

**District Councillor's Report to Parish Councils April 2024**  
**Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward**

**Scheduled Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders & Roadworks**

Intended closure of Wiggens Green, Helions Bumpstead on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 for one day. The closure is required whilst Openreach undertakes pole testing. <https://one.network/?tm=137394156>

\*\* I continue to pursue a response from Essex Highways concerning the proposed closure of the B1057 from 10<sup>th</sup> May to 13<sup>th</sup> September.

**Launch of Community Infrastructure Grant Fund**

Braintree District Council is launching a £100,000 fund to provide grants to community groups wishing to reduce their carbon output. This is part of a three-year investment plan funded from central government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The fund will support the council's delivery of a key outcome of its Climate Change Action Plan 2023/24, to help local community groups to reduce their carbon emissions and energy costs. Applications that feed into other Climate Change Action Plan outcomes are welcomed. The capital funding is available to existing constituted groups such as charities, associations, parish councils, voluntary and community groups, to make changes to physical structures such as:

- Installing sources of renewable energy to buildings or their surroundings
- Installing energy efficiency measures such as insulation or LED lighting to buildings or their surroundings
- Installing or embedding other capital projects which reduce carbon emissions to buildings or their surroundings.

Support will be given to a minimum of ten projects with funding of approximately £10k per project; however, applications for larger and smaller amounts will be considered. The grant is discretionary and projects may not receive the full funding requested if it enables Braintree District Council to support a greater number of projects. The project should be accessible to the community and should demonstrate a carbon reduction from existing infrastructure of at least 5%, which should be effective for at least five years. Groups will need to demonstrate how they will achieve this in their applications, and report annually following an initial six month evaluation.

**Exciting news from Citizens Advice**

Starting 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024, drop-in advice sessions will be each Monday from 9.30am to 1.00pm at Braintree District Council offices; Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree CM7 9HB. Residents can drop in for advice on income maximisation, benefits, debt, employment, housing and much more. Alternatively ring 0808 278 7852.

**Wethersfield – Asylum Accommodation and Prison Proposals**

At the full council meeting held 18<sup>th</sup> March, Leader; Cllr. Graham Butland provided an update. It was reported that earlier today, the Home Office confirmed they had made a decision to cap the maximum number of people residing at Wethersfield at any one time to 800. The Council was aware that the capacity of the site was currently 1,245 and it was understood that the Home Office would therefore use the remaining 445 bed spaces for short periods of time. This was a reduction from the 1,700 originally intended, and in response to lessons learned and concerns of the local community.

The Home Office continued to occupy Wethersfield under the emergency permitted development rights, known as Class Q, and this provision was due to expire in April 2024. It was understood that the Home Office still intended to extend the use of the site for at least a further three years by seeking planning permission through a Special Development Order (SDO). The Council understood that this was progressing and were awaiting to hear more from the Home Office. The Council would continue to keep residents updated as and when they were provided with more information on the SDO. The cap on numbers was however, separate to the ongoing considerations by the Home Office around an SDO. With the site still in operation, the Council continued to maintain an open dialogue with the Home Office, whilst holding them to account and doing their best, working alongside partner agencies, to ensure that the needs of residents, both local people and those living at the site, were met. The Leader added that following the decision taken in February, the Council had sought permission from the Home Office to provide £50,000 of the funding, received by the Council to date and would support discretionary activity on the site. Whilst accountability for support for Asylum Seekers remained with the Home Office, it was recognised that this was an important element of ensuring a safe and self-sufficient site, mitigating the impact on the surrounding community. The Leader reminded Members that the Council was required to administer this funding in accordance with Home Office instructions, the primary aim was to reduce the pressure on statutory services resulting from the use of the site for

Asylum seekers, and that this funding was a one-off and expected to cover the entirety of the time the site remains in use. Applications had been received from groups the Home Office was in conversations with and who they would authorise to work on site. The deadline for applications against this grant funding was 4th March and the Council would imminently be letting groups know the outcome of the evaluation of those applications.

Finally, the Council had received confirmation that the appeal against the decision of the High Court, within which the Council challenged the Home Office's decision to use the RAF Wethersfield site, would be heard before the Court of Appeal on 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This had been listed alongside other appeals brought by West Lindsey District Council for the RAF Scampton site and the appeal by a resident from Wethersfield. Following the announcements of the intention to seek an SDO, and the Court of Appeal hearing dates, the Council were currently reviewing its legal challenge, which was taking into account the costs likely to be incurred.

Any further information will be put on the web page as and when it arises:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/news/article/380/braintree-district-council-sets-out-its-position-over-wethersfield-prison-proposals>

### **Council Adopts New Long Term Strategy**

A new corporate strategy, setting out the council's ambitions and priorities up to March 2028, has been adopted unanimously by councillors at Braintree District Council, at a meeting of Full Council on Monday 18 March. The feedback received through a period of public consultation last year from residents and stakeholders helped shape the new strategy, which outlines the council's longer-term vision and aspirations for the next four years. It features three key themes: communities, prosperity and environment and under each outlines a number of council priorities, which, among others, include providing affordable, high quality and safe homes to meet the needs of residents, developing safer and more resilient communities, attracting and supporting business growth as well as protecting and enhancing the environment. With this comes a key focus to ensure equal opportunities are at the heart of everything the council does and ensuring services are fit for the future. This strategy will be supported by the council's new Fit for the Future transformation programme, ensuring that council services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way to help meet long-term financial challenges. Working in collaboration with partners across Essex is recognised as being crucial in delivering these priorities to deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses.

### **Deer Carcasses Found Dumped in Bags**

A number of small Deer body parts have been found in bags (fly-tipped) on three occasions around a village in the Bumpstead Ward. Naturally there are concerns around the risk of food poisoning regarding the consumption of meat that is not stored or handled safely.

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