

# BRAINTREE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

*Supporting Parish and Town Councils in the District of Braintree*

*Chair: Cllr Martin Lee*

*Association Clerk: Kevin B. Money  
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## **MINUTES OF THE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup>. OCTOBER 2023 VIA ZOOM AND IN PERSON AT WITHAM TOWN HALL AT 7pm**

In attendance: Martin Lee (Chairman), Jane Taylor, Matt Burgess, Roger Duffin, Ann Wood, Susan Pedder, Kerry Barnes, Ken McDonald, Graham McCoyd, Ms Charlene Slade CEO at EALC & Kevin B. Money (BALC Clerk)

- 1. Welcome from the Chairman.** The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting
- 2. Apologies for absence** were received from D. Griffin T. Edwards, A. Hanson, D. Hambling, P. Lees, P. Gentry, J. Kelly.
- 3. Guest speaker** Ms. Charlene Slade CEO from EALC

Thank you for inviting me to attend this meeting.

### **AGM:**

You will have received a copy of our Annual Report prior to the AGM, which has details of the work of the EALC, so I wanted to explain a little bit about some of the work I do that is often unmentioned, and happens behind the scenes, which is equally important. As County Officer, I represent the EALC on various committees and working groups, both locally and nationally.

Some of these committees:

- East C.A.N – this is a consortium of 6 County Associations working together to provide the Nimble E-Learning Courses that we have available online. The group meets four times a year to write new course content, review and update current courses. These modules are bit size and are an introduction to topics such as H&S, GDPR, and home working essentials. There are 19 courses currently available. They are easy to complete and are available for one year from date of registration.
- There is a seat for the Chair and CEO on the Essex Rural crime forum and Essex rural partnership, to represent the members of the Association.
- During 2022, I joined the Mid and South Essex community assembly steering group, this is an alliance of voluntary partners organisations across the county. The invitation to work with other organisations was specifically to look at how we could support the health sector to become integrated within the ICB (integrated care board). Both Mike and I attended various meetings on behalf of the Association. We will continue to work with these partners to support the sector and develop our health and wellbeing initiative.
- Partners from West Essex Health & Care Partnership were also at our AGM. We hope to continue to work together with Essex County Council to develop these relationships to support the work of our members with the health, wellbeing and climate initiatives.
- The County Officers forum, meet every two weeks, these forums are essential for sharing up to date and current information that is shared in our weekly newsletters and legal updates. Please ensure that you encourage your fellow councillors to sign up to the weekly newsletters by sharing the link: <http://eepurl.com/idX6zz>.
- County officers development and buddy scheme
- NALC's improvement and development board, buddy scheme member, so that county officers could be linked together, giving each other support, in the form of mentoring and sharing experiences. I became a buddy to a new County Officer, Robin Thomas from Bedfordshire, We catch up at least 4 times a year or as often as we can to provide support, and share ideas. I also work closely with Sally Longmate from the Suffolk Association, and the members of the EAST CAN group. With only 43 Associations in the country, we are quite unique in the work we do to support our members, therefore, communication between us is key to understanding how we can improve our member services.
- I volunteered to be part of the working group for the PWLB. The work of this group is to provide a framework and checklist for county officers to follow, when processing public works loan applications;

before applications are submitted to the department of levelling up for approval. Prior to this working group, I developed my own check list for processing applications, this has been implemented as a formality for County Officers to follow. Previously there was very little guidance for county officers. This I now best practice. The group meet quarterly to review various documents.

- I am a new member of the NALC The Policy Committee. Justin Griggs, Head of Policy and Communications is here with us today. The committee's work is to lobby central government to change for the sector, this year, the committee put forward a case to central government for parish and town councils to have direct access to government funding. (Catch Justin at lunch for more detail).

I am most proud to have supported the creation of three new councils this year (Wickford Town Council, Chelmer Village Council and Chelmsford Garden Community Council).

### **Training**

We have continued to improve the training function with a variety of courses, both in house and also delivered online. A total of 85-100 courses have been delivered so far. Excluding nimble e-learning.

New courses have been created by our tutors who have expert knowledge and skills, raising the standards for the sector in councillor training, the Clerks qualification, and other key subjects. Thanks to all the tutors for the hard work and dedication.

### **Local Council Awards**

The EALC have continued to support many Parish and Town Councils to achieve an award under the Local Council Award scheme, the award was designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop. EALC is proud to lead the Country with the largest number of accreditations. Great Waltham Parish Council have now achieved Foundation.

### **NALC Start Council Award**

EALC have been nominated a finalist for County Association of the Year. An Award Ceremony will take place at the House of Lords on 29<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Future Plans**

As the demands and needs upon our membership change, the EALC will continue to evolve to support you, the Councillors and Clerks who are at the heart of our communities. A full review is being carried out of our current strategy and a new 4-year business plan will soon be in place which will ensure that the Association continues to improve and provide even greater value for its membership.

Charlene also asked to encourage members to sign themselves up to the weekly newsletter and encourage them to pass it on to their fellow members as well by clicking on the link here: <http://eepurl.com/idX6zz>.

Charlene then took questions from the members.

A question was on Virtual Parish Council Assemblies. Charlene referred this to LTN6 dated September 2014 "Meetings of Parish council Meeting"

The Chairman then thanked Charlene for giving up her valuable time

Charlene Slade then left the meeting

#### **4. Colne Valley Community Energy Project - Cllr Jane Taylor**

I am co leader of the Colne Valley Community Energy Project with Jill Bruce who is the Climate Ambassador for the Federation of Essex Wis

The projects aim is to bring solar panels with battery storage to domestic rooftops. The university of East London devised the scheme with backing from the EU, and ECC have acquired the geospatial surveys for every rooftop in Essex.

This survey allows us to look at individual roof tops to give us a good indicator of the energy capabilities of the building.

ECC have identified an ESCO – an energy supply company skilled in delivering renewable energy and understanding the logistics of the Project. Their name is Power circle.

They are able to engage with social impact funders for the project, and work with trusted and capable installers An ESCO is a not-for-profit company.

So how does the Project work?

A householder will have three choices

1 Firstly buy the solar array and batteries out right - due to economies of scale the Project will be able to supply panels and batteries at a lower price than in the open market. Any excess energy generated will be able to be sold, back to the project, known as peer to peer, or to the national grid.

As an illustration of costs, an average 3 bedroom house using around 4500 kWh per year could take an installation of 10 panels at a cost of £5,485 with a 5.2 kWh battery added for an extra £2,999.

2. Or if the householder does not have the means to fund the panels, the Project will be able to fund the supply and installation on a Pay as you Go contract. No upfront cost for the householder and still cheaper than buying

electricity from the National Grid. At this stage the Project is suggesting the contract will cost approx £2 - £3 per week. Excess energy is sold by the ESCO to householders without solar (peer to peer) or to the national grid. The pay as you go customer does not receive any payment for the excess energy generated.

3. For those unable to fit solar panels on their roof, for whatever reason, they can still be part of the project by receiving community energy on a peer-to-peer basis. This will be cheaper than the national grid. There is also the possibility to have ground mounted panels depending on space and location.

We have taken this message to 7 different parishes, the 4 Colnes Gt Tey Chappel and Halstead Town Council. All are supporting the project. Another group is also working in Manningtree. Together we are working to identify the first 50 householders who will self-fund and start the project. This will bring confidence to the Project allowing everyone to see for themselves how well everything works. To get investors on board, for the pay as you go contracts, we need to demonstrate that we have 300 properties who want to be funded.

If your Council agrees to supporting the Project then we can organise and lead a public meeting in your town or Parish with presentations from ECC, Power circle and one of the installers. We have found that a house-to-house leaflet drop is a good way to advertise the meeting and Jill and I have a budget for printing and venue hire with refreshments. We would however ask if you had a way of delivering leaflets as we are unable to cover that. There will also be a need for volunteers to move the project forward. At the end of the meetings, we usually ask residents to send their expressions of interest to a specified email address, and in reply they receive the solar potential for their property. We are not in a position to field all those emails but would be happy to train and support your volunteers.

For the project to be successful in your Parish or Town, we would therefore ask first for your Council to support the scheme and secondly to agree to find a group of volunteers to work with us.

**5. To approve the Minutes** of the last meeting of BALC Representatives on 19<sup>th</sup>. July 2023. **All Agreed**

**6. Finance report:**

a) To receive the Bank reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup>. September 2023  
Councillors noted the Bank reconciliation as at 30<sup>th</sup>. September 2023

b) To receive the BALC accounts to 30<sup>th</sup>. September 2023  
Councillors noted the BALC accounts to 30<sup>th</sup>. September 2023

**7. Local Highways Panel**

BDC LHP has a New website

It was also stated that Councillors come to the meeting in a pre-determined position and many projects have been deleted from the list without notification to the appropriate Council.

The Braintree LHP were allocated a budget of £407,600 for 2023/24. being made up of:  
£203,800 for improvement schemes: £144,188 for carriageway improvements: £59,612 for casualty reduction schemes. An additional sum of £202,800 was also allocated for additional footway schemes  
Which gives a grand total of £610,400. Of this all but £15,300 has been allocated. It was decided that any remaining budget will be used to fund the design element of schemes awaiting design.

**NEW BDC LHP Website address of LHP schemes with status** is below

<https://www.essexhighways.org/highway-schemes-and-developments/local-highway-panels/braintree-lhp>

**8. BDC Standards Sub Committee** Nothing to report

**9. EALC Executive report**

EALC had their AGM which was poorly attended.

It was discussed as to why, as most of the Councillors work, is the AGM held on a weekday and not on a Saturday where more Councillors could attend.

The Great Dunmow office lease, which expires in 2025, was discussed. There may be a possibility of the office moving more centrally to the district, but the CEO is against any move as the staff will not travel to the centre of Essex.

**10. Information Sharing** – an opportunity for Councils to ask questions and share their experiences  
Nothing more was added that had not already been said

**11. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup>. January 2024 at 7pm**

Mr. Dan Gascoigne CEO of BDC has been invited to attend this meeting but again is not attending

Cllr G. Butland Leader of BDC has been invited

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

Signed

*M Lee*

**Martin Lee**

17<sup>th</sup>. January 2024

**Chairman**