

BRAINTREE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Supporting Parish and Town Councils in the District of Braintree

Chair: Cllr Martin Lee

*Association Clerk: Kevin B. Money
7 Roach Vale, Colchester, Essex. CO4 3YN
email: balc.clerk@gmail.com
website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/balc/>*

MINUTES OF THE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17th. JANUARY 2024 VIA ZOOM AND IN PERSON AT WITHAM TOWN HALL AT 7pm

In attendance: Martin Lee (Chairman), Paul Lees (Vice-Chairman), M. Burgess, R. Duffin, S. Pedder, K. Barnes, K. McDonald, R. Turner, M. Burgess, G. Warren, M. Lovell, A. Hanson, R. Duffin, C. Calver, D. Hambling, T. Edwards, G. McCoyd, D. Garrod, Mr. D. Gascoigne CEO at BDC, Cllr G. Butland Leader of BDC & Kevin B. Money (BALC Clerk)

1. Welcome from the Chairman. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting
2. Apologies for absence were received from M. Eldred, P. Gentry, Cherie Root BDC,
3. To approve the Minutes of the last meeting of BALC Representatives on 18th. October 2023. **All Agreed**
4. Guest speakers Mr. Dan Gascoigne CEO, Cherie Root from BDC and the Leader of BDC Cllr Graham Butland
 - Question from Black Notley PC – see email. GB replied saying that once a planning application is submitted to contact him again. DG said that BDC will support the Parish. DG took the question back to BDC for answers.
 - C. Calver SHPC – SHPC receives about £17000 from BDC to contribute for street cleaning. Will it still be in the 2024/25. Answer Yes. 2025/2026 do not budget for this revenue. This revenue must be phased out over a period of time.
 - Cllr G. Butland went on to say that BDC is facing challenging times with a £2.5m gap. Balance budget. BDC in better position. BDC is capped by raising Precept but PC's are not. It is reviewed on a year-by-year basis. Printing of recycling calendars has stopped. £2.5bn goes on adult and children social care. Green waste raised £900,000pa.
 - K. Barnes – With the Street Cleaning grant possibly being withdrawn in the future this cost falls on local residents where the Precept will be increased to cover the cost.
 - £280,000 has been spent by BDC with legal cost regarding Wethersfield Airbase Asylum centre. This helps local residents but not residents living far from Wethersfield.
 - M. Lovell stated that potholes are in an appalling state in Gt. Yeldham. The country areas are at a disadvantage against Braintree towns etc. Regarding street lighting Castle Hedingham have turned their lights out to have a "dark skies" village.
 - D. Garrod – Rural ward problems is highways (flooding / street signs) Braintree Town does not pay a Precept. The road problem/s is a County Council issue not a District Council. Solar Farms are being built all over the rural areas.
 - P. Lees – Are the staffing levels in planning adequate? Planning Officers seem not to visit the planning application sites and use Goggle maps. Enforcement officers are slow to react to planning issues. In the past and present BDC planning enforcement officers are still short. £200,000 was spent on 1 issue in Gestingthorpe village.
 - R. Turner spoke about the solar farm in Rivenhall.
 - M. Lee – Spoke about highways department in ECC. They are difficult to get hold off and the response is poor. The work is very poor. Does BDC put pressure on ECC on the state of repairs and the quickness of response. Cllr G. Butland stated that each Parish Council should pressurise their ECC Councillor to get highways repaired on time and properly. PROW are sadly neglected
 - A. Hull - Braintree Strategic Growth feels like bulldozers are coming in more and more. BDC local plan has been approved. 5.8 year housing land supply. BDC is in a better position to refute speculative developers. A120 would be good to be extended from Galleys corner to Marks Tey. Cycle ways are being looked into at the next phase of the local plan.

- K. McDonald – Sustainable developments have not worked. These developments place undue pressure on existing infrastructure. G. Butland is in favour of Garden Communities. Small developments cannot cope with the infrastructures. Larger developments, over 3000 homes, help with drainage systems. BDC does not have great powers with developers. Planning consents are given but not built cannot be included in the 5-year housing supply. The UK has a housing shortage. BDC has 2500 empty house in the district.
- s106 money is held by BDC with no pressure on developers to release the money. BDC has never handed s106 money back to a developer. Once an agreement has been agreed it is difficult to change what the money it was agreed to be used for. Can BDC adopt a policy on not being so rigid on the construction of the contract. Developers, if a change to the contract contacts BDC, then BDC will look at the revised agreement. PFCC's can apply for s106 monies.
- Affordable / temporary housing in the district is a problem for BDC. A subsidy is given to BDC and is a challenge for BDC. Health and Wellbeing is linked with housing problem.
- 10 devolution deals are caught up "in a black hole" said Cllr G. Butland. ECC has gone for a tier 2 at the start. Franchising of local transport.
- Does BDC have any knowledge about the Rivenhall Motel. At the start Asylum Seekers were going to be housed at the Motel. BDC asked Government, about a year ago, not to use the Motel for any future use. Rivenhall Motel is up for sale. R. Turner understand that the Motel is still being used for Asylum Seekers. R. Turner thinks that this has been going on for a number of months.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre – Any more update from the Home Office. BDC working closely with all agencies in supporting local communities. Over 600 seekers are on the site out of 1700 which Home Office wants in the future. New programme manager has been appointed on the site. Infection and control have been managed better with more security. Better cleaning but incidents still happen on the site within the seekers. Home Office information on meeting dates is very difficult to obtain the information. Communications between Home Office and BDC still exists. A riot happened a week ago. BDC will always take "best legal advice" on the application. Another £50 - 60,000 is to use for legal Government costs. Nationally 17,000 seekers are not accounted for.
- £15m has been spent by Ministry of Justice on the Wethersfield Airbase.
- As it is Crown land BDC has no rights to turn up at the airbase to gain access to inspect the area.
- Green waste uptake is now at 51%. More residents have applied for the green waste since the "early bird scheme" finished. BDC to make sure the refuse collectors check the disposal of waste per each residents.

Dan Gascoigne and Cllr G. Butland left the meeting but asked if these meeting could happen every 3 months

5. Finance report:

- a) To receive the Bank reconciliation as at 31st. December 2023

Councillors noted the Bank reconciliation as at 31st. December 2023

- b) To receive the BALC accounts to 31st. December 2023

Councillors noted the BALC accounts to 31st. December 2023

- c) To discuss the increase in the hall hire at Witham TC to £14 per hour

Cllr M. Lee proposed accepting this hall hire increase. Cllr P. Lees seconded. **All agreed**

- d) To discuss 2024/2025 subscription level

Cllr R. Turner proposed accepting the recommended the 2024/2025 subscription. Cllr K. Barnes seconded.

All Agreed

- e) To discuss the BALC insurance payments. The new starts from 19.01.24 costing £96.60p per year

6. Local Highways Panel

- LHP meeting is due 18.01.24
- Number of Road signs damaged/obscures – Dan Maclean could be a proactive approach to replace/clean up the signs.
- A number of projects have been dropped from the 2024/2025 list.
- Any BALC members if they wish to ask about their projects please contact Kerry Barnes, Garry Warren or Jane Taylor.

7. BDC Standards Sub Committee. Nothing to report

8. EALC Executive report
 - Next EALC Finance meeting is tomorrow (18.01.24)
 - Met in Nov '23 - Same Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the next year - More personnel being hired.
 - More training is being set up - Bursary can be claimed with Councils with less than £25000 Precept.
 - CIF funding is always over-subscribed - Emergency CIF fund is available – Any public body can claim s106 monies - Training in situ. Minimum of 11 Councillors are needed for this training to happen. These numbers can be made up of more than one Council. Councillor Bursary is now up and running
9. Information Sharing – an opportunity for Councils to ask questions and share their experiences
 - G. Warren – Sportsground advice for any BALC members. Contact Halsted TC
10. Date of next meeting – **Wednesday 17th. April 2023 at 7pm via Zoom and in person at Witham Town Hall**

The Chairman then closed the meeting at 9.25pm and thanked everyone for attending

Signed

Martin Lee
Chairman

17th. April 2024