

Fourth Quarter Performance Management Report

1st January 2023 to 31st March 2023

And Annual Performance Management Report

2022/2023



Contents

Section 1: Introduction and Summary	page
• Purpose of the Report	3
• Summary of the Projects	3
• Summary of the Performance Indicators	4
 Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy	 5
Connecting People and Places	5
Enhancing our Environment	7
Supporting our Communities	12
Promoting Prosperity	15
Delivering and Innovating	17
 Section 3: Managing the business	
• Performance Indicators in detail	20
Connecting People and Places	20
Enhancing our Environment	20
Supporting our Communities	20
Promoting Prosperity	21
Delivering and Innovating	21
• Complaints	22
• Our Organisation	23
• Health and Safety	24
• Financial Performance	25
Financial Position Statement	25
Capital Investment	28

Section 1: Introduction and Summary






Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the performance of the Council at the end of the fourth quarter and the end of the financial year in relation to the publication of 'Bouncing Back Together', our plan for the district up to March 2023. This sets out the key activities being implemented to deliver our corporate priorities and summarises the measures in place by aligning key performance indicators to our priorities within the Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and health and safety.






This report does not contain details of the numerous activities ongoing in each service area that also contribute to delivering what is important and will make a difference to all in the District. Full details of all projects and performance indicators used to measure the outcomes are available upon request.

Summary of the Corporate Projects current position for the end of the financial year

The following table provides updates for the end of the financial year in relation to our key activities.




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	9	1	1	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	12	1	0	0	1
Supporting our Communities	13	2	1	0	1
Promoting Prosperity	9	1	0	1	0
Delivering and Innovating	11	3	0	0	0
TOTAL	54	8	2	1	2

KEY:




-  Project completed
-  Project on target
-  Project scope/target date requires attention
-  Project requires amendment
-  Project aborted/closed

Summary of the Key Performance Indicators position for the end of the financial year

The following table shows the performance for the end of the financial year in relation to key performance indicators

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	2	0	0	1
Enhancing our Environment	3	0	1	1
Supporting our Communities	0	0	1	4
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	3
Delivering and Innovating	5	1	0	2
TOTAL	10	1	2	11

KEY:

-  Performance Indicator has achieved target
-  Performance Indicator is up to 5% below target
-  Performance Indicator is 5% or more off target

Summary Position

The Council has performed well during the period of the Bouncing Back Together plan with 54 projects completed and a further eight on track and progressing well. Two projects have an amber status as they have experienced delays or increased costs. Two projects have been cancelled due to the projects not being financially viable at the time.

Targets are not set for all performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic. Targets will be reviewed and re-introduced in 2023/24. For the targets that remain, ten performance indicators have met or exceed target, one performance indicator has missed target by less than 5% and two performance indicators have missed target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to response times to stage one complaints (<5%), recycling rates (>5%) and the average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%).

It has been a challenging year due to the cost-of-living crisis, budget pressures and increasing demand for services. Some of our more ambitious projects will be continuing into next year and as we enter into the last year of our Corporate Strategy, we are committed to providing residents with support when they need it, encouraging and assisting businesses to thrive and working to protect and enhance the areas we live in.



Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES






Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Adopt the Braintree District Local Plan providing a vision for the future growth of the district		
The Council formally adopted Section 2 of the Local Plan at a meeting of Full Council in July 2022. Section 2 contains local policies and allocations to guide development of homes, employment, infrastructure and community facilities in the Braintree district between now and 2033. Section 1 of the Plan, which was adopted in February 2021 and is shared by Tendring District and Colchester Borough Councils, sets the key vision, objectives, and overall strategic direction for growth. Now that Section 2 of the Local Plan has been adopted, it has full weight in determining planning applications.	August 2022	✓
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		
The Victoria Square development is now complete. The £30 million town centre regeneration included a 70-bed Travelodge, 35 new homes, a livewell hub, pharmacy, restaurant, new bus interchange, public toilets, a car park and garden area to complement Braintree's historic Town Hall. A ceremony has been held with partners to mark and celebrate the completion of the build.	August 2022	✓
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		
Braintree District Council were allocated £268,835 of Welcome Back funding and the completed spend amounted to £268,811.50. One of the main projects delivered is in respect of the High Street Improvement Fund. This has been a hugely successful intervention, with positive engagement and feedback from businesses. 37 businesses successfully achieved improvements consisting of labour to improve the aesthetics of the retail/hospitality premises to create a safe and welcoming environment.	March 2022	✓
Deliver events in Braintree town centre to increase footfall and support local retailers taking advantage of the newly pedestrianised town centre		
All events for Braintree town centre have been delivered for 2022/23. Braintree Street Markets will continue into next year and trader numbers at these events have returned to healthy figures pre covid with traders keen to come to Braintree to trade.	March 2023	✓
Deliver physical improvements to the town centres of Witham and Halstead		

The main works were retendered and the Landscape element of the Town Centre improvement works has been provisionally awarded subject to portfolio approval. Civils design on the crossing of Halstead High Street and schemes around realignment of the road network in Witham are progressing well with proposed road layout changes identified.	December 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		
The five-year Healthy Housing Strategy was approved at Cabinet in March 2023. This sets out the key priorities and measures on how the council will work with partners to address housing need and ensure residents in all tenures have access to safe and affordable homes and can thrive within healthy and sustainable communities.	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others








Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue to work with our partners on planning decisions of strategic infrastructure schemes		
<p>In January, National Highways entered the six-month Examination stage during which the Planning Inspector examines the planning documents submitted for the widening of the A12.</p> <p>The A120 Braintree to A12 was identified as a pipeline project and was being progressed by National Highways. The Council is still awaiting official confirmation of the scheme status.</p> <p>National Grid will be submitting an application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate for the Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement which would see the construction of a new, 29 km 400 kV electricity transmission line using a mixture of overhead line and underground cables. The Planning Inspectorate will have until May 2023, to decide whether to accept the application.</p> <p>The examination of the Development Consent Order for Longfields Solar Farm by the Planning Inspectorate is now complete and the Council is awaiting the outcome.</p> <p>The Council will continue to report out on the pre-examination processes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Schemes (NSIP) in and around the district.</p>	March 2023	
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		
The last year has been a series of 'quick wins' which have been achievable with the resources and budget available. Good partnership working with local cycle clubs has been established resulting in successful grant applications being received from three cycle groups. Cycle retailers are now offering discounts to residents. The Council produced a range of cycle maps of the district to promote cycle routes to both families and leisure cyclists. There are 10 routes available both on the Visit Braintree website and in paper format. Work has commenced with Essex County Council to refresh the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) and this area of work will continue into the next Annual Plan.	March 2023	
Introduce the new Digital Demand Responsive Transport service, linking Horizon 120, with a fleet of electric mini-buses, to surrounding areas and central Braintree		
The new digital demand responsive transport Service has been launched and the first live outing was on the 1st April 2022. The service is called DigiGo and is a fully electric shared public transport service which offers on-demand or pre-bookable travel in parts of Essex including linking Horizon 120 to surrounding areas and central Braintree. There are no fixed routes or timetable and is booked	March 2022	

through the 'Travel Essex' journey planning app and operates 7 days a week from 7am until 10pm.		
Continue to support and monitor Superfast Essex in the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the district		
The Braintree district achieved 97.6% of premises able to access superfast broadband in partnership with Digital Essex.	March 2023	✓
Facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham		
All Council actions have been progressed. We are however continuing to await an update from the ICB on their sign off of the final business case and comfort with the projects financial viability.	April 2023	⚠




Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
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		
The results of the air quality monitoring in Halstead have shown that no measures need to be put in place. The information from the monitoring in Halstead will be included in the overall air quality review of the district being carried out by external consultants.	May 2022	✓
The review of air quality in the district has been completed by the Consultants and reviewed by Management Board. The Council is still waiting for the secondary legislation from the Environment Act to confirm new targets. This will help the Council to understand what it needs to measure and will feed into new actions.	December 2022	✓
Provide replacement litter bins along the A120 and A12 to keep laybys litter free and our district clean and tidy		
The Council has installed a total of 57 new brightly coloured litter bins along the strategic network within its district, at various lay-bys located on the A12, A120 and A131. The new bins have been match funded by WRAP, allowing the council to invest a total of £30k to give the locations a brand new look. The Council is	March 2022	✓

also trialling seven customised bins that have a large single opening allowing people to dispose of litter without having to leave their vehicle.		
Continue to deliver campaigns and work with our communities to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce litter, keeping our district clean and tidy • Reduce waste and increase recycling • Improve awareness and understanding of climate change 		
The Love Essex campaign 'It's for driving on, not littering on' highlighting the fixed penalty fines for anyone caught throwing litter from their vehicle came to an end in October. Further littering campaigns will be launched in 2023/24.	March 2023	
The campaign themes to reduce waste in the fourth quarter were to 'make a meal planner' and 'make a shopping list' as well as continuing to encourage residents to take the Love Essex Love Food Pledge. Recycling roadshows took place at Newlands shopping centre and Halstead Weavers Court promoting Easter recycling and a repair café for electrical items. As at the end of the year, Braintree district residents have generated the highest response in Essex residents signing the waste reduction Love Essex Love Food Pledge with 40% of pledges coming from our district.	March 2023	
In the fourth quarter, the Council began to inform residents of the national government single-use plastic ban for takeaway businesses which includes cutlery, plates and cups which comes into force in October 2023. The Council also promoted the Travel Essex survey to better understand public opinion of the bus services in Essex and how they can improve to encourage more people to use buses.	March 2023	
Carry out drainage works at Braintree cemetery to eliminate flooding and increase burial capacity		
This project has been closed following a decision by Cabinet at the Strategy Workshop in October due to the unviable costs of the scheme.	March 2023	
Carry out refurbishments to eight play areas across the district providing improved facilities for young people to enjoy		
Refurbishments to the play areas at Church Street in Bocking, Acorn Avenue in Braintree, Shaw Road in Witham and De Vere Road in Earls Colne are now complete providing improved facilities.	May 2022	
Consult with local residents and users of our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham around replacement of facilities		
Public consultation with local residents and users of the skate parks was completed in November 2022. An executive summary report will be considered in the fourth quarter and the results will help to shape the design of the refurbishments of the skate parks.	June 2022	
Create a garden of remembrance at Bocking cemetery providing a peaceful environment for families to visit		
Construction works to create the garden of remembrance will start in April 2023.	June 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Deliver actions set out in our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to achieve our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district		
The Council is still waiting for updated government guidance in several areas following the Environmental Bill receiving Royal Assent in November 2021. Following Council approval in July regarding monitoring of the Climate Change Action Plan, quarterly updates are now included in this report on the progress	March 2023	

against the themes of the Strategy. A more comprehensive report on achievements throughout 2022/23 will also be presented to Cabinet in July.		
Involve residents and communities in tree and bulb planting across the district		
A high number of applications were received for planting packages. In total, 41,600 bulbs and 4,850 tree whips were handed out to Parish and Town Councils, Schools, Colleges, Charities and local community and voluntary groups. Success stories of planting across the district can be seen on our climate change pages of our website at https://www.braintree.gov.uk/advice-environment/climate-change/6 as well as encouraging everyone who has planted trees to plot their location on the Queens Green Canopy Map.	December 2021	✓
Complete our trial of anti-litter signage and continue to deter people from littering along highway verges		
The trial of the anti-litter signage closed in November 2021 after a year of strategically placing signs along the highway network. During the trial, there was a reduction in the litter discarded along the highway verges and the merits of the signs were clear. The results will be discussed with Essex Highways and discussions will take place to see if the signs are to become a permanent arrangement across the district.	November 2021	✓
Consider Opportunities to re-wild open spaces and verges in the district		
Opportunities to re-wild open spaces have been fully considered with the Council's own Maintenance and Landscapes teams identifying areas for sustainable planting programmed in for the Autumn of 2023 together with three Parish Councils (Rivenhall, Hatfield Peverel and Castle Hedingham). All three Parish Councils have met with the Wildlife Trust and understand what they can achieve in the first year. Communication plans are being produced and volunteer groups have been recruited.	March 2023	✓



CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

Quarter 4 has seen focus on bringing short term projects to completion and reporting on these as well as gathering potential actions and projects for Braintree District Council's Second Climate Action Plan. Extensive partnership development has taken place which will support large- and small-scale projects moving forwards. Three Community Garden projects have successfully gained funding through Braintree District Council and a large focus point for these has been rainwater harvesting.

The Climate Action Plan is classified under seven themes and individualised progress on these themes is outlined below:

Resources

Partnership engagement with farmers in the district is growing. Networking connections were made with local farmers at the North Essex Farm Cluster meeting on 1st March and avenues for development have been discussed with the Comms Team. Confirmation has been received that the subsidised water butt scheme shall run into the year 2023/24 and marketing for this has been scheduled for the next Contact Magazine. A draft approach for Sustainable Procurement within The Council was created which is being developed with Essex County Council who are advanced

in this area and the Shared Procurement Service member authorities. Social media post and e-newsletter have been scheduled to inform public about the anticipated single use plastic ban for takeaway cutlery/plates/cups, by national government - to be introduced in October 2023.

Energy Conservation

The energy tariff for The Council is due for renewal in April 2023 and extensive work has been undertaken to investigate a switch to a green energy tariff. The rise in energy rates has affected this project and the decision for this will be reviewed in the first quarter of next year. Support and advice have been given to parish councils on solar panels. The project team reviewed the first draft of the vehicle replacement program report and provided feedback and amendments required before sign-off. The Treeconomics draft tree survey has created a value data set for the carbon sequestration and value of current tree stock across the district and shall scope future carbon offsetting opportunities.

Built Environment

The planning policy team is working on the draft of the SPD at present and the work and research being undertaken by the ECC's climate change team can provide evidence to support policies in the SPD. Consultation on draft SPDs are expected in 2023. National government consultation has also been released on extending permitted development rights for solar panels on car parks. The checklist was approved by members at their meeting in March and will be introduced following a change to the validation list which will take place after the election. Housing and Communities are in the process of establishing Registered Providers Housing networking event to work with our partners to develop the Braintree District Housing Forum (BDHF). This forum will meet quarterly to work in partnership on the biodiversity and climate change; supporting partners, residents, and local businesses to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030

Transport

All public Council owned car parks now have between 4 and 8 EV charging points and the focus moving forwards shall be on the installation of rapid charging points. Essex County Council have successfully secured bids from bid OZEF & LEVI for developing a programme of installations across the county. Communication channels continue to promote the DigiGo bus service. Braintree district is currently at 97% of premises able to access superfast broadband. The ECC funded LCWIP project for Braintree town has commenced and due for completion summer 2023. The BDC funded LCWIP project for Witham town and environs has started and is due to complete summer 2023. The ECC funded county wide LCWIP is due to commence Spring 2023. Around forty walks have been held on a monthly basis and referrals have been made for residents from several partnership organisations.

Business and the Green Economy

ECC have now agreed that BDC can pilot the green accreditation scheme named "A Great Start" and Braintree District Council have supported them with the milestones and measures that a business may take to achieve a green accreditation award. The fortnightly Green Business newsletter has now become a regular feature and mapping has been undertaken to ensure a wide coverage of advice for businesses wishing to adapt to issues relating to Climate Change. Promotion of a NEAB-funded Carbon Foot-printing and Sustainable Business course continued although uptake was poor. A presentation by the green travel plan team at ECC was given to businesses on Springwood Drive February with a follow up email sent to all businesses, making them fully aware of all the services on offer and encouraging them to get in touch to access support. Networking and links were created with several landowners within the district through the North Essex Farm Cluster and the Water Resource Day in March highlighted issues of Climate Change, land management and food production. The Essex Climate Commission £20k Climate Action fund has been shared with several parties and this funding stream has now closed. An up

to date grants list for Climate Change projects based in community action has been created and shared with several parish councils.

Natural Environment

Essex County Council are the responsible authority for delivering a local nature recovery plan. A local nature partnership has been set up to undertake the work and stakeholders from across Essex are engaged. The strategy has been delayed due to a delay in government guidance but the working group stands ready to produce the plan as quickly as possible. The Parish Councils have now all met with the Wildlife Trust and understand what they can achieve in the first year. Communication plans are being produced and volunteer groups have been recruited for all three Parish Councils. Under the Shared Prosperity Fund Year 1, £15k has been allocated between Bures, Castle Hedingham and Steeple Bumpstead equally for community garden projects. The final £5k of Year 1 funds has been taken forwards into 2023/24 and this money will be offered to community groups alongside further funds. The tree canopy survey which is underway with consultants Treeconomics shall support BDC with identifying opportunities for further tree planting across the district. Consideration shall be taken into place of urban areas and the need for planting trees which are heat and drought tolerant. As part of the North Essex Farm Cluster networking and information day on Water Course Management, links were made with the Environment Agency, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust and both water companies and a series of meetings with potential partners has been arranged throughout April and May. Many more Green Heart Champions have been welcomed to and the number currently stands at 555 which shows an increase of 54 new volunteers this quarter.

Adapting to Climate Change







Ongoing work has been undertaken through Comms Channels to advise residents on winter resilience as well as rainwater harvesting. As part of the emergency planning protocol, climate change related flood risks are identified and managed as far as possible and climate change flood instances are logged and could potentially be mapped in a GIS mapping system. The Council has engaged with parishes on updating their parish emergency plans. Meetings have been scheduled throughout April and May with various partners to support potential projects relating to nature-based flood alleviation, including Essex County Council, the Environment Agency, both water companies and the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust. Data is currently being collated to support updates to the Council's Emergency Plans. The Corporate Risk Register is up to date. BDC continue to be an active member of the Essex Flood Partnership Board which lobbies for funding from government and through Utility Company Funding Grants.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES











Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue to develop support for residents and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis		
Multiple partners forming the Braintree District Cost of Living Partnership Group meet on a regular basis to support residents in a number of areas such as fuel and energy poverty, general financial advice, food and essentials, housing, health and wellbeing and winter resilience. Warm spaces have been actively used throughout the fourth quarter and information for residents and business continues to be updated on our website. The Council is also looking at how data relating to cost of living can be mapped to help identify hot spots and where we need to reach out to people. It has been announced that £1m of New Homes Bonus will be used to support residents of the district through the continued cost of living crisis over the next two years and this will be reflected in the Annual Plan for 2023/24.	March 2023	✓
Continue to work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans		
The Feering Neighbourhood Plan was adopted at Full Council in January bringing the total number of plans adopted to seven. There are a further nine Plans underway in the District for Earls Colne, Gosfield, Steeple Bumpstead, Great Yeldham, Great Bardfield, Stisted and Toppesfield, as well as the joint plan at Bures/Bures St Mary and the Plan for Witham Town. The plan for Hatfield Peverel has just completed a consultation before it is submitted for independent examination and Steeple Bumpstead is currently out to consultation on the proposed plan. This is a continuing area of work for the Planning policy team and they have achieved what they set out to achieve for the period of the Bouncing Back Together document.	March 2023	✓
Support and develop volunteering in the district		
Throughout the year, volunteering has been promoted at events and the community transport service currently has 24 volunteer drivers. At the end of the year a total of 28,991 journeys were provided by the Community Transport team. Volunteering in the community has increased with involvement in warm space activities and Ukrainian coffee mornings. Community 360 with the support of Braintree Village distributed over 700 winter warmth bags to those in need. Community 360 will be providing the support required around recruitment of volunteers moving forward.	March 2023	✓
Replace the artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club		

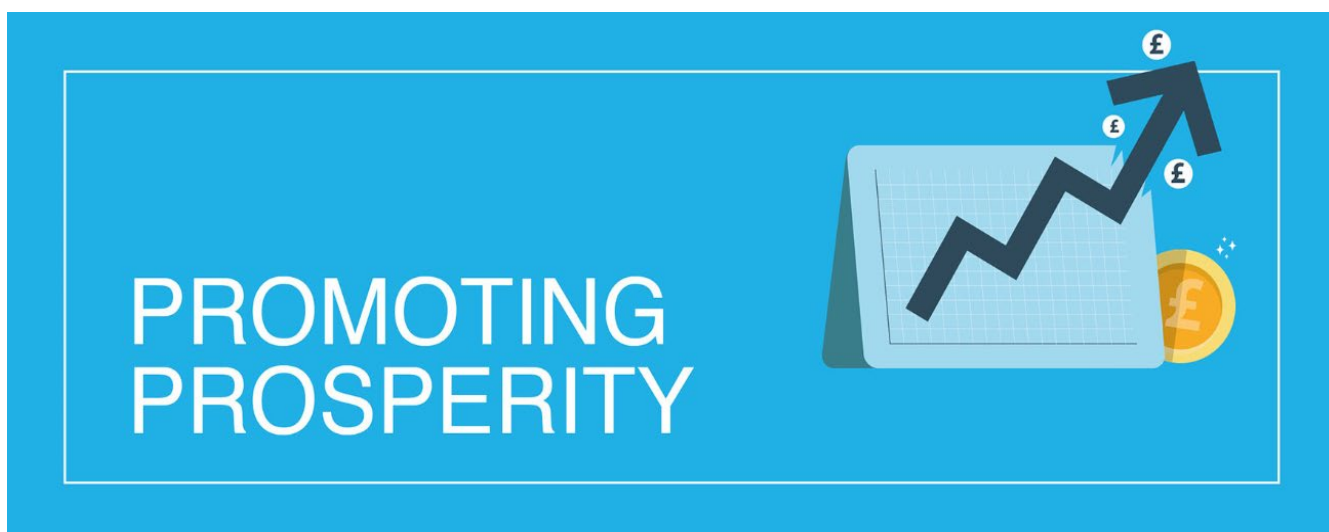
The artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club has now been replaced and is back in use.	October 2022	
Carry out physical improvements to Braintree Sports and Health club and Halstead Leisure Centre		
The improvements to the sports hall and studio floor at Braintree sports and health club have been postponed for future budget consideration. This project has been closed and will be considered as part of the budget preparations for a future year.	March 2023	
The replacement of the boilers and building plant management systems at Braintree sports and health club were completed in February 2022.	March 2022	
The project to refurbish the wet and dry changing rooms at Halstead Leisure Centre is currently on hold as the costs for the project have exceeded the budget. This project will be carried forward into next year.	March 2023	
Set up a young people's panel to encourage more young people to have their say on things that matter to them		
The Council has been looking into using a youth panel to collect young peoples views on climate change, where they live, their community and to give young people an opportunity to get involved on a wide range of topics. Young people will be able to volunteer for projects and provide feedback on the outcomes of the projects as well as joining the youth panel. This area of work is on-going and a revised date will be set in the first quarter of next year.	March 2023	
Continue to deliver our LiveWell programme, focussing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
Throughout the year, there have been a number of activities delivered under the Livewell programme. Children and their families have been supported through the Essex ActivAte programme providing sporting activities through the school holidays. Support for older people ranged from age related fitness classes, seated exercise classes, weight management sessions to organised walks. Supporting children and adults to have good mental health used sport and activity such as Pilates, yoga and meditation whilst other activities around setting up a crisis café and community garden were explored. Tackling obesity saw the Man v Fat Football scheme go from strength to strength with four teams set up and 90% of participants losing weight which totalled over 390kg in the year. Reducing hip fracture activities involved a slipper exchange and 'move it or lose it' low impact exercise classes across the district to improve strength and mobility. The health and wellbeing panel are reviewing the priorities of the health and wellbeing board and a new Livewell Strategy will be published next year.	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Provide support to children and families who need it during school holiday periods through the provision of activity sessions		
In the fourth quarter, six clubs and two dedicated SEND and mental wellbeing hubs were available during the February half term with 121 children attending. Essex ActivAte is the Holiday Activity and Food programme run by Active Essex in partnership with Essex County Council and funded by the Department for Education and has been successfully utilised across the district during the school holiday periods with a high number of users in receipt of free school meals and from low-income families.	March 2023	
Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district		





There have been a number of successful initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness throughout the year such as pop up lounges, community puzzles, coffee mornings, rural tours and warm spaces. The council supported loneliness week in June 2022 and will be looking to carry out further activities in loneliness week in June 2023. Community 360, United in Kind and the Salvation Army have been actively involved in many of the activities over the year. The Braintree District Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum will be meeting in April 2023 to agree activities for 2023/24.	March 2023	
Continue to work with Essex County Council on the Governments 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' on initiatives to prevent rough sleepers returning to the streets		
The Next Steps accommodation programme to provide stable accommodation and tailored support to prevent people returning to rough sleeping and begin to rebuild their lives is now up and running with all six units of accommodation now occupied. Regular meetings with NACRO take place to monitor progress.	March 2023	
Lead on the co-ordination of the Community Safety Partnership work focusing on protecting the vulnerable, promoting healthy relationships, keeping safe online, building community resilience and promoting safety in our communities		
A draft action plan for 2023/24 has been developed and sent to members requesting that they add any projects their organisation is planning on delivering that links to the CSP priorities and to indicate any projects on the plan that they would like to be involved in. The action plan and strategic assessment will be agreed at the CSP meeting in April 2023. Following the launch of the Anti-Social Behaviour Plan by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at the end of March, a consultation will be undertaken regarding the role of CSP's and PFCC's in tackling ASB and the suggested changes to the ASB legislation. This area of work is ongoing and is now included in business-as-usual activities.	March 2023	
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		
The Mid & South Essex Integrated Care System Health Inequalities Fund, managed by the Mid Essex Alliance, has awarded several grants; Funding for Community Transport to support residents to access key services, continuation of the Finding Your Feet walking programme (previously joint funded by the Council and Active Essex) and the Thriving Places Index wider determinants measurement tool. A bid is currently being codesigned with the three mid Essex CVS's to support access to men's Mental Health programmes. The activities for this year are completed however, work to address the health inequalities will continue and will be reported on through the next Annual Plan.	March 2023	
Work with our leisure providers to get people back into activity improving their physical and mental health		
Throughout the year, there have been numerous activities across the district with growing participation as people get back into activity including sports for confidence sessions, rebound sessions, active rewards and cardiac rehab. 'Lets move Essex' was launched in February and provide free in person or virtual classes over a 12 week period for people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions to be active.	March 2023	
Engage with school age children and young adults through careers, jobs and apprenticeship fairs to inspire young people to raise their aspirations		
The Council hosted the jobs fair at The Plaza on the 25 th March 2023 with 22 businesses taking part exhibiting a range of key sectors. The fair attracted over 150 visitors.	March 2023	
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		
Safer Streets is a programme of activities providing targeted intervention in key areas in Witham and aims to improve people's perception of safety. The programme has a primary focus of reducing Violence against Women and Girls,	March 2024	

neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour. A Safer Streets Survey was launched in February to ask residents and visitors of Witham about their views on feelings of crime and safety in the bid areas. A total of 162 responses were received and this has helped to inform a number of proposed activities that will be delivered over the next year. Partners include Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's Office for Essex, Essex Police, Witham Town Council, Neighbourhood Watch, Fusion Lifestyle, CARA (Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse), Eastlight Community Homes, Crimestoppers and Essex County Council. The first activity planned is a 'Dog Day' in April to sign up local residents for Dog Watch, which is an Essex Police led scheme. Dog owners and walkers are usually familiar with the area in which they reside and could have the opportunity to spot anything out of place or suspicious whilst walking their dog, which they are encouraged to report if they are concerned.		
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Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

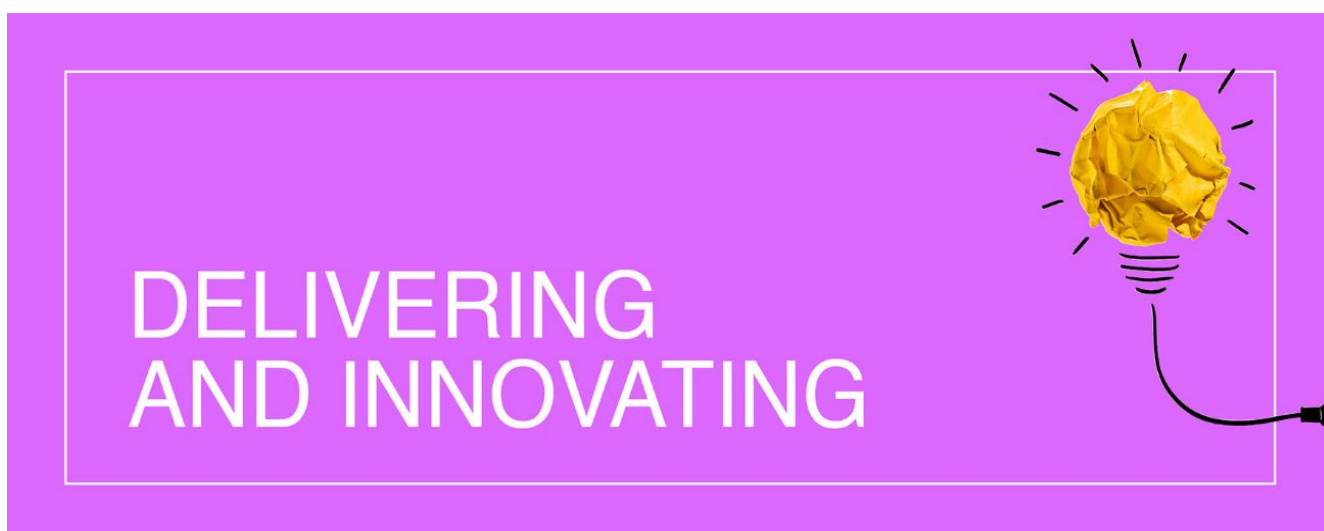
Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue with the development of Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park creating up to 2,000 high quality jobs		
Construction work has finished on three units set for logistics or light industrial use. The buildings will be used for the purposes of logistics and distribution or the manufacture of goods or both. There is an expansive space for a warehouse or factory, offices on the first floor, parking and a secure yard. The new units have been built to a high specification and comply with sustainable environmental standards. The project has been extended to July 2023 as the Council has the potential for improved capital receipt subject to Planning.	July 2023	▶
Complete the Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre (The Plaza) providing space for conferences and events as well as serviced offices, café and public plaza for start-up companies and SMEs		
The Plaza opened in July 2022 providing private offices, a co-working space with desks for individuals as well as businesses, shared meeting rooms, seminar rooms, conference and event spaces and a café area.	July 2022	✓
Develop the Witham Enterprise Centre providing small industrial units for start-up companies and SMEs		
Project review underway to establish the viability of project subsequent to legal advice on previously agreed S106 commitments.	October 2024	●

Complete the I-construct innovation centre supporting the development of SMEs in the construction sector		
I-Construct, a £2.3 million centre of excellence for construction innovation, has opened for business. Building work finished in December, 15 months after it began. The two-storey building consist of a technology suite, exhibition space, conference facilities and informal meeting areas. It is home to a team offering one-to-one mentoring, grant schemes and advice to small and medium sized firms connected to the construction industry. The business support programme at the hub will be run by the Haven Gateway Partnership and will serve businesses across Essex, Kent and East Sussex. The programme will support over 350 businesses and create up to 130 jobs. I-Construct was officially opened by Chairman Councillor Sue Wilson in a ribbon cutting ceremony in February 2022.	December 2021	
Refresh our Plan for Growth to identify future priorities and deliver the outcomes of the associated Action Plan		
The new Economic Growth Strategy 2023 to 2028 and associated action plan were agreed at Cabinet in March 2023. The Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 depicts the links to local, regional and national strategies, the district's economic profile following the newly obtained evidence base, the core vision and key priorities, as well as how the strategy will be funded, delivered, and monitored. It has taken into account the recent Essex Sector Development Strategy and has been developed alongside the NEEB strategy, both of which are in broad alignment with this strategy.	March 2023	
Deliver campaigns to promote Braintree District as a place to invest in, live in and visit		
Over the year, the Council has actively promoted the district as a place to live in, work and visit through our social media channels, at key events and attractions across the district and through the Visit Braintree website. In the fourth quarter, promotional activity focused on the jobs fair, promoting cycling in the district, free business workshops and a fraud clinic provided by Essex Police.	March 2023	
Support individuals back into employment by addressing barriers and providing tailored support and access to training		
Over the last year, the Support and Employment Officer has engaged with 274 people resulting in 239 people accessing training and support. Over 20 individuals have gained employment.	March 2023	


Actions carried out in partnership with others









Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
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		
The ARG programme is being delivered with monthly meetings with all suppliers being held and KPIs reported against and managed by the board. Some of the actions complete at the end of March, whilst additional timelines have been agreed for others to ensure that the fully benefit is realised. Work on the new strategy continues and Councillor and officer workshops took place in February and updates are expected as a result of those workshops. the final report will be reported to the NEEB board after the elections.	March 2023	
Continue to develop the business support offer for the construction sector as part of the I-construct innovation centre		
The I-Construct project has now come to an end. Haven Gateway have requested an extension to stay at the I-Construct building whilst the programme is finalised. They will be producing a summary of the outcomes which will be shared in due course.	March 2023	
Continue to provide signposting to business support, advice and suitable grants		


Throughout the year, the Economic Development Team have continued to signpost businesses to support, advice and information on grants. The Plaza website now includes a dedicated webpage for business support. Following the award of the Rural England Prosperity Funding, projects from this will begin in April 2023.	March 2023	
Ensure residents have access to the skills programmes and education they need to access employment opportunities including in new and expanding sectors		
An options analysis has been completed to determine the direction and form the Braintree Education Skills Board will take for 2023/24. The recommendation is for the Education Skills Board to be part of the Business Breakfasts meetings planned for 2023/24.	March 2023	







Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
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.		
<p>The Investment and Development Programme has been reviewed with a new structure consisting of a single Investment and Capital Programme Officer group serving two boards. The Capital Board and the Investment and Development Board. Notable achievements over the year include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial Gov has undertaken a review with a significant number of opportunities identified. These have been reviewed by officers and members through the above groups and a prioritised shortlist finalised consisting of Fees and charges review and the development of business packages to improve income from our traded services. Commercial Sales Executive support activities have performed well, overachieving against targets. The Plaza is now fully operational with good office lettings and events and hatchery space usage growing. Shared Procurement service is progressing well with five authorities, one further interested authority. The first Strategic Officer Group and Officer 	March 2023	

<p>Operational Group meetings have been held with further meetings planned to agree principles and offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to create common processes, procedures and documentation has begun. • Hybrid mail procurement has been successfully completed with a saving and mobilisation has begun. <p>Activities are ongoing and the Council will continue to report out on areas of work through next years Annual Plan.</p>		
Refresh our Digital Strategy and action plan to address future demand and improve the way we use technology to deliver services		
Cabinet agreed the Digital Strategy 2022-2026 at their meeting in December 2022. The Strategy sets out how future challenges will be met and how technology will be used to deliver better outcomes across the strategy's themes of Council, Customer and Place.	December 2022	
Encourage residents to transact with us online by developing our website to allow customers to make bookings, track requests and sign up to receive council tax bills electronically		
A number of online forms for waste processes have been reviewed and updated following the launch of the new waste management system. Further online processes have been identified to improve the customer transaction process around our street scene services and are currently in development to go live in the next financial year.	March 2023	
Residents are now able to sign up to receive their council tax bills electronically and promotion of this will be ongoing.	March 2022	
Develop a plan of community engagement to better understand the needs of our local communities		
A total of 38 events have been attended throughout the year within the community and feedback has been received from over 1,000 people. Events attended range from specific community catch ups to Ukrainian coffee mornings, recycling events, warm rooms, Wellness cafes, Little Legs festivals, slipper exchanges, roadshows and the Santa Bus. The events provide an opportunity to update people on the cost of living, wellbeing and how the Council can support them as well as to gather feedback on consultations. Community Engagement events have been planned for 2023.	March 2023	
Use customer information and feedback to improve services whilst working towards retaining the accreditation for customer service excellence		
The Customer Service Excellence Assessment took place in September and the Council has been successful in retaining the accreditation for the seventh year in a row.	September 2022	
Review the criteria for the discretionary business rates scheme for charitable and non-profit organisations		
The criteria for the discretionary business rates scheme has been reviewed and no changes to the criteria are being made. The relief scheme has been published and all current recipients of this relief have been contacted and asked to reapply so that entitlement can be reassessed against policy.	March 2023	
Monitor changes to various legislation to understand the impact on services including but not limited to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Environmental Bill 2020 and Planning reforms		
The Specialist Domestic Abuse Officer continues to provide support to colleagues within the Housing Service. Additional training was undertaken in October to provide the Housing Service with the skills required in making enquiries into homelessness where there are issues relating to domestic abuse.	March 2023	
The Council is still waiting for the Government to formally announce the policy changes within the Environment Act. This will enable the Council to understand the impact of the Act in relation to its waste collection service. In the meantime,	March 2023	















the Council have engaged consultants to model options around twin stream collections of dry recycling.		
Throughout the year, the council has monitored and responded to consultations on Biodiversity net gain whilst waiting to hear an update from the Government in regard to the Environment Act. From the various consultations, any changes to planning are being dealt with. This action is dependent on timings of announcements from government and will be a continuous piece of work.	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others







Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
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		
Works to upgrade the gym facilities at all four leisure centres across the district is now complete with new energy efficient equipment, a new layout, new lighting, décor and flooring.	March 2023	
Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex and enhance the value of joint working through the waste management partnership		
The draft Strategy was presented to the Partnership Board in March 2023 where key principles were discussed as well as the public consultation timeline. It was agreed at the Board meeting that over the coming months, officers would continue to work on the draft Strategy and develop the consultation questionnaire in preparation for public consultation in the summer. This project will continue into next year.	March 2023	
Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund and rural prosperity fund projects		
Government has approved the investment plan submitted by the Council for our £1.36million share of the Governments Shared Prosperity Fund to support communities and businesses over the next three years. The Council has signed a grant agreement and the first-year funding is now waiting for the funds to be received before proceeding. A list of projects to utilise the funding has been developed.	March 2025	
Deliver the Levelling Up rural pilot with Essex County Council		
The Council is working with Essex County Council on its own levelling up agenda which includes 20 commitments divided into 4 key areas: economy, environment, health and family. Essex has identified rural Braintree as a pilot area to consider the particular issues which are faced by more rural communities. Essex County Council commissioned consultants to undertake research in the community and the Council has been involved with stakeholders in the design of the consultation programme. A large-scale engagement event will be taking place in June 2023 with the help of community reference groups.	March 2025	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2022/23								
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Target for the end of the year	Status at the end of the year
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES									
Number of affordable homes delivered	90	70	75	53	37		288	250	
Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district	95%	95%	95%	95%	n/a	n/a	95%	n/a	n/a
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	162	583	902	1,607	1,080		1,607	1,080	
Comments The breakdown between full and outline permissions are as follows: Full – 244 Outline – 1,363									
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT									
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.04%	49.34%	46.62%	42.15%	60%		47.54%	60%	
Comments Figures are awaiting validation by Essex County Council. The total tonnage collected in the fourth quarter is 567 tonnes lower than in the previous quarter. However, this includes the months of January and February where garden waste collections are suspended which in part accounts for the reduction in tonnage.									
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	109kgs	107kgs	106kgs	110kgs	117kgs		431kgs	468kgs	
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a	7%	5%	3%	6%		5%	6%	
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (168)	100% (197)	100% (189)	100% (352)	100%		100% (906)	100%	
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						655	n/a	n/a
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES									
Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (calculated in	153 days	151 days	129 days	146 days	90 days		145 days	90 days	

Performance Indicator	2022/23								
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Target for the end of the year	Status at the end of the year
days from point of referral to approval)									
Comments <i>In 22/23 BDC have approved £1,26 Million spend on DFG adaptations with £972K approved for payment post completion of adaptations. This is the highest approval spend in the last 10 years of BDC supporting the DFG. In the fourth quarter, the service received 58 new grant referrals (4 of which were critical) and approved 37 cases (4 of which were critical). Critical cases approved in the quarter were dealt with on average in 22 days, with the quickest of those completed in 13 days. The remaining caseload at the end of the fourth quarter is 99. The Team continues to receive a high number of complex cases some with planning permission required and it remains the case that builder's quotes are taking longer to turn around due to the ongoing difficulties the industry is experiencing with supply of materials. The Christmas shut down in the Building Industry exacerbated this as many builders stopped working for almost 3 weeks in December which increased the length of time for approvals.</i>									
Participation levels across all our sports centres	167,599	179,405	134,465	159,014	n/a	n/a	640,483	n/a	n/a
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						63.1%	n/a	n/a
Comments <i>The figure reports from November 2021 to November 2022 from the active lives survey on Sport England and shows a positive increase in physical activity across the district.</i>									
Number of customers using out Handyman scheme	49	50	58	54	n/a	n/a	211	n/a	n/a
Number of homelessness cases prevented	60	62	61	55	n/a	n/a	238	n/a	n/a
PROMOTING PROSPERITY									
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.5%	2.6%	2.6%	2.6%	n/a	n/a	2.6%	n/a	n/a
Number of new business start-ups across the district	239	234	224	294	n/a	n/a	991	n/a	n/a
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	116	67	297	91	n/a	n/a	571	n/a	n/a
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING									
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre	73%	73%	66%	62%	n/a	n/a	69%	n/a	n/a
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt (cumulative)	97.83%	97.7%	98%	98.4%	97%	✓	98%	97%	✓
Number of people transacting with us online	41,016	30,730	26,109	37,037	n/a	n/a	134,892	n/a	n/a
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	18.3 days	15.23 days	15.83 days	15.79 days	20 days	✓	16.29 days	20 days	✓
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	10.93 days	4.45 days	2.81 days	2.64 days	6 days	✓	5.21 days	6 days	✓

Performance Indicator	2022/23								
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Target for the end of the year	Status at the end of the year
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	95.83%	88.20%	86.73%	88.24%	90%		89.76%	90%	
Comments <i>In the fourth quarter, 105 out of 119 stage one complaints were responded to within timescale. For the year, this represents 447 out of 498 complaints responded to within timescale. Delays to responses occurred mainly in the Operations and Planning Service areas in respect of more complex complaints requiring additional time for investigation and responses. The customer was kept informed at all times during the complaint.</i>									
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.01%	57.4%	84.23%	97.70%	97.40%		97.70%	97.4%	
Collection rate for Business Rates	31.26%	56.9%	82.26%	98.92%	98.60%		98.92%	98.60%	

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the fourth quarter of 2022/23 is detailed below. This is compared with 2021/22 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23	Q3 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	TOTAL
Justified	40 (51)	87 (67)	45 (39)	57 (49)	229 (206)
Not Justified	61 (82)	65 (68)	32 (49)	39 (60)	197 (259)
Partially Justified	27 (26)	15 (46)	28 (7)	29 (18)	99 (97)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (1)	1 (1)
Total	128 (159)	167 (185)	108 (91)	125 (128)	526 (563)

Comments

There has been an increase in the number of complaints this quarter compared to the previous quarter, however, this is lower than the number of complaints received in the first half of the year. Overall, in 2022/23, the number of complaints received has fallen by 6.5%.

The majority of complaints received are in our Operations service area in respect of missed waste collections with access issues, contaminated waste and missed assisted collections continuing to be the main reasons.

Throughout the year, the Council monitors trends in complaints and uses this information to identify any improvements to processes and the service provided with the aim of reducing the number of complaints received.

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the fourth quarter of 2022/23, the LGO received one new complaint in respect of planning and a notification of a complaint to be investigated against planning enforcement.

The ombudsman issued five final decisions all in respect of planning/planning enforcement. For two cases, the investigator found fault in respect of the Councils record keeping for planning

enforcement cases. Apologies were issued to the complainants and the Council will be reviewing its work activity and record keeping processes to avoid delays in the future. The outcome of the review will be reported back to the Ombudsman. For the other three cases, the LGO declined to investigate as they were unlikely to find fault for the following reasons: in the use of officer delegated authority to determine a planning application, due to not having discretion to investigate where the customer has the right of appeal to the Planning Inspector and in the handling of a planning application.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	487	487	494	486	- 8	-
Total staff FTE	440.71	439.23	441.74	437.67	- 4.07	-
Level of employee turnover	2.87%	2.67%	2.02%	3.29%	+ 1.27%	-
Number of leavers	14	13	10	16	+ 6	-
Number of starters	9	13	17	8	- 9	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.61 days	1.37 days	2.61 days	2.30 days	- 0.31 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	79.01%	68.38%	53.85%	47.12%	Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	2400	1,041	1288	1515	+ 227	-
Number of delegates	106	539	605	709	+ 104	-
Number of apprentices **	18	20	20	19	- 1	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	464	466	481	492	499	492

** BDC's apprenticeship programme runs throughout the year. The figures reflect various apprenticeships ranging from level 3 through to a degree level 6

Health & Safety

The following is a selection of our health and safety performance measures. The data is for information purposes only.

Health and safety is a crucial responsibility of everyone within the organisation. This information is used to improve the management of health and safety of staff, our customers, residents and other non-employees we come into contact with. Monitoring is undertaken by the corporate health and safety committee and action plans will be put in place where necessary.

Health & Safety: Indicators of Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	(2021/22 figure in brackets)				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13 (8)	5 (7)	15 (9)	13 (15)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (6)	5 (6)	15 (8)	13 (11)	<i>Injured whilst handling and Verbal/physical made up majority of reports for the quarter</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (4)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	37 (0)	35 (10)	16 (22)	1 (26)	<i>Injury to hand</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	3 (2)	2 (1)	1 (1)	5 (1)	<i>Four verbal incidents and one physical. The physical attack occurred to a waste operative at Cordons Farm as a member of the public became angry and wanted the operative to move.</i>
Number of near miss incidents	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)	0 (2)	
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	1 (1)	0 (3)	0 (3)	
Number of claims settled	4 (1)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (2)	

Financial Performance

This part of the report provides the provisional outturn spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget for the year. Also included is a summary of treasury management activities; movements on the General Fund balance; and a summary of spending on capital projects.

Executive Summary

The financial position for the year is as follows:

- **A positive variance of £728k** after allowing for service carry forwards.
- The provisional outturn is being reviewed to ensure on-going variances have either been reflected in the 2023/24 budget or are taken into account when preparing for the 2024/25 budget and updating of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- The net change in the **General Fund unallocated balance** because of the budget variance is an **increase of £268k**.
- Earmarked reserves identified as no longer required and a planned repayment of a prior year pension fund contribution also added to the level of unallocated balances.
- **Spend on capital projects** for the year totalled **£8.7m** with the majority of the spend incurred on the completion of the Manor Street development and the Horizon 120 enterprise centre ('The Plaza').

Background

Full Council agreed a budget of £13.5m, net of a £2.7m drawdown from the business rate retention reserve to offset a Collection Fund deficit. An adjusted budget figure of £16.2m has therefore been used for the purposes of in-year financial monitoring.

During the year budgets have been updated in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure.

General Fund Revenue Spending

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Variance £'000	Carry forwards £'000	Net General Fund £'000	Previous Quarter Variance £'000	RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,909)	(2,396)	513	0	513	642	R
Community & Leisure	719	677	(42)	0	(42)	(14)	G
Corporate Management Plan	1,635	1,601	(34)	0	(34)	(36)	G
Economic Development	223	216	(7)	0	(7)	0	G
Environment	808	839	31	0	31	31	A
Finance	1,317	306	(1,011)	0	(1,011)	(774)	G
Governance	1,262	1,134	(128)	38	(90)	(103)	G
Housing Services	819	763	(56)	0	(56)	(70)	G
Business Solutions	850	809	(41)	0	(41)	(45)	G
ICT & Facilities	1,855	1,811	(44)	0	(44)	1	G
Marketing & Communications	605	592	(13)	0	(13)	27	G
Operations	6,491	6,352	(139)	15	(124)	(68)	G
Strategic Investment	20	177	157	0	157	173	R
Sustainable Development	1,277	1,396	119	0	119	68	R
Service Total	14,972	14,277	(695)	53	(642)	(168)	G
Corporate Financing	1,572	1,186	(386)	0	(401)	(198)	G
Efficiency	(300)	0	300	0	315	300	
Net Total	16,244	15,463	(781)	53	(728)	(66)	G

RAG Status: G = favourable or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = > 5%

¹See Analysis of the Total Budget Variance below

Business Plan Service	Total Variance £'000	Variance by Category		
		Staffing £'000	Other Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000
Asset Management	513	(26)	210	329
Community & Leisure	(42)	(27)	(39)	24
Corporate Management Plan	(34)	(65)	21	10
Economic Development	(7)	0	(5)	(2)
Environment	31	216	33	(218)
Finance	(1,011)	(122)	67	(956)
Governance	(128)	(51)	(43)	(34)
Housing Services	(56)	(12)	79	(123)
Business Solutions	(41)	(31)	(9)	(1)
ICT & Facilities	(44)	30	(67)	(7)
Marketing & Communications	(13)	4	7	(24)
Operations	(139)	103	472	(714)
Strategic Investment	157	161	(5)	1
Sustainable Development	119	(161)	50	230
Service Total	(695)	19	771	(1,485)
Corporate Financing	(386)	0	44	(430)
Efficiency	300	300	0	0
Net Total	(781)	319	815	(1,915)

Change in Total Variance from Q3

The main changes during the final quarter from the position reported at Q3 relate to the following factors:

- **Council Tax Sharing Agreement (+£222k income)** – An improvement in the Council Tax collection rate achieved by the Council in the last quarter of the year, combined with the overall performance achieved by all Essex billing authorities, resulted in an increase in the percentage gain share received under this agreement (up from 12% to 14%). This was the final year of the current agreement with a revised scheme in place for 2023/24, which has a lower performance element for billing authorities.
- **Treasury Management Income (+£208k)** - Cash balances remained higher than originally forecast during the final quarter allowing for increased short-term investments, with further uplift in returns due to the continued rise in market interest rates.
- **The Plaza Net Operating Cost(+£105k)** – The approved business case for the Plaza provided for net operating costs to be met from balances in its first two years of operation. The overall net operating cost of the Plaza was £219k for the year, which was less than projected at Q3. As it is still early days in the operation of the facility, income and expenditure continues to be closely monitored.

Commentary on Total Variances

Asset Management.

- Loss of rent (£134k) and service charges (£157k) due to areas of Causeway House being vacant, partially offset by savings on operating cost and short-term business rate relief (£28k).
- New Facilities (I-Construct, The Plaza, Victoria Square, and H120 Business Park). The outturn reflects higher operating costs across all the facilities totalling £188k, a significant part of which related to energy costs where facilities were added to existing supply contracts at market level of wholesale prices. There are also unrecovered service charge costs where development is still in progress or land plots remain unsold on H120. As occupation increases the costs to the Council should reduce in future. Rent and other income across the sites is slightly above target (£21k).
- Shortfall on income achieved from other commercial and property rent reviews compared to the target assumed in the budget and rent voids (£95k). Additional resources have now been engaged to catch-up on outstanding rent reviews.

Environment

- Building Control additional agency staff were engaged covering vacant posts where there have been difficulties in recruitment, and this has been combined with high service demand. The additional costs in the service (£228k) are partially offset by increased income (£158k).
- Licensing – there was increased demand from tax operators resulting in additional net income; however, as a regulated activity this income is ringfenced for future service investment and is excluded from the outturn General Fund variance.

Finance

- Staffing related savings from a combination of service efficiencies, vacancies, and appointments at lower scale points and cost recovery through New Burdens funding provided for administering energy rebate schemes and Covid related reliefs (£122k).
- Treasury Management – investment income due to higher interest rates/ cash balances (£1.04m)
- Local tax and housing benefit cost recoveries are lower than budget (£134k).

Governance

- Staff related savings from vacancies (£51k) of which £28k has been approved to be carried forward to fund extra locum support which will be necessary until existing vacancies have been filled. Expenditure on Members' allowances and expenses was lower than budgeted (£44k).

ICT & facilities

- Net underspend on maintenance budgets, system development and training budgets (£72k).

Operations

- Net overspends on staffing costs due to the higher pay award, partially offset by savings from vacancies (£103k).
- Increased vehicle operating costs due to higher diesel costs (£139k); and spot hire and maintenance of an aging fleet (£171k).
- Additional costs incurred on provision of wheelie bins and kitchen caddies for new properties and lifecycle replacements (£30k).
- Increase in income from mixed dry recycling material net of processing and haulage costs (£603k). This is due to a higher average basket price for material for the year at £106 per tonne against a budget of £43 per tonne. Pricing is subject to market fluctuations and more recently prices have been falling.
- Recycling and other sacks contract – increased costs following procurement (£49k).
- Saving achieved on the contract for In-Cab Technology (£38k).
- Higher glass recycling income (£77k) (price/ tonnage) and Bulky Waste collections (£56k)
- Shortfall in car parking income from pay and display which has still not recovered to levels pre-pandemic (£167k). Charges have been reviewed as part of the 2023/24 budget process and changes are being introduced from June 2023.
- Increase in waste management income under the Inter-Authority Agreement from ECC due to higher inflation (£45k).
- Increase in grave digging cost and general maintenance within cemeteries (£29k).

Sustainable Development

- Majority of the staffing underspend due to vacancies within the service including new enforcement roles/ landscape services where there have been difficulties in recruiting. Several posts were held vacant as part of the in-year Recovery Plan to offset the higher April 2022 pay award.
- Overall, planning income was underachieved by £236k. Planning application income was lower than budget by £448k due to a sharp reduction in the number of major applications received in the year. Pre-application income is also lower (£50k) although this is in part considered to be due to applicants being encouraged towards Planning Performance Agreements, where income exceeded budget by £262k for the year. Income budgets will be reviewed and realigned for 2023/24 to reflect the changing pattern of service demand.

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax Sharing Agreement – Additional gain share due to collection of prior year debt; an overall improvement in the Council's in-year collection rate; and in recognition of the overall collection performance across all Essex billing authorities (£397k).

Strategic Investment Team (SIT)

- Total cost £550k of which £277k has been charged to capital works, leaving a revenue cost of £273k partly funded: £20k base budget; and £96k from reserve. This leaves a shortfall of £157k.

Capital Programme

The current Capital Programme totals £19.7m of which £9.7m was profiled into 2022/23, with the remainder profiled into future years.

	Budget Profiled 22/23 £000	Actual Spend £000	In-year Variance £000	Slippage or (-deduction from future budget) £000	Remaining Variance £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	466	378	-88	88	0
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	3,838	3,704	-134	134	0
Manor Street regeneration	1,497	1,355	-142	142	0
I-Construct Innovation Centre	140	56	-84	0	-84
Maltings Lane Community Facility	120	37	-83	43	-40
Town Centre improvements	136	212	76	-76	0
Industrial estate improvements	2	2	0	0	0
Property planned maintenance	288	131	-157	125	-32
Information technology systems & equipment	712	608	-104	104	0
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	441	342	-98	100	2
Cemetery improvements	1	1	0	0	0
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	6	7	1	-1	0
Operational equipment	138	83	-55	49	-6
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	315	222	-93	52	-41
Climate change initiatives	47	0	-47	47	0
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,012	1,118	106	-106	0
Capital salaries	497	477	-20	20	0
Total	9,654	8,734	-920	721	-199

Changes to Capital Programme

- The overall programme and profiled spend in 2022/23 increased by £227k during the final quarter, mainly due to several S106 funded project approvals (£119k) plus capital approvals to be funded from the plant replacement reserve (£47k) and revenue (£61K).

Year End Position

- Actual capital spend for the year was £8.7m against a profiled budget of £9.6m, resulting in an in-year variance of £920k.
- Slippage of project budgets into 2023/24 totalled a net £721k, leaving a net variance of £199k on projects which had either completed or where services had confirmed that funding is no longer required or could be reduced.

Capital Receipts & Other Resources generated in the year

- Capital receipts from the sale of serviced land plots at Horizon 120 (£3.8m)
- Final interim payments (£363k) from Eastlight in respect of the residential units at Victoria Square.
- Receipts from Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – ten sales were completed generating £1.6m for the Council. (In 2021/22 19 sales were completed generating £2.7m); and VAT shelter £314k.

- Better Care Funding was received of £1.1m which is used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Changing Places Fund of £120k to fund new disabled changing places toilets within Halstead Leisure Centre and Witham Town Council.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

The Council's treasury management activity to the end of the financial year is summarised in the table below:

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity for the year		Amount Invested at end of the year
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£56.8m	£144.4m	£153.5m	£47.7m
Average amount invested for the year			£64.2m
Highest amount invested in the year			£72.1m

Investments totalling £19m were maintained across a range of long-term pooled funds with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets. The remaining balance of investments have been held in short-term investments comprising money market funds; Debt Management Office Account (UK Government); bank deposits; and liquid cash held in a current account with Lloyds Bank.

Investment income and valuations

The table below sets out the amount of interest and dividends earned in the year and the rate of return:

Investments	Average Amount Invested	Interest & Dividends Earned	Annualised Return %
Long-Term Pooled Funds	£19.0m	£919k	4.84%
Short-Term	£45.2m	£907k	2.01%
Total	£64.2m	£1,826k	2.84%

The market value of shares and units in Pooled Funds at the end of the year was £20.7m, representing an unrealised gain of £1.7m over the amount originally invested.

Investment portfolio

At the end of the year the Council's investment portfolio comprised the following:

- Long-term pooled fund investments £19m (allocated: £3m property fund; £13m across four equity funds; and £3m in two diversified asset funds)
- Low volatility Money Market Funds (MMFs) (4 x £5m) £20m
- Variable net asset value MMF £4m
- Short Term Fixed Deposits (£3m) £3m
- Lloyds current account £1.7m

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

- As a contingency against unforeseen events
- To meet short-term or non-recurrent one-off costs that are not provided in the base budget and/ or are incurred to achieve future savings and efficiencies.

Based on the projected outturn set out above, the estimated movements on the General Fund balances are:

Balance at 1 April 2022	£'000
	6,056
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(89)
Funding for one-off investment	(371)
Outturn variance	728
Sub-total Net Budget Variance	268
Repayment of Pension Fund contribution	823
Transfer from Covid reserve & other earmarked reserves	946
Balance at 31 March 2023	8,093

Movements shown on the General Fund balance are in respect of:

- The approved budget included an anticipated reduction in balances totalling £460k. One-off investment included £310k for the initial net operating costs of the Plaza, and £61k for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.
- A one-off payment was made in 2020/21 to the Essex Pension Fund covering the period April 2020 to March 2023, which was part funded from General Fund balances. A planned repayment into balances is being made in 2022/23.
- As part of the 2023/24 budget process, it was agreed to transfer back the balance of Covid funds (£923k) previously set aside from the General Fund balance. A review of carry forwards was also undertaken which identified £23k that was no longer required for the purpose it was set aside for.