

# BRAINTREE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

*Supporting parish and town councils in the District of Braintree*

*Chairman Cllr Martin Lee*

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2022

### Via Zoom

**In attendance:** Martin Lee (Chairman) (Sible Hedingham) Dave Gronland (Halstead), Ann Hooks (Rayne), David Smith (Gestingthorpe) Michael Lager (Witham) Robert Waters (Witham) Jane Taylor (White Colne) Tony Clayton (Foxearth and Liston) Mick Radley (Halstead) India Jayatillake (Kelvedon) Lucy Orrow (Colne Engaine) Jill Toocaram (Castle Hedingham) Garry Southgate (Castle Hedingham) Laurence Nichols (Bulmer) Derek Hamblin (Greenstead Green & Halstead Rural) Philip Rawlinson (Great Yeldham) Peter Gentry (Little Yeldham, Tillbury, Juxta Clare & Ovington) Melanie A'Lee (Rivenhall) Roger Duffin (Finchingfield) Dorothy Griffin (Great Notley) Chris Siddall (Essex Highways) & Grahame Walkingshaw (BALC Clerk)

### 1. Apologies for absence

Margaret Barrett (Earls Colne), Kerry Barnes (Steeple Bumpstead) Paul Lees (Feering) Richard Shackell (Bures Hamlet) Gary Morris (Black Notley) Lynsi Haywood-Smith (Gt Bardfield)

### 2. Welcome from the Chairman and Executive Committee

Chairman Martin Lee welcomed everyone on behalf of the Executive Committee. The chairman introduced the Executive Committee members to all present.

### 3. To receive reports:

#### a) Finance Report

The BALC Clerk reported that there were three payments.	Clerk Salary
November	£70.00
Clerk Salary December	£70.00
Temporary Clerk Salary (Feb to Oct)	<u>£162.29</u>
Total	<u>£302.29</u>

The Clerk informed the meeting that Cressing have now joined BALC and that payment is waiting to go into the bank account. The Current Balance in the Unity Bank Account is £398.97 as at 27/01/22

Proposed: Cllr Ann Hooks

Seconded: Dave Gronland

#### b) Local Highways Panel

Cllr Dave Gronland informed the meeting that an update on the LHP had been sent to Parish Clerks from Alison at Braintree District Council. Cllr Philip

Rawlinson informed the meeting that 4 VAS signs had been applied for by Parish Council's but Town Councils cannot apply for these.

Cllr Dave Gronland asked if it was possible for a bit more clarity on who can ask things from the LHP, is it the responsibility of the Councillors or the Clerks to make contact with the LHP?

**c) BDC Standards Sub Committee**

Cllr Jane Taylor informed the meeting that there was nothing to report, as there had been no meeting so far.

**d) EALC executive**

Cllr Martin Lee informed the meeting that there was nothing to report, as there had been no meeting since the last one.

**4. Guest Speaker: Chris Siddall (Highways Chairman)**

The Chairman, Martin Lee introduced Guest Speaker Chris Siddall (Highways Chairman) to the meeting.

Chris Siddall gave a brief summary of his background as a District Councillor for Earl's Colne, working with Braintree District Council for 6 years and becoming an elected county Councillor last year. He had also requested becoming chairman of the Local Highways Panel.

Chris Siddall reported to the meeting that Parish Council's could buy VAS/VAD Units cheaper than the £3,500 usually quoted. The Parish Council's will need a licence for them and he would encourage Council's to move the signs around to get the best use out of them.

Chris Siddall is lobbying for more money for the Local Highways Panel and wanted to prioritise schemes based on importance so that money would be paid out quicker to those schemes. Parish Council's should go through their District Councillor with Local Highways Panel applications. These will be passed on to the Highways Cabinet Member who will decide if it goes to the Local Highways Panel.

Questions for Chris Siddall:

Lucy Orrow (Colne Engaine)

Question

We have many times in the past asked if it would be possible, maybe on an annual basis, for highways to liaise with each council to discuss which local roads we consider need work. There is one main road in to the village, which has not been resurfaced since 2013 and many parts are slick but a back road that has minimal traffic gets replacement stones each year.

### Answer

Chris Siddall is pushing Essex County Council to devolve powers down so that Parish Council's could commission small repairs themselves. Halstead were given equipment from Essex Highways to repair potholes and one person had completed the work.

Lucy Orrow (Colne Engaine)

### Question

Colne Engaine has 3 main roads, signs on 2 of the roads stated they would both be shut over the New Year (Giggaclear & Broadband). The Parish Clerk was not informed and there was no link between the companies doing the work. Could information have been better distributed by Essex Highways?

### Answer

Chris Siddall stated that they had a lot of this lately, these companies are contracted out and don't always talk to each other.

Peter Gentry (Little Yeldham, Tillbury, Juxta Clare & Ovington)

### Question

Essex County Council give contractors licence to put signs up, so why is there such mixed messages when it comes to diversions?

Ann Hooks (Rayne)

### Question

How come contractors don't come to collect signs once diversions are completed? Councillors have a pile of signs for collection from Essex County Council to come and pick up.

### Answer

Chris Siddall asked if it had been reported, the response was that it had, he further asked if there had been any response, there had been no response since it was reported. Chris Siddall suggested they speak to their County Councillor Graham Butland and informed the meeting that he would chase it up as well.

### Question

Why is it so difficult to get a SID sign repaired? The Parish Council has been asking for this for months in relation to a SID sign on Yeldham Road.

### Answer

Chris Siddall replied that Essex Highways prioritise work to be completed. Chris will aim to sort this out.

David Smith (Gestingthorpe)

Question

Why is there no direct contact number for Local Highways Inspectors?

Answer

Chris Siddall replied that Charlotte at Braintree District Council would prefer people to go direct to her. Essex Highways are not allowed to give out e-mails with names on it. Chris would take this back to Braintree District Council.

Ken McDonald (Silver End)

Question

Is the Parish Council's 'wish list' taken from the Open Spaces Action Plan, what is the impact if the Developer does not speak to/meet with the Parish Council and who decides which project is to benefit?

Answer

Chris Siddall stated that this was a Braintree District Council issue but he would be happy to answer it. Open Spaces Action Plans are important and need to be up to date. With Section 106 money it is important that you set out what development you require for the year ahead. Section 106 is put in when planning is at the discussion stage. Once approved it cannot be changed.

Ken McDonald (Silver End)

Question

The surgery in Silver End is also for the residents who live in Cressing, so can S106 money from Cressing developments be used to benefit the Silver End surgery?

Answer (Chairman Martin Lee)

No

Answer

Chris Siddall stated it is a legal document within development, the money must be spent or it would be lost.

Mick Radley (Halstead)

Question

The rules of engagement for VAS/VAD units are not as easy as it seems. No information has been put through to Parish Council's. Could the information be passed on to the Parish Clerks?

Answer

Chris Siddall replied that the VAS/VAD Unit information is a bit patchy but he will request that the information goes out to Parish Clerks.

Peter Gentry (Little Yeldham, Tillbury, Juxta Clare & Ovington)

Question

Country areas with no speed limits are unable to put VAS/VAD Units on no speed limit areas, how can we change this?

Answer

Chris Siddall replied that you could aim to have the speed limit changed by submitting an application to the Local Highways Panel with support from your County Councillor.

Philip Rawlinson (Great Yeldham)

Question

Great Yeldham had speed wires across the road but didn't qualify for a speed limit change. How can they go about getting a speed change in Great Yeldham?

Answer

Chris Siddall informed the meeting that he would recommend contacting your local County Councillor.

Derek Hamblin (Greenstead Green)

Question

Greenstead Green bought their own Speed Gun & VAS/VAD Unit which was funded by village fete's etc. All the speed analysis has been completed but it doesn't go over the 38 mph required to get County funding. Peak times are Morning/Night time rush hours. Could we get police out at peak times?

Answer

Chris Siddall replied that Essex Highways would fund VAS/VAD Units as long as Parish Council's met the correct criteria. He suggested that Parish's get together with County Councillors to fund these and suggested that sharing VAS/VAD Units over 12 months would be beneficial to smaller Parishes.

Answer

Chairman Martin Lee suggested that the Chief Constable Essex – Ben-Julian Harrington - be invited as a guest speaker to the next meeting.

Michael Lager (Witham)

Question

Local Highways Panel meetings are closed to the public, why?

Answer

Chris Siddall replied that anyone could come to a Local Highways Panel meeting provided they had permission from the Chairman.

Michael Lager (Witham)

Question

Can this be put on the Local Highways Panel Agenda?

Answer

Chris Siddall referred back to the previous answer.

Michael Lager (Witham)

Question

Urban footpaths/PROW's are often muddy and covered with vegetation and can't be accessed by disabled people. Could proper funding be provided to turn these into footpaths accessed by all?

Answer

Chris Siddall is currently pushing this with Essex County Council. Shared space across private land can be an issue but is possible (e.g. cycleway from Earl's Colne to Coggeshall).

Chairman Martin Lee stated that he would write a letter to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst in relation to road speeding.

Philip Rawlinson informed the meeting that it would be a good idea for Parish Council's to write a letter to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst and to write individually as well.

The Chairman Martin Lee thanked Chris Siddall for his time in answering all the questions and for attending our meeting as well.

## **5. Information Sharing – an opportunity for Councils to ask questions and share their experiences**

Jane Taylor (White Colne) informed the meeting that the Climate Conference had been today and 67 people had attended. Lots of information had been coming out from the EALC on this subject and she suggested it would be worth getting hold information from Charlene Slade

Lucy Orrow (Colne Engaine) asked whether it would be possible for Parish Councils to go to Bi-monthly meetings instead of monthly meetings?

She was informed that other councils within BALC do this at present.

Philip Rawlinson (Great Yeldham) informed the meeting of the household support fund, in which Essex County Council have set aside money to help with fuel poverty & low income support. To apply you should contact Community 360.

Roger Duffin (Finchingfield) asked if other councillors were aware of the white paper on "Levelling Up Essex"? Roger would send this document to the BALC Clerk for distribution to members. The clerk was actioned to add this to the next agenda.

Michael Lager (Witham) informed the meeting that he had heard that Braintree District Council would not be giving out the surplus on the collection fund as they had done in previous years. He would contact the Braintree District Council Member to verify whether this was the case or not.

Mick Radley (Halstead) confirmed that this was the case and despite challenging this and asking for writing confirmation from Braintree District Council, he informed the meeting that Braintree District Council would be retaining the money.

Jane Taylor (White Colne) asked whether BALC could make a representation to Braintree District Council in the hope that they would reverse this decision.

## **6. Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (AGM)

Venue – (To Be Confirmed)

Guest Speaker at next meeting: TBC

The meeting closed at 8.47 p.m.