

# Bouncing back together

Our Plan for the District



October 2021 to March 2023  
Updated October 2022



# Welcome

## Welcome to Braintree District Council's plan for the District up to March 2023

We know this is a really difficult time for many people, with the ongoing impact of the pandemic and now the cost of living crisis and we will continue to develop support for residents and businesses. We will also drive forward levelling up our district by spreading opportunities and improving public services.

As we transition into a time of recovery and negotiate new uncertainties, we are keen to build on the community spirit which shone throughout the pandemic. We want to build on the sense of community we all experienced. We want to encourage more residents to get involved in their communities to strengthen the places we call home. We are committed to listening to what our communities need and we will work to strengthen and support them. Ultimately, we want to bounce back together.

Throughout our plan you will see a number of threads running through the work we want to accomplish and those threads can be distilled into four priorities: sustainable growth and prosperity, strengthening our communities, unlocking more chances for all residents and protecting our environment for future generations.

We will make sure that ours is an inclusive district where people have access to good homes and good jobs. A district where people are supported when they need it the most. Our district is a wonderful place in a well-connected location.

Over the next few years we want to unlock our district's potential further. Opportunities which come from many of our projects for example the creation of our Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park will make a real difference to the life chances of our residents and businesses. This flagship development exemplifies our ambition for sustainable growth and having skilled jobs, businesses and opportunities on our doorstep.

Although town centres are changing, they are still the heart of our communities. We will continue to support the regeneration of our town centres and doing our bit to create a thriving environment for everyone to enjoy. The completion of the Victoria Square development and the pedestrianisation scheme in Braintree is centre to that as is delivering physical improvements to Witham and Halstead town centres.

Like many people and organisations, much of our focus over the coming years will be on tackling climate change. We are committed to doing our bit to reduce our impact on the environment and working with the community to do the same. Our long term aim is a huge one: to become a carbon neutral district.

We will continue to invest in the open spaces we have and improve them. We will provide more inclusive play facilities, keep our outside areas free of litter and involve our communities in schemes such as community tree and bulb planting.

We know we can do much more when we work together with our partner organisations so you will see throughout this plan just some of what we aim to achieve with the support of other agencies such as Community360, Braintree District Community Safety Partnership, Essex County Council and many more.

Overall our aim is to make our district a happy and healthy place to live, work and play. A place where residents and businesses can reap the rewards of our investment, services and support and together we can bounce back stronger, healthier, greener and more prosperous than ever.



**Councillor Graham Butland**  
Leader of Braintree District Council



**Dan Gascoyne**  
Chief Executive



# Connecting People and Places

## Priorities:

- Grow the district in a sustainable way supported by the required services such as health, leisure and community facilities
- Develop our infrastructure leading to improved journeys in and across the district
- Deliver good quality affordable homes for local people
- Create thriving Town Centres for everyone to enjoy
- Improve the districts digital connectivity and harness innovation in technology to meet future digital needs



## We will:

- Adopt the Braintree District Local Plan providing a vision for the future growth of the district
- Rejuvenate Braintree town centre by completing the Victoria Square development providing a Livewell health hub, 35 apartments, a hotel, bus interchange and public open space
- Continue to support the safe return to our town centres and help build back together from the pandemic using the Welcome Back fund and other available funding
- Deliver events in Braintree town centre to increase footfall and support local retailers taking advantage of the newly pedestrianised town centre
- Deliver physical improvements to the town centres of Witham and Halstead
- Enable the delivery of 500 affordable homes across the district from April 2021 until March 2023
- Develop a new Housing Strategy setting out how the Council will support the availability of good quality homes which best meet the needs of the current and future residents



## Working with others we will:

- Continue to work with our partners on planning decisions of strategic infrastructure schemes
- Work with partners including Essex Highways on the delivery of our Cycling Strategy and implementation plan which includes developing integrated, high quality cycle routes that are safe to use and connected across our district
- Introduce the new Digital Demand Responsive Transport service, linking Horizon 120, with a fleets of electric mini-buses, to surrounding areas and central Braintree
- Continue to support and monitor Superfast Essex in the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the district
- Facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham



# Enhancing our environment

## Priorities:

- Ensure our district is clean and well maintained with high quality parks and green spaces
- Encourage others to change their behaviour to protect and enhance the environment
- Minimise pollution by promoting sustainable energy sources, construction and transport
- Ensure Braintree District Council reduces its own environmental impact and be carbon neutral where practical by 2030
- Support residents and businesses to reduce, re-use and recycle



## We will:

- Carry out air quality reviews in known air pollution hot spots across the district to improve the knowledge of local air quality and the proposed actions to take
- Provide replacement litter bins along the A120 and A12 to keep laybys litter free and our district clean and tidy
- Continue to deliver campaigns and work with our communities to:
  - Reduce litter, keeping our district clean and tidy
  - Reduce waste and increase recycling
  - Improve awareness and understanding of climate change
- Carry out drainage works at Braintree cemetery to eliminate flooding and increase burial capacity
- Carry out refurbishments to eight play areas across the district providing improved facilities for young people to enjoy
- Consult with local residents and users of our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham around replacement of facilities
- Create a garden of remembrance at Bocking cemetery providing a peaceful environment for families to visit

## Working with others we will:

- Deliver actions set out in our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to achieve our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district
- Involve residents and communities in tree and bulb planting across the district
- Complete our trial of anti-litter signage and continue to deter people from littering along highway verges
- Consider opportunities to re-wild open spaces and verges in the district





# Supporting our Communities

## Priorities:

- Build on the strengths of our communities and what they can do to support themselves and help each other
- Help people to make positive lifestyle choices, increasing their physical and emotional wellbeing
- Focus on prevention and early intervention so residents can lead independent and active lives
- Provide support and protection to our most vulnerable residents, their families and carers
- Support and inspire young people to raise their aspirations and reach their full potential



## We will:

- Continue to develop support for residents and businesses through the cost of living crisis
- Continue to work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans
- Support and develop volunteering in the district
- Replace the artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club
- Carry out physical improvements to Braintree Sports and Health club and Halstead Leisure Centre
- Set up a young people's panel to encourage more young people to have their say on things that matter to them
- Continue to deliver our LiveWell programme, focussing on:
  - Supporting children and their families to have the best start in life
  - Supporting older people to age well
  - Supporting children and adults to have good mental health
  - Tackling obesity in adults and children
  - Reducing hip fractures in over 65's

## Working with others we will:

- Provide support to children and families who need it during school holiday periods through the provision of activity sessions
- Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district
- Continue to work with Essex County Council on the Governments 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' on initiatives to prevent rough sleepers returning to the streets
- Lead on the co-ordination of the Community Safety Partnership work focusing on protecting the vulnerable, promoting healthy relationships, keeping safe on line, building community resilience and promoting safety in our communities
- Work with the integrated care system and Health and Wellbeing panel to understand local health inequalities and develop the role of Primary Care Networks to support and improve the health of our communities
- Work with our leisure providers to get people back into activity improving their physical and mental health
- Engage with school age children and young adults through careers, jobs and apprenticeship fairs to inspire young people to raise their aspirations
- Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham



# Promoting prosperity

## Priorities:

- Make use of the competitive advantage of our location to attract new business
- Support the growth of key employment sectors
- Enable businesses to thrive with access to business support and key networks
- Ensure skills and training provision is aligned to meet the needs of the local economy now and in the future
- Develop our culture and heritage offer in shaping opportunities for tourism and investment



Credit: The Marshgate Group



## We will:

- Continue with the development of Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park creating up to 2,000 high quality jobs
- Complete the Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre (The Plaza) providing space for conferences and events as well as serviced offices, café and public plaza for startup companies and SMEs
- Develop the Witham Enterprise Centre providing small industrial units for startup companies and SMEs
- Complete the I-Construct innovation centre supporting the development of SMEs in the construction sector
- Refresh our Plan for Growth to identify future priorities and deliver the outcomes of the associated Action Plan
- Deliver campaigns to promote Braintree District as a place to invest in, live in and visit
- Support individuals back into employment by addressing barriers and providing tailored support and access to training



## Working with others we will:

- Rise to the economic challenges by working in partnership with members of the North Essex Economic board to provide support to businesses and create opportunities to boost growth
- Continue to develop the business support offer for the construction sector as part of the I-Construct innovation centre
- Continue to provide signposting to business support, advice and suitable grants
- Ensure residents have access to the skills programmes and education they need to access employment opportunities including in new and expanding sectors



# Delivering and Innovating

## Priorities:

- Listening to our residents and businesses more and using this information to improve our services
- Involving communities in the design, development and delivery of services
- Building strong, effective partnerships across the public, private, voluntary and community sector taking a place based approach to achieve more for the district
- Modernising the way we work to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services
- Considering new ways to generate income achieving financial self-sufficiency



## We will:

- Through our Investment and Development Programme, continue to develop and implement a pipeline of projects focussed on reducing costs, improving efficiency, generating income and becoming more commercially focussed to deliver against the £1.6m financial gap over the next four years
- Refresh our Digital Strategy and action plan to address future demand and improve the way we use technology to deliver services
- Encourage residents to transact with us on line by developing our website to allow customers to make bookings, track requests and sign up to receive council tax bills electronically
- Develop a plan of community engagement to better understand the needs of our local communities
- Use customer information and feedback to improve services whilst working towards retaining the accreditation for customer service excellence
- Review the criteria for the discretionary business rates scheme for charitable and non-profit organisations
- Monitor changes to various legislation to understand the impact on services including but not limited to the Domestic Abuse Act 2020, Environmental Bill 2020 and Planning reforms

## Working with others we will:

- Work with Fusion to recover and develop leisure services following the pandemic ensuring the district has the right type and level of leisure provision to meet resident's needs
- Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex and enhance the value of joint working through the waste management partnership
- Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund and rural prosperity fund projects
- Deliver the Levelling Up rural pilot with Essex County Council



# Measuring success

In addition to the projects and actions described in this plan, we also measure the following performance indicators. The majority of the indicators focus on what the Council is directly delivering, whilst some will focus on broader priorities and how delivery of our actions contribute to the overall picture of what is happening in the district.

## Connecting people and places

- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district
- Number of homes granted outline and full planning permission



## Enhancing our environment

- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household
- The percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter
- The percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported
- Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures (annually reported)

*Further work is currently being undertaken to develop a monitoring plan for the Climate Change Strategy which could identify further performance indicators*

## Supporting our Communities

- Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (calculated in days from point of referral to approval)
- Participation levels across all our sports centres
- Percentage of adults being active for 150 minutes per week
- Number of customers using our Handyman scheme
- Number of homelessness cases prevented

## Promoting prosperity

- Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 - 64)
- Number of new business startups across the district
- Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support

## Delivering and innovation

- Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre
- Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt
- Number of people transacting with us online
- Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims
- Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes
- Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days
- Collection rate for Council Tax
- Collection rate for Business Rates
- Customer satisfaction with the Council (reported at the end of consultation period)



# Comments and feedback

We always welcome comments, suggestions and feedback (critical or otherwise) on our plans and improvements and in the way that we write our documents and communicate them.

- You can go online and make a comment at **[www.braintree.gov.uk/comment](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/comment)**
- You can e-mail our Customer Service Centre at **[csc@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:csc@braintree.gov.uk)**
- You can drop written comments off at our main office - Causeway House, Braintree
- You can telephone our Customer Service Centre on **01376 552525**
- You can speak to your local Councillor who will be able to pass your comments back if you wish. Contact details for your Councillor can be found on our website: **[www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)**