

**Panel Meeting - Mid Area Highways**  
**22 May 2009 – Mid Area Office**  
**from 10.00 am**

**Braintree District Council**

Paul Munson (PM)  
 Mr Walters CC (RW)

**Chelmsford Borough Council**

Cllr Grundy (IG)  
 Mike Shaw (MS)

**Essex County Council**

John Dobinson (JTD)  
 Robbie Jamieson (RFJ)  
 Denise Lawrence - Minutes  
 Julie Martyn (JMM)  
 Samir Pandya (SNP)  
 Mr Joe Pike, CC (JP) Chairman  
 Bob Wiltshire (RWW)

**Maldon District Council**

Brian Harker (BH)  
 Stuart Jennings (SJ)

1	<b>Welcome by Chairman</b> JP welcomed those in attendance.  JP read out an email from Cllr Francis, expressing his appreciation for the work done by JMM and the Mid Area Office (MAO). He also sought clarification on the progress of works in Moulsham Street. JTD to advise accordingly.	<b>Action</b>  JTD
2	<b>Apologies</b> These were received from Mr Hume CC, Mr Edey CC, Mr Francis CC, Paul Partridge, and Averil Price.	
3	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b> JP asked if anyone had any comments relating to the last minutes. No comments were received and the previous minutes were accepted.	
4	<b>Staff Changes at Mid Area</b> JP commented that there seemed to be a lot of staff changes in Mid Area Office (MAO). JMM advised that people are encouraged to develop their skills and seek promotion to other posts, either within MAO or within Essex County Council (ECC).	
5 5.1	<b>Programme of Works</b> JP advised that the paperwork distributed prior to the meeting was very useful and shows how the money is being spent. He	

	was pleased with the work which had been included in the Braintree programme.	
5.2	IG asked for clarification on the proposals for Three Mile Hill in Chelmsford. JMM advised that consideration was given to close the gaps in the central islands to prevent accidents but this was discounted due to them being useful for traffic management at the V Festival and for diverting traffic in the event of an accident or for road maintenance. The scheme aims to improve lines/studs. If this proves unsuccessful and there are more accidents, MAO will consider the viability of installing cameras.	
5.3	Traffic arrangements in Greenbury Way have been changed, so that only left turns are allowed out of the Hylands Park exit and no U-turn restrictions will be imposed. JTD confirmed that the temporary barriers have now been made permanent. IG asked whether the closed openings could be opened up during the V Festival to help the Police control the traffic flow. JMM advised that MAO had asked the organisers to allow only coach travel to the Festival for the increased ticket numbers but this had not been accepted. JMM advised that a lot of planning takes place before, during and after the Festival to minimise any congestion. MAO are currently in talks with the Police to consider temporary signage on the A12. The Festival is an expensive operation, but MAO's planning last year ensured that everything ran smoothly, which is an achievement, given the large number of people attending the event.	
5.4	PM asked about general maintenance and in particular what plans were being made for the repair of the A131 between Braintree and Chelmsford. JTD advised that repairs are being done and any problems left are below the intervention level; the road is due to be resurfaced next year.	
5.5	JMM advised that an additional allocation of £200K had been made available to accelerate the patching and pothole repair programme and MAO are now doing more maintenance than previously budgeted for. JMM advised that road surfaces have deteriorated rapidly due to poor weather conditions and ECC are now reviewing the road materials currently being used in ECC and in Europe. The current matrix asphalt materials reduce spray and noise levels. However, it does allow water into the surface, which combined with lower than normal temperatures last Winter, has caused road surfaces to deteriorate. The freeze/thaw action on water in the matrix of the road surface and the substructure causes movement which increases the rate of decay.	
5.6	JP advised that pot holes continue to be a general topic which is discussed at Parish meetings.	

6	<b>Localism</b>	
6.1	JMM advised that Localism was being rolled out in the Braintree District initially. Paul Partridge and Paul Munson had been looking at the composition of their Panel, which would be formally set up after the elections. However the subject has been discussed at a Committee and the representatives agreed. RW advised that he would probably be Chairing the Panel. No date had been set for the first meeting. PM will discuss this with SNP/JMM after the close of the meeting.	JMM, PM, & SNP
6.2	BH asked for an explanation of Localism. JMM advised it is a mechanism for introducing a decision making process which involves both Parish and District Councils. However it is up to the District Councils to decide how the Panel is arranged. MAO will give the necessary support. There is a Localism budget provided which allows Parish Councils to assess their priorities and advise MAO. Localism has already been introduced in Castle Point, Colchester and Brentwood and proved successful. Chelmsford and Maldon now need to consider the composition of their Panels, which will become operational from the next financial year.	JTD
6.3	Some money is also available within the budget for work done previously in some Districts via the planned parish visits initiative, eg minor works, tidying of verges, cleaning signs etc.	
6.4	JMM advised that MAO would explain what work can and cannot be done by the Rangers, eg hedge cutting. SNP advised that surgeries had been trialled to deal with local queries but these had not been successful and were poorly attended in the trial areas.	
6.5	IG asked if the Chelmsford Localism Panel would be operational from next year and JMM advised yes. Localism takes a lot of Officer time; however it allowed District Councils more involvement.	
6.6	PM asked if the range of Highway surfaces would be the same. JMM advised that schemes can be put forward but MAO would not support any schemes which increased risks to users, were uneconomical, had minimum benefit or required high levels of maintenance.	
6.7	JP advised that the 3 Liaison Committees for Braintree, Halstead and Witham will continue and this will allow County Councillors to feed their comments to the Localism panel. JP was not sure where the MAO Panel meetings fitted in once the Localism Panels were established. JP felt that the MAO Panel was still viable to sort out any conflicts between the 3 Districts. This will need to be reviewed further when Chelmsford and	

	Maldon's Localism Panels are set up.	
6.8	RW expressed his concerns that a Localism Panel in Braintree will cause friction between the 3 towns within it. However he was satisfied with the work being done on schemes currently.	
6.9	IG asked whether a Localism report has been prepared. JMM advised that this was still being prepared and that MAO had concerns with regards to the increased administration and use of resources in MAO.	
6.10	SNP advised that there was no set formulae for the Panels which had already been set up in other areas. The other Panels have found their meetings useful for debating issues and deciding priorities. PM welcomed the Panel meeting, and felt that Chelmsford will benefit from seeing how Braintree deal with issues.	
6.11	JP reiterated that he was not happy with Localism which left County Councillors "out of the loop", but pleased that he can still contribute via the Liaison meetings.	
6.12	SJ asked whether Maldon will get some help to get the Panel process started, JMM confirmed yes.	
7	<b>Community Initiative Fund (Highways)</b>	
7.1	SNP advised that 15 schemes were put forward (5 for each district). The majority of the schemes were for Vehicle Activated Signs, although Chelmsford has some footway works included. This work will be carried out over the next three months.	
7.2	SNP advised that the £83K allocated for CIF will come out of the 2008/2009 budget. No budget has been given yet for the works to start this financial year but it should be available shortly.	
7.3	MS asked whether the Moulsham Street scheme would be funded by Localism. JMM advised yes, the works will be done this financial year.	
8	<b>Any Other Business</b> There were no other comments, JP thanked MAO again for the distribution of documents prior to the meeting. He found the meeting productive, and felt it was important to continue to meet  No further comments were received and JP closed the meeting.	
9	<b>Date of next meeting</b> To be advised.	

