



Annual Plan 2024/25



Foreword

Braintree is truly a fantastic district. It is a privilege to serve our residents and businesses and we are committed to deliver on our vision to create a district of equal opportunity for all our communities.

This plan aligns to the council's priorities as part of our Corporate Strategy 2024-2028, setting out key activities to deliver in 2024/25.

We are entering into a year against a backdrop of the toughest financial climate that local government has ever faced, with unprecedented cost pressures from inflation, increased demand and the need to confront difficult decisions. It is also a time for ambitious and steadfast determination to deliver the very best services for the people of the Braintree district.

With supporting residents who need us most at an all-time high, over the next year we want to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis by providing targeted assistance to residents so they can easily access food and essential goods and enhancing health and wellbeing support for young people.

Despite these challenges, we will invest more money in improving our services – providing funding to improve assets in Halstead, progress the Witham Community Centre, upgrade our play areas and skateparks and delivering a new community garden to support people with multiple and complex needs.

Housing remains one of the most complex challenges local authorities deal with, but we will work with partners to increase the availability of affordable homes, as well as more community involvement in local planning policies to guide sustainable development across the district.

We will forge ahead on developing our business support services alongside partners to support economic growth including green and sustainable solutions.

The impact of climate change on our environment becomes ever more evident. Having declared a climate emergency, we'll continue to deliver initiatives to help residents reduce their carbon emissions, do more for nature and make ourselves and our buildings more carbon neutral too.

To be a council which is as ready as it can be to meet the challenges ahead, we are committed to our 'Fit for the Future' transformation programme to look at our services and ensure we are working with people, partners, and places in the most efficient, effective, and modern way to support our roadmap to financial resilience. It's not about doing less, but about doing things differently and better, both for now and for the long-term.

We have seen the benefits of the council working alongside partners, agencies, voluntary groups, businesses, faith groups, individuals and communities to do the very best that we can together for all those who live and work here, and this will continue to underpin our activity for the coming year to help our communities thrive and our people prosper.

We have faced significant challenges in the past, and we will face them in the coming year. Whether that is looking after our health and wellbeing, strengthening our local economy or protecting and enhancing our environment, our focus overall remains to deliver value for money, putting Braintree district residents at the heart of all that we do and sowing the seeds of future growth for a better, greener, and healthier district.



Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of
Braintree District Council



Dan Gascoyne
Chief Executive



Communities

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our **communities can thrive**, our people prosper and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY 1

Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduce health inequalities, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Title: Working with the Mid Essex Alliance, develop a programme of local activities targeted towards addressing the priorities outlined in the Thriving Places Index.

Outcome: Future projects and programmes informed to drive better wellbeing and equality.

Neighbourhood Teams are shaped and influenced using evidence from the Thriving Places Index.

End date: March 2025

Title: Continue to support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through initiatives raised by the £1m New Homes Bonus.

Outcome: Targeted assistance provided, enabling residents to easily access food and essential goods.

Additional support reaching those most in need to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. Young people can access physical and emotional health and wellbeing support.

End date: March 2025

Title: Subject to a successful bid for funding from the Football Foundation, build the new 3G Pitch at Witham Sports Ground.

Outcome: Optimal use of space transformed into a high-quality, low maintenance all-weather surface pitch ideal for playing a diverse range of sports all year round.

End date: March 2025

Title: In partnership with Healthwatch Essex, host a Fellas Fair event in the district.

Outcome: Raise awareness of men's health and wellbeing and provide relevant information on the specific needs and challenges faced by men from all walks of life.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 2

Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents.

Title: Deliver the Home Upgrade grant phase 2 for people living in cold homes or struggling with winter fuel bills.

Outcome: Grants are made accessible to a wide range of eligible households supporting those who are most in need of energy saving upgrades, enabling less energy usage, a reduction in carbon footprint and lower energy bills.

End date: March 2025

Title: Introduce a landlord incentive scheme

Outcome: Support and incentives provided to landlords who can offer affordable rented accommodation for local people in need of a home.

Support provided to tenants to help them to maintain their tenancy.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 3

Reduce social isolation and loneliness and support communities to build positive social networks and connections.

Title: Launch round 2 of the Halstead Community Fund.

Outcome: Development and improvement of assets that positively impact local communities in Halstead.

End date: December 2024

Title: Continue to work with partners to deliver various activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

Outcome: Providing opportunities for individuals to connect with each other.

Implementation of targeted interventions to address loneliness and social isolation.

End date: March 2025

Title: Award contract and start to build Witham Community Centre.

Outcome: Contract awarded for the design and build of the community centre and timeline for completion established.

End date: March 2025

Title: Provide a Community Garden through funding from the Changing Futures Programme.

Outcome: Increased opportunities for community engagement and social connections while offering therapeutic gardening activities to support people with multiple and complex needs.

End date: March 2025

Title: Support and expand community-led walking activities to 10 in the district.

Outcome: Reduce social isolation and encourage people of all ages including those with health and mobility problems and those recovering from illness to walk for their health and enhance their wellbeing.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY 4

Develop safer and more resilient communities, empowering residents to take ownership of local projects and initiatives.

Title: Through the safer streets funding, prevent violence against women and girls in public, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour in Halstead.

Outcome: Deliver practical support and change for women and girls across communities within Halstead.

Investment in transformative crime prevention initiatives.

Change in attitude and behaviours, lowering crime rates.

End date: September 2025

Title: Continue to administer the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.

Outcome: Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.

End date: March 2025

Title: Oversee the coordination of the Community Action Safety Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime.

Outcome: Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.

End date: March 2025

Title: Continue to support local investment in communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 3).

Outcome: Funding provided for community activities and initiatives to support a wide range of interventions building pride in place and improving life chances.

End date: March 2025



Prosperity

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, **our people prosper** and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure.

Title: Deliver physical improvements to Halstead and Witham Town Centres.

Outcome: Providing enhanced urban environments with diverse community appeal through improved signage, wayfinding, and street furniture.

End date: July 2024

Title: Work with communities to implement Neighbourhood Plans in Steeple Bumpstead, Hatfield Peverel and Earls Colne.

Outcome: Enabling communities to play a role in shaping their areas.

Neighbourhood Plans used in the determination of planning applications.

End date: March 2025

Title: Revise the Local Plan in line with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Outcome: To set a refreshed framework for sustainable development across the district until 2041.

End date: June 2025

Title: Develop an affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing the context of when and how affordable housing can be delivered across the district.

End date: December 2024

Title: Develop a design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance to ensure the future development of the district is of the highest design standards.

End date: June 2025

PRIORITY

2

Attract and support business growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries.

Title: Develop the Councils inward investment activity in association with the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB).

Outcome: Attract new businesses and grow existing businesses.

Bring new and better jobs into the district.

End date: March 2025

Title: Create an additional meeting area and multi-media space at the Plaza

Outcome: Increased capacity at The Plaza to support businesses.

End date: September 2024

Title: Provide planning permission for the remaining plots at Horizon 120

Outcome: Land available for sale for potential development opportunities.

End date: October 2024

Title: Confirm the viability of the Council delivering the enterprise site at Witham

Outcome: Decision reached regarding the Council delivering the project

End date: December 2024

PRIORITY

3

Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate.

Title: In association with the North Essex Economic Board, provide business support services focused on enhancing digital skills, financial management and business growth.

Outcome: Businesses are supported to grow and innovate.

End date: March 2025

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Green Business Expo.

Outcome: Showcasing green solutions to boost business growth and become carbon neutral.

Funding accessed to implement green initiatives.

End date: June 2024

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Digital Business Expo.

Outcome: Showcasing digital solutions to boost business growth and improve efficiencies.

Funding accessed to implement digital initiatives.

End date: October 2024

PRIORITY

4

Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic wellbeing.

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a green skills programme.

Outcome: Supporting people to gain qualifications and employment in green skills that are needed in new and existing sectors.

End date: March 2025

Title: Organise and deliver a jobs fair in the district.

Outcome: People are connected to prospective employers to explore new career opportunities.

End date: October 2024



Environment

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, our people prosper and **our environment is cherished** for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Protect and enhance our built and natural environments across the district, providing good access to open spaces and increasing biodiversity.

Title: Enhance the play areas at Meadowside in Braintree and Oxford Meadow in Sible Hedingham.

Outcome: Play areas fully refurbished incorporating inclusive play equipment that improves play value for individuals of all ages.

End date: March 2025

Title: Develop a renewable energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Detailed guidance on the range of renewable technologies accepted by the Council including how to calculate the renewable energy requirement for future developments.

End date: December 2024

Title: Upgrade the skateparks at Spa Road in Witham and Weavers Park in Braintree.

Outcome: Skateparks fully refurbished providing a safe space for skateboarders and others to ride.

End date: October 2024

Title: Revise the Councils Tree Strategy.

Outcome: Manage and maintain the Councils own tree stock.

Secure new landscaping through the planning process.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

2

Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Title: Develop a local Air Quality Strategy.

Outcome: Compliance with the latest air quality standards and regulations. The strategy will contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

End date: March 2025

Title: Procure 14 Electric Light Commercial Vehicles (LCV's).

Outcome: Decarbonisation of the Councils fleet in line with the Councils commitment to climate change.

Improved air quality across the district.

End date: September 2024

Title: Install solar panels at Witham Leisure Centre.

Outcome: Reduction in carbon footprint. Longer term savings on energy costs.

End date: March 2025

Title: Take an active part in establishing a Climate and Environment Partnership and work programme across the North Essex Councils.

Outcome: Commitment to work together.

Increased resilience to work on the main climate change challenges affecting North Essex Councils.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

3

Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts.

Title: Allocate funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support at least ten Community Infrastructure initiatives in relation to decarbonisation.

Outcome: Community infrastructure projects deliver a 5% reduction in carbon emissions contributing to a reduction in the districts overall carbon emissions.

End date: April 2025

Title: Deliver a campaign to encourage motorists around schools to switch off their engines when stationary outside schools.

Outcome: Motorists are more aware of the impact of vehicle idling.

Reduction in air pollution and carbon emissions.

End date: March 2025

PRIORITY

4

Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more.

Title: Collaborate with other Essex Authorities to establish and adopt a new Waste Strategy for Essex.

Outcome: Tackling key challenges and promoting a sustainable and environmentally friendly future for the region.

End date: July 2024

Title: Work with other authorities, including Essex County Council, to develop and deliver waste minimisation and recycling initiatives that deliver the on the requirements of Waste Reforms and Essex Waste Strategy.

Outcome: Influence and change attitudes and behaviours to reduce waste, reuse and recycle.

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop a waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance on the storage and management of recyclables and waste and the implementation of high-quality on-site waste management systems.

End date: December 2024

Title: Deliver a behaviour change campaign to increase recycling, reduce waste and encourage re-use.

Outcome: Residents and businesses reduce the waste they produce, reuse items and recycle more.

End date: March 2025



Fit for the Future

Priorities:

- Using the opportunities that new technology offers us to improve services, remove demand and reduce costs.
- Working more closely with our partner organisations in Essex and beyond to share resources, assets and information to deliver better outcomes for our residents and businesses.
- Becoming an organisation that can flex and be responsive to changes as the volatility in our world continues.
- Finding new ways of delivering which allows us to meet the needs of our residents and businesses while continuing to be financially resilient as demand increases due to demographical and other changes.
- Understanding and putting plans into place for the skills our workforce will need in the future.
- Making sure that we continue to be an employer of choice, offering fulfilling and rewarding careers for our people.

Actions that will be undertaken in year:

- Mobilisation of programme team and development of programme planning.
- Development of stretching but achievable cashable savings to be added to the MTFS showing the flight path to financial resilience.
- Agree approach and timetabling of reviews of current services and functions to optimise service delivery and use of resources.
- Development of business cases for options for a shared back office with Colchester City Council and Epping Forest District Council.
- Scope and agree parameters for Organisational Design workstream.
- Evaluate the level of maturity and effectiveness of the Councils data management practices to identify areas for improvement and enhance our data-driven decision-making capabilities.

- Carry out workforce planning to assess gaps and interventions required to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, at the right time to fulfil our strategic objectives.
- Develop a comprehensive Asset Management Strategy that focuses on maximising the value of property and realising the highest return on investment.
- Refresh Causeway House into a modern workspace that promotes agile and flexible working, enhances collaboration and creates opportunities for generating income.
- Consider ongoing operational asset requirements and opportunities to share assets with partners to improve efficiencies, service delivery and service user experience.



Corporate Peer Challenge

Following on from the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in October 2023, an action plan was agreed at Cabinet in March 2024. The following themes will be addressed throughout 2024/25 and reported on more widely in the quarterly reports.

Action: Clearly develop and communicate the Councils vision supported by clear internal and external-facing leadership.

Outcome: Successful campaign delivered to promote the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 and actions being taken to deliver them.

Vision embedded with staff, residents, communities and businesses.

Action: Maximise the council's leading role as a valued local and regional public sector strategic partner with others.

Outcome: Key player in regional planning network meetings.

Help shape the integrated care approach to health and wellbeing.

Lead the North Essex Economic Board to drive forward economic growth.

District Strategic Assessment undertaken to help shape the Community Safety Partnership Action/Delivery plan.

Influence the Community and Voluntary sector commissioning process through active collaboration.

Impact on the communities close to the Large Site Asylum Centre at Wethersfield offset.

Through the Essex Resilience Forum, effectively respond to issued which impact the district.

Action: Establish the new 'corporate priorities' with an ambitious delivery plan with a golden thread through Medium Term Financial Strategy, strategies, processes and prioritisation. Support this by an evidence-based performance management programme.

Outcome: New Annual Plan themes embedded across the organisation.

Performance Management Framework developed and improved performance management process implemented.

Corporate priorities embedded into organisational templates.

Action: Encourage innovation within the context of a mature approach to risk management.

Outcome: Risk appetite aligned with Corporate Strategy ambitions.

Risk Management training delivered to members and key officers.

Innovation built into service design.

Action: Develop a well-resourced and SMARTer Transformation programme that clearly identifies the roles of senior leaders to deliver corporate priorities and seeks to innovate and balance the budget, supported by an effective change management strategy.

Outcome: Governance and reporting structures agreed.

Fit for the Future Team developed.

Scope and approach to transformation programme agreed.

Members fully understand and support the approach to transformation.

Approach and timetable for service reviews and organisation design work agreed.

Financial targets developed.

Action: Create a workforce and organisational development strategy that tackles issues around capacity, skills gaps, succession planning, health and wellbeing and retention.

Outcome: Values and Behaviours reviewed and embedded in the organisation.

Organisational strategy developed.

Approach to workforce planning agreed.

Review of organisational design agreed.

Wellbeing day held for staff.

Recruitment and retention package improved.

Onboarding process improved.

Action: Maximise the use of council assets to be clear on their purpose – regeneration, social or commercial to maximise income through capital investments.

Outcome: Property and Asset Strategy Group established.

Asset Management Strategy and Action Plan developed.

Review of Operational Asset requirements completed.

Measuring success

KPI	Target
Number of affordable homes delivered	250
Participation levels across our sport centres	784,458
Number of homelessness cases prevented	Data only
Percentage of major planning applications decided on time	60%
Percentage of minor planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of other planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of planning applications overturned on appeal	10%
Number of new startup businesses	Data only
Number of businesses accessing business support	Data only
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	50%
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	400 kgs
Percentage of recycling contamination	15%
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100%
Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescale	80%
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre	65%
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	98.5%
Number of people transacting with the Council online	Data only
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	16 days
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	3 days
Percentage of stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale	90%
Collection for Council Tax	97.5%
Collection for Business Rates	98%

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
- You can e-mail our Customer Service Centre at 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

