mr Hayden clarified that the proposal from the bidders recognises the need for medium size retailers to compliment the existing larger stores and adjacent smaller units.

Other matters raised by Board Members were:-
- the second design has larger parking capacity, achieving greater accessibility and convenience to shoppers to the east and north of the town
- the problem with footfall at shops in the High Street, where properties are small and cannot attract medium national traders
- the building space capacity of the Manor Street development, and whether the developer can fill the shop units before the operational date
- to work closely with ECC to ensure (i) appropriate layout for the bus park, as buses may park, and will not just stop and start on their journey; (ii) for the taxi rank in Manor Street to be allowed for; and (iii) to enable traffic flow at the exit to car parks
- to be careful not to detract from George Yard, the High Street area and to encourage local residents to use local shops, without travelling to larger towns
- to attract quality stores of a suitable size, and provide a vibrant Market Place to bring the shopping areas together
- that retailers do not want double fronted shops that face two directions, as they prefer single aspect
- that office space will attract employment and spending in the town
- a request for an archaeological dig on the site, and suitable space for articulated lorries will be determined at the planning stage

The Chairman thanked Jon for the presentation, and stated that more detailed information will be available for consideration at the planning application stage.

31 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS

Zoe Myddelton, Regeneration and Economic Development Officer, provided an update on the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and reminded Members of the proposal for Braintree to join with Essex, Kent and East Sussex LEP. To effectively drive forward economic growth in the area, Braintree has reconsidered its position and priorities, and recognised that the Haven Gateway is a more appropriate Sub Region to share future growth aspirations and investment goals. The Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP) is an established partner, with a proven track record and has similar priorities of the A120, integrated links, for targets on broadband delivery to rural areas, and on regeneration of town centres. It was clarified that Braintree sits within the Heart of Essex (along with Brentwood, Maldon and Chelmsford) in the LTP framework, and joining the Haven Gateway in a LEP will not compromise this arrangement. Further business information was circulated at the meeting within the Economic Overview and Business Snapshot for the Braintree District.

DECISION: That the verbal report be noted.
LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman referred to two main items from the Steering Group meeting held on 10th December 2010. Firstly, to a report on ‘The Economic Impact of the Voluntary Sector on the Braintree Economy’ – a copy is attached to these minutes (for Board Members only). This highlighted that the Third Sector in the Braintree District had £4.6m income in 2009/10, and had spent £4.9m in the same period. This displays a market value on volunteers for every £1 the sector spends on volunteers there is a return of £4.55. Linda Riley emphasised the value and importance of the voluntary sector with 60% of income from statutory sources, and the opportunities in the sector for paid employment.

Secondly, the Chairman referred to a report on the NEET’s problem and a one-year project to identify ways to tackle this issue. However, an agency or provider is required to be pro-active and take this matter forward, i.e. like Connexions - however Connexions have had their ECC funding withdrawn. A recent national report highlighted that 600,000 young people had never worked, and that 250,000 families have no income from work.

2011 Annual LSP Assembly. An additional Assembly had been held on 18th January 2011 to illuminate the problem and impact in Public Sector finances. Presentations were received from the Health Authority, ECC and BDC, with a message of the tough times ahead. It was noted that the Braintree Association of Local Councils had met with County and District Councils to discuss using the three tiers of local government to collate and deliver local services.

A presentation was also received from the Central Divisional Commander of the Police who also advised of numerous changes, including delivery of services with reduced resources, and to the future of the Neighbourhood Watch. A further presentation is proposed for March 2011, and that changes will require approval of the Local Police Authority. The election of a Police Commissioner within the re-structuring of the Police was also noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

INFORMATION: Keith Hughes advised that Monday 28th November 2011 is the last operational date for Business Link in the region. It was proposed that the Partnership Board may wish to discuss this change at their meeting after this date, and identify what they wish the business service to be. Board Mtg – Jan 2012

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

INFORMATION: It was noted that the next meeting of the Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board would be held on Monday 4th April 2011 at Causeway House, Braintree starting at 6.00pm.

The next meeting of the Business Council is on Monday 14th March 2011 at 6.00pm, at The Corner House, Braintree.

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 8.06pm.

B CUTMORE

(Chairman)