

Report delivered by District Councillor Iona Parker at the 17 January 2023 PC meeting

District Councillor Iona Parker reported on the following matters:

a) 2023-24 BDC Budget – BDC is facing a large budget gap because of rising inflation, fuel costs and increased staff salaries which mean that substantial cost savings need to be made. Even with cost savings, BDC reserves will be used to balance the budget over the 4 year ‘medium term financial strategy’ period. BDC needs to balance support for residents, provision of services and investment for the future. Officers have already identified £400,000 of savings/additional income but decisions need to be made on further cost saving measures. These are likely to include: the introduction of a small fee for collecting garden green waste. The proposal is also to return to a full 12 month collection service to start in January 2024: discontinuing the paper copies of the recycling calendar (information still available online): and a 33% reduction in payments to PC’s who enter into a Street Cleaning Agreement. BDC are likely to increase their element of Council Tax but it is still the 4th lowest Council Tax charge in Essex.

b) Government Rural Prosperity Fund – BDC will receive £600,000 to provide grants of £10,000-£50,000 for capital projects. Applications can be made from February 2023.

c) New BDC Planning Forum – This will be introduced shortly and for all applications of more than 10 houses and renewable energy scheme applications, the developer will meet with the Planning Forum (consisting of members of the BDC Planning Committee and PC representative(s)) to discuss the details of their proposals in advance of the application being considered by BDC.

d) Parliamentary Constituency change – The proposal to create a new Halstead and Haverhill Constituency has been dropped.