

<b>Key Decision Required:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>In the Forward Plan:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
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## CABINET

14 JUNE 2013

### REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR INWARD INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

#### **A.6 RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

(Report prepared by Jon Barber and Elizabeth Ridout)

#### **PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To provide an update on the progress made with regard to the Rural Infrastructure (RI) project and recommend the way forward in order to address the key rural infrastructure needs, including the possible causes of flooding, in Tendring.

##### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The Rural Infrastructure project seeks to identify problems associated with living and working in rural communities, the impact they have on the local community, and develop plans to resolve issues.
- Many of the issues are outside the responsibilities of the local authority but, using the Council's position as a community leader, we can influence appropriate agencies to address infrastructure matters impacting our communities, such as domestic flooding, as well as providing more direct support to local residents.
- A cross party workshop of Members has been proposed to contribute to the RI project.
- Where the Council is unable to directly support residents it can develop its support including providing advice and guidance as well as bringing partners together to resolve problems.
- Supported by the responses from a survey, including of Town & Parish Councils, the following key issues have been identified as being of significant importance in Tendring; Fuel poverty; Absence of utilities and Domestic flooding
- This report includes an action plan setting out how both direct support can be offered and where the Council can work with partners in order to support local people. It is clear that the issues affecting the rural community will require considerable commitment to resolve them, however an aspiration of the Council is to enable all households in Tendring the option of connectivity to key services where feasible and reduce the risk of flooding to domestic properties.

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Cabinet:**

- i) **Notes the current position with regard to the Rural Infrastructure Project;**
- ii) **Agrees the 'way forward' as detailed in the Executive Summary and the Action Plan attached as Appendix 4;**
- iii) **Agrees to a cross party Member workshop, chaired by Cabinet Member for**

- Inward Investment and Growth (including representation from rural Town and Parish Councils) to discuss the rural infrastructure issues and consider the Action Plan as a means for providing direction for the project; and**
- iv) **Subject to the above, approves the use of the rural infrastructure fund to support the proposed approach and delegates to the Corporate Director, Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inward Investment and Growth the detailed spending and budget adjustments required as the scheme progresses.**

## **PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION**

### **DELIVERING PRIORITIES**

Work undertaken through the Rural Infrastructure Project will assist the Council in addressing several of its priorities in the Corporate Plan. Dependant on the scope of the RI project agreed it will help to:

- i) Reduce health inequalities and disadvantage by focusing on housing and fuel poverty; and
- ii) Promote sustainable economic growth by attracting investment and improving the match between jobs and employees.
- iii) Protect and enhance our countryside with good inland flood protection.

It will also contribute to the following Corporate Goals:

- Affordable excellence;
- Continue to improve public perception and reputation; and
- Address deprivation.

### **FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK**

#### **Finance and other resources**

As part of the consideration of the outturn for 2011/12, Cabinet approved the allocation of £100,000 to a rural infrastructure fund.

Costs will become clearer as the project is developed and therefore to remain flexible, a delegation to the Corporate Director, Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Inward Investment and Growth to approve expenditure to be met from the allocated budget is included in the recommendations above.

#### **Risk**

The RI project is being closely managed and monitored to ensure that expectations of affected residents and other bodies are realistic and obtainable in order to avoid dissatisfaction with the project. At this stage it is difficult to know how wide a scope the RI project will take.

### **LEGAL**

There are no legal implications.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

**Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward Affected / Consultation / Public Engagement**

**Wards affected**

Those in rural areas.

**PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**CURRENT POSITION**

**Consultation Feedback**

As a result of a survey sent to rural Town and Parish Councils and a public web based survey (promoted through the local media) a number of key issues were highlighted which adversely impact rural communities in particular.

**Parish Councils**

A wide range of responses have been received from Parish Councils across the District. Although the responses are diverse a number of issues are common to several Parishes and these include:

- i) Properties without mains gas, electricity, water/drainage/sewerage (see below table)
- ii) Domestic flooding
- iii) Slow Broadband speed
- iv) Poor transport provision
- v) Poor maintenance of roads and pavements
- vi) Lack of local amenities

Service deficit by parish		Not connected to mains supply of service					
		Gas		Water		Sewerage	
Parish	Dwellings	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Alresford	901		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>Ardleigh*</b>	844	300	35.5%	50	5.9%	100	11.8%
Beaumont	130		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Great Bentley	987		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>Little Bentley</b>	118	118	100.0%	18	15.3%	30	25.4%
Bradfield	461		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>Great Bromley*</b>	408	102	25.0%	20	4.9%	340	83.3%
<b>Little Bromley</b>	100	100	100.0%	15	15.0%	100	100.0%
<b>Little Clacton**</b>	1,368		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>Elmstead*</b>	817	30	3.7%	30	3.7%	30	3.7%
<b>Frating</b>	238	238	100.0%	20	8.4%	20	8.4%

<b>Lawford*</b>	1,898	50	2.6%	5	0.3%	150	7.9%
<b>Manningtree</b>	524	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
<b>Mistley</b>	1,286	50	3.9%	30	2.3%	30	2.3%
<b>Great Oakley</b>	440	440	100.0%	0	0.0%	20	4.5%
<b>Little Oakley</b>	501	75	15.0%		0.0%	5	1.0%
Ramsey Parkeston	1,044		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>St Osyth*</b>	2,603	100	3.8%	5	0.2%	25	1.0%
<b>Tendring</b>	266	266	100.0%	10	3.8%	266	100.0%
<b>Thorpe Le Soken*</b>	876	100	11.4%	10	1.1%	200	22.8%
<b>Thorrington</b>	510	250	49.0%	20	3.9%	20	3.9%
<b>Weeley</b>	847	200	23.6%	20	2.4%	20	2.4%
Wix	328		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Wrabness	250		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
<b>Total (Parishes only)</b>	<b>17,745</b>	<b>2,389</b>	<b>13.5%</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1,326</b>	<b>7.5%</b>

Key:

**Bold** = Return received

\* = Estimate

\*\* = Unable to supply data

### Residents

Responses have also been received from residents and generally fall into the following categories:

- i) Local communication issues
- ii) Poor maintenance of roads and pavements
- iii) Highway concerns

The feedback received has been analysed and forms the basis of the action plan that is attached as Appendix 4.

### Addressing fuel poverty

Fuel poverty occurs when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain satisfactory heating and other energy services. The consequences of fuel poverty include cold, damp homes; reduced quality of life; poor health and debt.

Research into Collective Buying and Oil Buying Schemes is underway and the schemes being developed by some groups of local authorities are also being looked at, with a view to widening the scope of supporting residents with a potential District wide energy purchase scheme. Details of the Collective Buying and Oil Buying schemes are attached as Appendix 1.

A gas supply coverage map for the District and cost data for some locations to be connected is attached as Appendix 3.

### Addressing flooding issues

Although the responses are diverse a number of Parishes raised concerns surrounding localised flooding for a variety of reasons including:

- Inadequate piping of ditches
- Inadequate surface water drainage capacity
- Surface water enters sewerage system causing backflows.

Building on the consultation exercise the following work streams have been undertaken:

- i) Identifying the authorities and bodies responsible for land drainage and what their responsibilities are.
- ii) Identifying, where possible, areas and properties that have been subject to, or are at risk of flooding.
- iii) Producing a flood map illustrating main causes of flooding between July 2008 and May 2012 and mapping these against areas susceptible to surface water flooding. This map is attached as Appendix 2.

## **Climate Change**

If trends in climate change continue as predicted, flood risk is likely to increase significantly and progressively for all areas of the UK over time. The UK climate will become warmer, winters will become wetter and summers may become drier.

- In 2012, the heaviest rainfall in East Anglia was recorded in April with 113mm (4.4 inches) of rain – more than double the usual amount for that month.
- The same issue arose in June with the UK experiencing almost double the usual rainfall for that month.
- More intense rainfall leads to significantly higher risk of flooding from surface run-off resulting from overwhelmed drainage systems.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Essex County Council**

Since the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 came into force, Essex County Council became the lead Flood Authority for this area.

The County Council formed “The Essex Partnership for Flood Management” which was created to bring together all key stakeholders so they may contribute to a strategic overview of matters surrounding flooding in Essex. An elected Member from all of the 12 District Councils sits on this group and they are often supported by key advisors from the authority. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Coast Protection is the Member representative for Tendring District Council.

The Essex County Council Flood and Water Management Team is divided into two functions: Flood Risk Management for surface water flooding; and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

The Flood Risk Management function is concerned with flood investigations, ordinary watercourse regulation and consent, development of flood risk management plans and strategies including funding applications, improvement / alleviation projects and asset management.

The SuDS function focuses on providing pre-application advice on surface water drainage, commenting on planning applications involving SuDS (currently over 1ha) and setting up the future SuDS Approval Body.

### **Highways Authority**

Under the Highways Act, the Highways Authority has a duty to maintain the highway. This includes ensuring that highway drainage systems are clear and that blockages on the highway

are cleared, where reasonably practicable. The Highways Authority for highways in Essex (apart from those managed by the Highways Agency) is the County Council.

### **Local Authorities**

Under The Land Drainage Act 1991, the Council has no responsibilities (except when it is a land owner) for land drainage. The Council, along with other public bodies, only has permissive powers to act in certain circumstances, to mitigate the effects of flooding.

Tendring District Council currently has four pieces of land through which a watercourse passes. As a landowner, the Council undertakes monthly inspections to ensure that the watercourses are functioning correctly. Appropriate works are undertaken when any blockages occur to ensure that the flow is maintained. Vegetation is cut back as necessary.

### **Riparian Owners**

Riparian owners (if you own land or property adjacent to a watercourse) have responsibility:

- To pass on flow without obstruction, pollution or diversion;
- To accept flood flows through their land;
- For maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse, and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise;
- Not to cause any obstructions;
- For keeping the bed and banks clear of any matter that could cause an obstruction;
- For keeping clear any structures that they own such as culverts, trash screen, weirs and mill gates; and
- For protecting their property from seepage through natural or man-made banks.

### **The Environment Agency**

The Environment Agency (EA) is the principal flood defence operating authority and as such has responsibility for main water courses (the sea and rivers). Under the Water Resources Act 1991, the EA has permissive powers for the management of flood risk arising from designated main rivers and the sea. The EA is also responsible for flood forecasting and flood warning dissemination, and for exercising a general supervision over matters relating to flood defence. The EA, through the Regional Flood Defence Committees has various statutory powers including the following:

- To maintain or improve any watercourses which are designed as main rivers;
- To maintain or improve any sea or tidal defences;
- To install and operate flood warning equipment; and
- To control actions by riparian owners and occupiers which might interfere with the free flow of watercourses; and to supervise internal drainage boards.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a means of obtaining financial contributions from developers toward addressing any demands for improved infrastructure arising from development. The government is keen for all local authorities to be operating CIL by 2014. The CIL is charged on the basis of a price per square metre of floorspace of new development. The amount of money the Council can obtain through CIL however has to be based on an understanding of the economics of development (which will vary from area to area) to ensure that the cost of paying CIL does not result in a development being economically unviable for either developer or the landowner involved. In rural areas, the volume of development that would be allowed tends to reflect the size and character of the village to which it relates i.e. the larger the village, the greater the potential for development. In smaller rural villages, where local infrastructure and utility limitations tend to be more common, the scale of development

that would be acceptable is likely to be too small to generate sufficient CIL to make any meaningful contribution toward rectifying any existing substantial or longstanding utility issues.

## BACKGROUND

At the Cabinet meeting on 13 June 2012 the then Leader of the Council introduced the issue of the rural infrastructure.

It was resolved at this meeting (Minute 5, 13.6.12 refers):

‘That the Leader of the Council establish a cross-party working group to work with all of the Town and Parish Councils in the District to investigate the issue of the rural infrastructure of the District.’

This decision led to the formation of the Rural Infrastructure Project (RI project).

At the same Cabinet meeting, as part of its consideration of the outturn for 2011/12 and the allocation of the £693,000 net General Fund variance for the year, Cabinet also decided that (minute 6 refers):

- *£100,000 be set aside to create a rural infrastructure improvement fund.*

This therefore provides the financial basis to develop the project against the broad principles set out in this report. Although subject to further decisions, costs may include communication, publicity, negotiation, organisation and mapping work and, where agreed, some physical works especially if joint contributions are made from partner organisations.

Research has failed to identify examples of other local authorities seeking to tackle rural infrastructure deficits in this way, consequently the Council will be developing an approach in which to identify and facilitate the resolution of issues, many of which may be outside its direct control.

For information there are currently two further projects being separately undertaken by this Council that have a direct impact on the rural community:-

Superfast Broadband - Work to deal with the rollout of Superfast Broadband across the district is being undertaken by the Regeneration section. A report on this was considered by Cabinet on 16 May including an update on Wireless Coast Proposal. Currently 50% of the District has access to Superfast Broadband with a high probability of funding (£6.6m Govt, £6.6m ECC and £13m Private sector) being made available to roll out across remainder of District with completion in 2015.

Emergency Planning - Emergency Planning for whole District is being dealt with by the Facilities Management (FM) section. St Osyth and Brightlingsea Parish Councils are currently working towards a bespoke Emergency Plan with advice from FM. Following completion of these plans, other parish councils will be approached with the intention of completing their plans; there is no timescale for this at present.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION

None

## **APPENDICES**

1. Collective Buying Scheme and Oil Buying Scheme details
2. Map showing flooding incidents (July 2008 – May 2012) against areas susceptible to surface water flooding
3. Gas Connections in Essex
4. Action Plan



### **Collective Buying Schemes**

There are an increasing number of local authorities that are putting in place bulk fuel purchasing schemes for residents who are more worried about their energy bills than ever.

As a trusted neutral party, and through a broker, councils negotiate either individually or collectively with energy companies (called an 'auction') on behalf of residents, harnessing their collective buying power to secure the best deal. Estimates suggest that 70% of those that take part in collective switching will save money, but because there is no obligation, those who sign up can make a decision whether or not to switch once an offer has been made by an energy company. With more people living in fuel poverty, it makes sense for us to look at how we can help people cope with the rising cost of heating and lighting their homes.

Signing up is free and with no obligation – all that is needed is a name, address and contact details and a recent energy bill. After the auction, each resident receives the outcome of the auction and the choice of whether to accept the offer.

The challenge is to get as many people as possible to sign up, which will increase the amount of possible discount. This could be achieved through press releases, information on our website and the involvement of Town and Parish Councils.

In summary:

- Our residents could save up to £200 per year per household, or more;
- There is no charge to residents;
- The broker gets commission from the energy supplier so there is no financial implication to the Council;
- There is no commitment for residents who express an interest, they are informed what level of saving they could secure and then are asked if they wish to proceed.

### **Oil Buying Schemes**

Initial feedback highlighted that within the Tendring District there are 17,000 properties without a mains gas supply that rely on the purchase of oil to provide fuel for heating. As oil is purchased in bulk it can lead to financial difficulties for residents due to fluctuations in price at the time of ordering. Therefore the potential for financially benefitting many residents is clear, by TDC providing support and advice to local communities who wish to establish their own schemes, such as on a Parish basis.

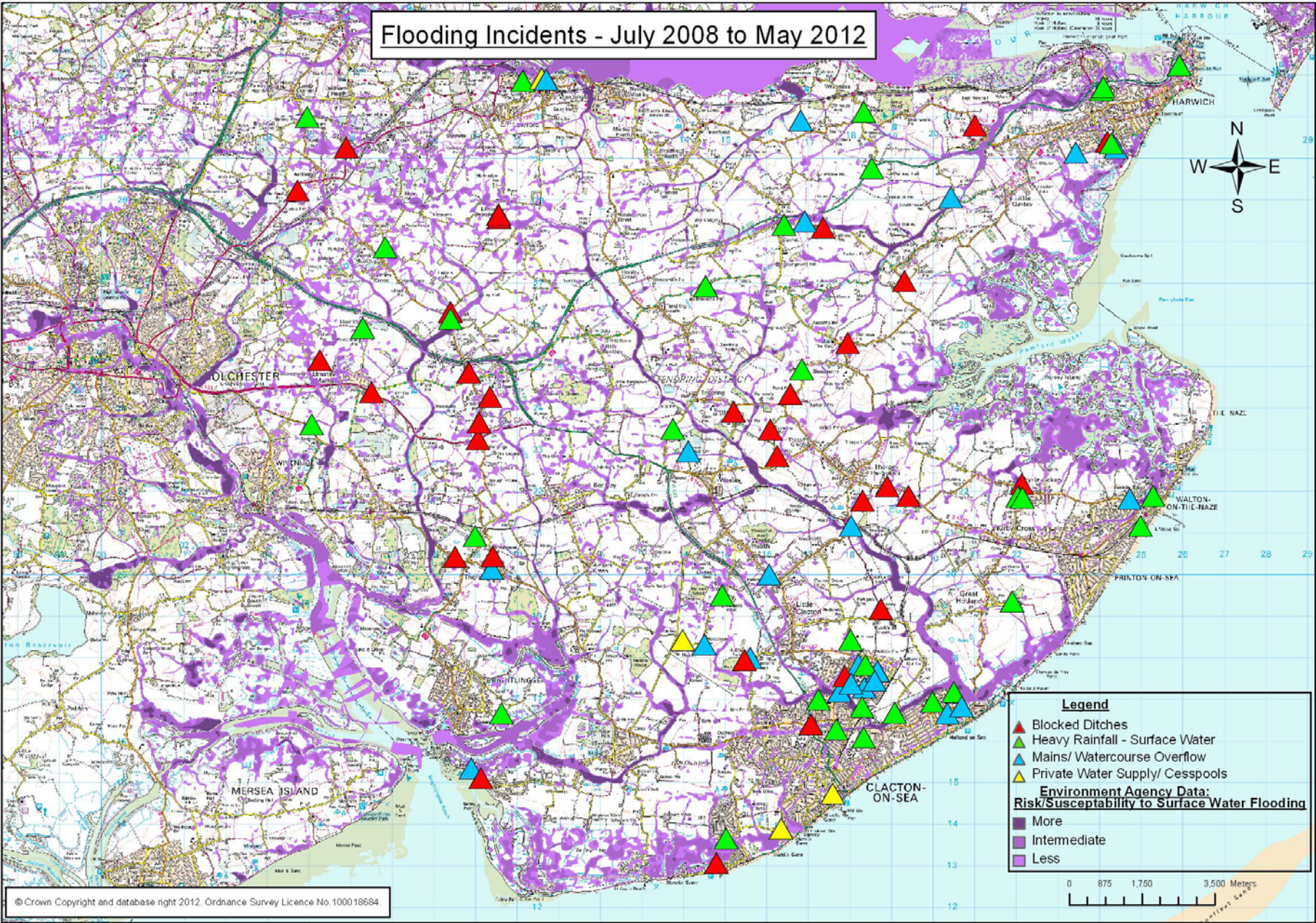
Essentially, residents become members of a community scheme and they can then order as many times as they like during the year with the price being negotiated centrally. Members take delivery of their oil, which takes up to two weeks from the date the negotiator agrees the price and places the order, and members pay the oil company directly.

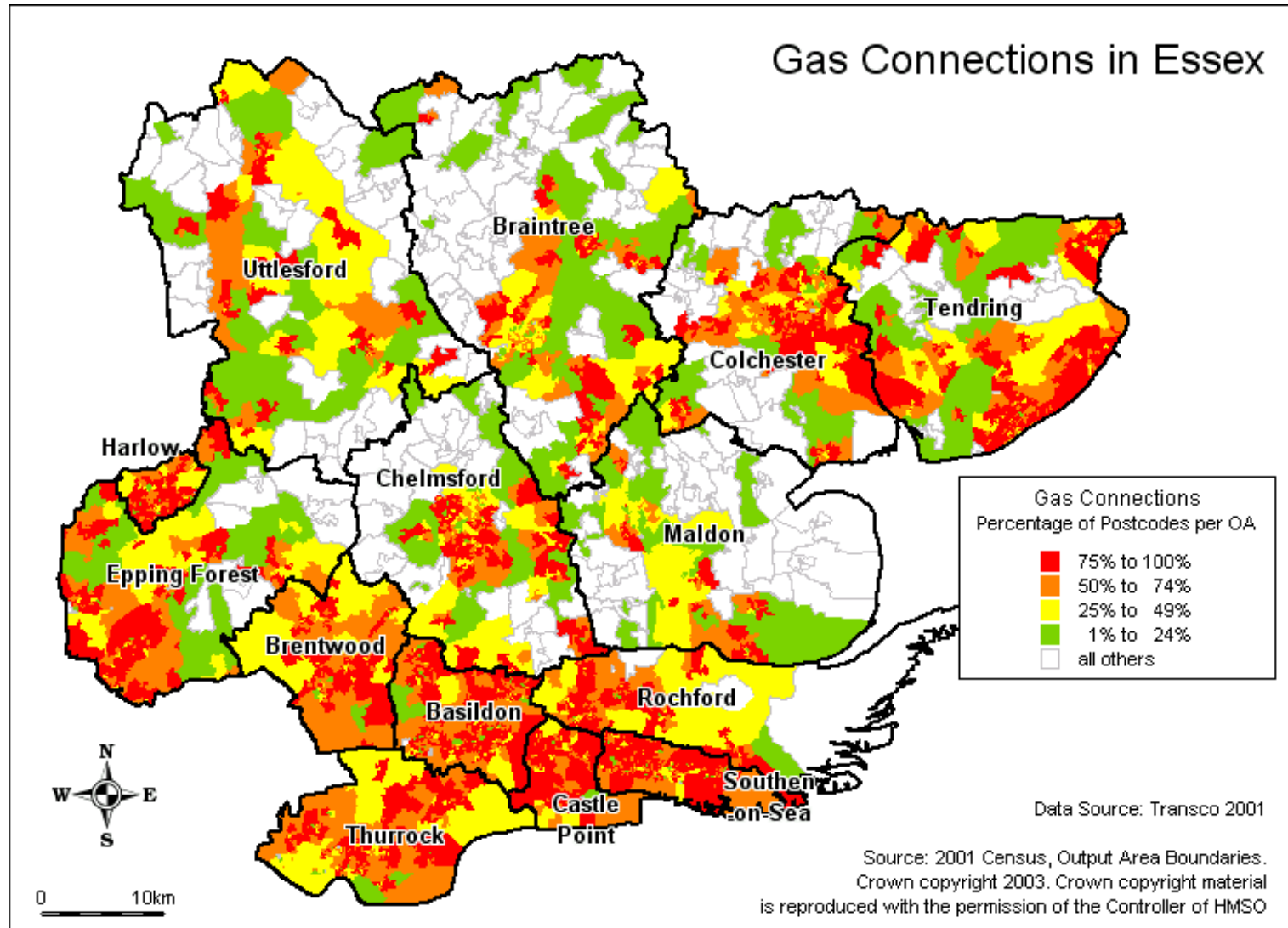
One such scheme already in place is the 'Bromley Buyers Group' ([www.greatbromley.net](http://www.greatbromley.net)).

To indicate the scale of savings available, the following costs are taken from 25 March 2013:

<u>Mean Cost of Oil</u>	<u>£ per litre</u>
Highest	0.95
Mean	0.71
Member	0.60

Using these figures and with an order of 1,000 litres a member of the scheme will save £110 on the mean cost and £350 on the highest cost.





## Rural Infrastructure – Action Plan

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Proposed Actions</u>	<u>Completion target date</u>	<u>TDC Role</u>
<p><b>Fuel poverty:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of a wider fuel purchasing scheme</li> <li>- Properties reliant on oil for heating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review approach and outcome of other local authorities that have established district wide fuel purchasing schemes (oil, gas and electricity) – promote a Collective Buying Scheme via press releases and website.</li> <li>• Supply information and advice to residents and Parish Councils giving information on how to receive the service.</li> <li>• Promote Oil Buying Syndicates to local communities and encourage them to run the scheme by providing information and support, such as development of websites. Provide publicity and monitor uptake.</li> </ul>	June 2013	Influencing others and providing support to residents
<p><b>Flooding:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Due to poor maintenance of drainage ditches and culverts</li> <li>b) Septic tanks overflowing</li> <li>c) Excessive surface water</li> <li>d) Blocked drains</li> <li>e) Existing drains unable to cope with volume of new properties</li> <li>f) Surface water entering foul drainage system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide internet link to the Essex County Council (as the Lead Local Flood Authority) Flood Helpline.</li> <li>• Publicise appropriate contact details for the various bodies responsible for the various types of flooding and signpost residents where to get help.</li> <li>• Provide advice leaflets for Town and Parish Councils, District Councillors and residents.</li> <li>• Liaise with Essex County Council, Environment Agency, Affinity Water, Highways and the</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Influencing others and providing direct help and support to residents

<p>g) Pumping stations too small and sometimes fail</p> <p>h) Ponds filled in</p>	<p>Emergency Services to provide a 'joined up' service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write to Landowners reminding them of their responsibilities under the Land Drainage Act 1991.</li> <li>• Investigate issues of blocked ditches / culverts etc and, working with partners, approach landowners to ensure a resolution is sought.</li> <li>• Seek out a competitively priced supplier of water butts</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Absence of utilities/amenities :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Properties not connected to mains gas</li> <li>- Properties not connected to mains sewerage/drainage</li> <li>- Properties not connected to mains water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Business Cases to connect communities to key utilities</li> <li>• Opportunities to connect rural communities to the gas network; connections to mains sewerage/drainage/water network .</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>June / July 2013</p>	<p>Providing support to residents</p>
<p><b>Recreation Areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No recreation area / playground</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The undertaking of a survey of recreation areas across the District is currently being carried out by the Life Opportunities Department.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Provider / Partner</p>
<p><b>Transport – Roads:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor maintenance</li> <li>- Pot holes</li> <li>- Need resurfacing</li> <li>- Time taken to repair</li> <li>- Lack and poor quality of white lines</li> <li>- Minor roads require more maintenance</li> <li>- Pavements and maintenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply information and advice to residents and Parish Councils.</li> <li>• Arrange site visits with Officers and Parish Councillors.</li> <li>• Provide information on the TDC website.</li> <li>• Report to Tendring Highways Panel.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Providing direct help and support to residents</p>

<p><b>Traffic:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Road Infrastructure</li> <li>- Speed limits require enforcement</li> <li>- Cars parking in narrow roads and on pavements during school pick up times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local communities to improve connectivity in road network – to be discussed by working party.</li> <li>• Supply information regarding the Community Speed Enforcement programme.</li> <li>• Liaise with schools and nurseries to publicise the issues.</li> <li>• Liaise with Parking Enforcement if appropriate.</li> <li>• Supply information and advice to residents and Parish Councils.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Influencing others and providing support to residents</p>
<p><b>Street lighting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited in places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply information and advice to residents and Parish Councils.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Influencing others</p>
<p><b>Communication:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve Parish Council communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Parish Council to improve communication with their residents.</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Influencing others</p>