

## **Report by District Councillor Mrs. Diana Garrod to the Parish Assemblies within the Bumpstead Ward of Braintree District Council 2017-18**

I was elected as your District Council Representative mid-term in October 2016 and will face re-election in 2019.

I am pleased to represent the four Parishes within the Bumpstead Ward on issues affecting them at the District Council. I also aim to keep the Parish Clerk aware of issues that the Parish Council may find useful and direct them to the most appropriate Council Officer, Department or body that is able to deal with local matters.

I would normally hope to support the Parish Council's views on all things affecting their Parish and sometimes I have to consider issues in the wider community interest. A typical example would be the Braintree District Local Plan, and in particular the development of larger community settlements.

The District Council is obliged to provide within the Local Plan, development space for around 850 new homes each year, up to the year 2033, when the Plan will be updated.

The majority of the identified developments will take place in and around the major settlements of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, but in order to try and avoid widespread development of our villages it has been necessary to consider new developments to the East and West of Braintree. The proposal closest to this Parish is a development proposal to the West of Braintree, for 2500 homes during the life of the Plan, although space is being identified for more properties, depending on circumstances after 2033. These proposals will help ensure there is housing available for our children and grandchildren, with the necessary infrastructure of roads, schools, health and leisure facilities, shops, and employment land. Of particular concern is that planning permission has been granted for over 1800 new homes where building has not started. This appears to be due to developers sitting on land perhaps waiting for property prices to increase; an issue that the Council continues to address.

There has been reductions of Central Government Grant to local councils and the Council has found savings or opportunities for raising income for the financial year 2018/19 of around £877,000 whilst continuing to maintain all essential services and support the local economy and infrastructure.

The Council has identified capital investment as a key Corporate priority for the District and approved ringfenced funding of £28m for the District Investment Strategy. Investment intervention is required to support planned housing and population growth in the District. The District Investment Strategy targets capital investments to support infrastructure improvements, with particular emphasis on: improved healthcare facilities, enhanced town centres, increased employment and business opportunities and improved highways infrastructure.

Since April 2017:-

- Planning permission had been granted for over 1800 homes, supporting the delivery of much needed housing and has enabled the delivery of 130 affordable homes across the District.
- The Council has helped over 250 households from becoming homeless.
- The Councillors Community Grant Scheme has seen 124 grants awarded, totalling an amount of just over £104,000 and will continue this year.
- Recycling rates are currently at 52%.
- 555 of reported fly tips have been collected within 24 hours.

Cleaning up our streets and countryside currently costs the taxpayer in England almost £800 million a year, yet the levels of fixed penalties for this type of offence have not changed since 2006. From April 2018 new powers will come into force that would almost double the maximum fixed penalty for dropping litter from £80 to £150 and the default penalty would also increase from £75 to £100. From 1st April 2019, the

minimum penalty is set to increase from £50 to £65. Local Authorities may set the penalties at any amount within these boundaries that they consider appropriate for their area.

In addition, there will be new powers to discourage littering from vehicles as, for the first time, Local Authorities (outside of London) will be able to issue a Penalty Charge Notice (civil fine) to the Registered Keeper of a vehicle for littering if it can be proven that the litter was thrown from their car – even if it was discarded by someone else. These powers will be used where the perpetrator cannot be identified.

The Council has recognised the need to protect larger public open spaces in the District from unauthorised access, including illegal encampments, to maintain the quality of the local area and prevent disruption and inconvenience to local residents and has installed fencing and bollards to nine open spaces across the district to date.

Incidents during 2017, including the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Arena bombing, are unfortunately recent reminders of the importance of being prepared for an emergency. Braintree District Council is required to plan and respond to major emergencies working alongside the blue light services. The Council has produced a robust new Emergency Plan reflecting the latest legislation, guidance and best practice. Whilst this is the overarching document it is supported by numerous “risk specific” plans including Flood and Severe Weather, Pandemic Influenza, Mass Fatalities, Communications, etc. We also have to assess risk and develop contingencies for impacts like fuel shortages, power outages or blackouts and more unfamiliar impacts such as space weather.

The Council plays an active role in the Essex Resilience Forum. This is a multi-agency partnership, made up of local councils, emergency services, health providers, the voluntary sector and many more organisations who work together to plan and prepare for a multi-agency response to a major emergency.

The next key piece of work to be undertaken by the Council is the development of a Recovery Plan; recovery for communities and businesses following an event is the responsibility of the local authority once the blue light services have gone. Each of the Councils services input will be key to the development of the Recovery Plan to ensure an effective recovery is possible whilst maintaining business as usual.

Work is ongoing to extend the number of premises available to the Council to act as rest centres in times of an emergency. The Council is looking to instigate formal agreements to cement this provision of a number of new premises throughout the District.

The Open Spaces Action Plan has been revised. The 2018 Edition had engaged Parish and Town Councils, Ward Members and Council Officers. The Plan outlines a table of proposals for the provision and enhancement of open spaces in Braintree District. Its purpose is to demonstrate the need for these and enable Council Officers to identify where financial contributions, being sought from Developers under the Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document, would be spent. The plan forms part of the Council’s evidence base for securing planning obligations from Developers to enhance existing open spaces, or provide new ones.

Finally, I would advise you that Cllr. Vanessa Santamauro has been elected Chairman of Braintree District Council for the civic year 2018/2019. The outgoing Chairman; Cllr. Stephen Kirby raised a total of £3,468 for his chosen charities.

I am pleased to be associated with our dedicated Parish Councils, individual Parish Councillors and community groups and consider myself very fortunate to represent one of the most picturesque areas of Essex.

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