



Approved

Our plans for the District in 2011 / 2012

Our vision

Improve the well-being of people and communities in the Braintree District now and for future generations – ensuring that local needs are met, that development is sustainable and accessible and that our historic towns, villages and attractive countryside are maintained, improved and protected

Our Priorities

- **The environment is clean and green**
- **Business is encouraged and the local economy prospers**
- **Everyone can enjoy a healthy lifestyle**
- **Housing and transport meet local needs**
- **People take pride in their local areas**
- **We deliver excellent, cost effective and valued services**

Welcome to Braintree District Council's Plan for 2011/12

In 2008 we published our Corporate Strategy, which set out our corporate priorities until 2012 and as we enter our final year, we can be proud of what we have achieved.

Braintree District Council has met immediate funding challenges by achieving a financial plan that secures nearly £5 million of savings over the next four years without major impact upon front-line services. In driving down costs we have been able to freeze council tax for the next two years and freeze prices on all Council run car parks helping the residents, shoppers and visitors to the District. Even during the financially challenging period we will continue to invest in our key priorities.

The local economy is a particularly important focus over the next few years. We need to create strong and vibrant town centres and villages, making sure that as the District emerges from a tough recession our town centres are in a strong position to thrive, providing more jobs and economic growth for the District. Additionally we are further investing in Witham by building a new leisure centre. We will continue to expand upon recycling and ensure that the Council gives you value for money.

It is important to recognise the significant changes and challenges that are happening to local government. I wish to ensure that Councillors engage with their local community by creating a much more integrated approach with real money and real decisions devolved down to local communities. One of the Council's key challenges is to understand local needs and wants and how these can be met.

This annual plan details our achievements so far and sets out our key activities and the measures used to check our performance for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of Braintree District Council



The environment is clean and green

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *The amount of waste being land-filled in the District will have been reduced*
- *The standards of cleanliness and the appearance of the District will have improved*
- *The biodiversity of the District will have been protected and enhanced*
- *The District will have a clear response to the risks facing it by climate change*
- *Improved standards of environmental sustainability will be included in all new developments in the District*
- *Braintree District Council's carbon footprint will have been reduced*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Increased recycling levels and extended the use of wheelie bins*
- *Planted over 22,000 new trees to improve biodiversity and distributed over 200,000 bulbs to local towns and parishes*
- *Provided an additional 43 allotment plots across the District*
- *All new housing developments (over 10 houses) and larger commercial developments meet best practice standards for environmental sustainability. Examples are the Riverview extra care scheme in Witham, the Rickstones and Maltings Academies and the affordable housing development in Shalford*
- *Gained Green Flag awards for the improved appearance of Halstead Public Gardens and Silver End Memorial Gardens*
- *Received awards from Essex Playing Fields Association for the excellent quality of 14 of our play areas*
- *Set up of a new local nature reserve at Bocking Blackwater*
- *Helped and supported local businesses to adapt to climate change challenges by advising them and by developing a climate change guide*
- *Helped our residents to save energy costs and reduce climate change impact by providing 50 renewable energy grants, over 250 loft and cavity wall insulation grants and signing up over 1,100 households in water and energy saving schemes.*
- *Reduced the Council's carbon footprint by being more efficient in our gas and electricity usage*
- *Launched the Green Heart of Essex Campaign to make the District cleaner and greener*
- *In partnership with McDonald's and the businesses in Galleys corner, set up a campaign to improve the appearance of the District and won two 'Keep Britain Tidy' awards*

In 2011/2012 we will:

- > *Improve cleanliness and increase enforcement across the District*
- > *Plant more bulbs and trees, look after our green spaces and engage with communities to take ownership and pride in their areas*
- > *Increase our overall recycling rates through the introduction of a food waste collection*
- > *Reduce Braintree District Council's carbon footprint by 5% through energy efficiency and utilising renewable energy*



Business is encouraged and the local economy prospers

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *Work on the regeneration of Witham, Braintree and Halstead town centres will have started*
- *Opportunities for long-term, inward business investment in the District will have increased*
- *Basic skills levels and vocational training opportunities in the District will have improved*
- *We will have lobbied to secure key infrastructure improvements in the District*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Consulted on town centre improvement schemes for Witham and Braintree*
- *Brought together six landowners to develop an area of land to the east of Halstead High Street*
- *Improved business networking by supporting the implementation of the Witham Business Improvement District (BID) project*
- *Supported over 100 small business clients through the Intensive Support and Business Planning Training Programme*
- *Contributed to the basic skills and apprenticeship project as part of the scheme to help young people in the District*
- *Promoted the three towns and developed events to attract visitors and shoppers*
- *Created 'Loving Your High Street' awards across three towns and rural areas*
- *The District joined the 'Haven Gateway Sub Regional Partnership'*

In 2011/2012 we will:

- > Invest in improvements and initiatives in the three towns to attract new retailers and shoppers
- > As part of the Essex, Kent and Sussex Local Enterprise Partnership, lobby for improvements to A120 and for a Braintree Rail Loop
- > In partnership with the Haven Gateway work towards improving Broadband speeds across the District for businesses
- > Commence work on the delivery of further business start up units in the District
- > Work with businesses in Braintree town centre to establish 'Braintree BID' to support improvements to the town centre



Everyone can enjoy a healthy lifestyle

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *Our leisure facilities, parks and open spaces will have improved and more people will be using them*
- *Young people will be able to more easily access local activities*
- *More play facilities will have been provided for children and young people to enjoy*
- *We will work to secure improvements to local health facilities and access to health services*
- *More people will feel that the District is a safe place to live*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Opened the Braintree Swimming Centre*
- *Developed leisure and recreation facilities (including the synthetic pitch) at Great Notley Country Park in partnership with the Parish Council and Football Club, Essex County Council and the Football Foundation*
- *Obtained funding to provide two outdoor gyms in Witham and Braintree*
- *Provided a two year free swimming programme for people aged 60 and over and 16 and under with the Primary Care Trusts*
- *Reduced anti-social behaviour by 17.2%*
- *Re-furbished five more play areas across the District*
- *Replaced the synthetic pitch at Braintree Leisure Centre with a state of the art pitch suitable for football and hockey*
- *Had the highest number of participants for 'walk for wellbeing' in Essex*

In 2011/2012 we will:

- > Commence building Witham Leisure Centre
- > Complete improvements to three children's play areas in the District
- > Continue to improve Witham Town Park
- > Expand cycle ways, river walks and footpaths across the District.
- > Improve accessibility to information and services for older people



Housing and transport meet local needs

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *More affordable and environmentally sustainable housing will be provided for local people*
- *A balanced range of good quality and environmentally sustainable housing will be available*
- *Plans will have been developed to ensure that the District can cope with appropriate long-term housing and business growth*
- *People who rent their homes will have more choice about where they live*
- *Transport providers will have been encouraged to provide services which better meet local transport needs*
- *The Community Transport scheme will have been improved to further meet the needs of elderly and vulnerable people*
- *Improvements will have been made to the way vulnerable and young people who live in areas with limited facilities and public transport can access services*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Provided affordable homes for over 350 families which included the regeneration scheme at Bailey Bridge Road, Braintree and rural schemes in Pebmarsh and Gestingthorpe*
- *Improved people's choice of property to rent by setting up a Choice-Based Letting scheme with six other Councils*
- *Implemented an electronic tool kit interpreting customers' needs and problems and offering effective advice based on a short series of questions*
- *Provided a new Extra Care housing scheme of 55 flats for older people in Witham*
- *Enabled 181 disabled people to continue living in their own homes by providing grants to adapt their homes*
- *Helped elderly, vulnerable, disabled and young people to access activities by providing extra journeys as a result of adding two minibuses to the Community Transport fleet*
- *Increased transport opportunities for elderly, vulnerable, disabled and young people through an increase in the pool of volunteer drivers for Community Transport*
- *Ensured that people have access to information and services in rural areas and are supported to live in their own homes through the Village Agents project in partnership with other public and voluntary organisations*

In 2011/2012 we will:

- > Facilitate housing growth including affordable housing through the delivery of the Local Development Framework
- > Expand the Community Transport Scheme to increase the number of passengers with a focus on rural areas
- > Work with Essex County Council to reduce traffic congestion across the District



People take pride in their local areas

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *People will have a greater understanding about the Council and what it does*
- *More people will take part in local democracy and in decisions which affect their local areas*
- *More people will feel that the District is a good place to live*
- *The voluntary and community sector will be better placed to respond to local needs*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Recognised the valued contribution of local people by organising our first Community Achievement Awards ceremony*
- *Encouraged resident participation in the Council's decisions and planning by setting up the People's Panel*
- *Improved public access to key meetings by broadcasting them online*
- *Transferred control of community halls to the local communities*
- *Ran a local 'Grab a Grant' competition in partnership with Greenfields Community Housing, Halstead Gazette and the Braintree & Witham Times enabling local organisations to carry out improvement projects in their local areas*
- *Promoted involvement in local decision-making and activities through Local Committees*
- *Set up the 'Volunteering Opportunities' web page with information on and access to volunteering opportunities*
- *X factor democracy produced a number of ideas by primary school children with local committees keen to implement them*
- *New petition scheme introduced enabling Council debates to take place where more than 1,000 signatures are received*

In 2011/2012 we will:

- > *Enable greater involvement and engagement of local people and communities to improve how we respond to local issues that impact on their lives*
- > *Encourage and work with enterprising communities who wish to deliver more activities and services locally*
- > *In partnership with the County Council, work closely with parishes to improve the delivery of local services*



We deliver excellent, cost effective and valued services

In 2008 we said that by 2012:

- *All of our services will have been reviewed and improvements put in place*
- *People will find it easier to contact us and we will provide speedier responses*
- *Greater use will be made of our website and it will be possible to do more online*
- *People will be able to access a range of public services through local shared 'one-stop shops'*
- *People who come to live in the District will be able to easily find out about the District and all the services that are provided here*
- *Our citizens will be more satisfied with how they feel about the Council and about whether we provide value for money*

Some of our achievements since 2008:

- *Increased the number of services our customers can access online including online benefits applications and online benefits calculator*
- *We answer calls more quickly*
- *Improved access to Council services by setting up and sharing a one-stop shop at Witham Library and Halstead Library*
- *Made waste collection more convenient by providing a single day collection for grey and green bins and dry recyclables for 85% of properties*
- *Saved over £1,000,000 by reviewing and improving the way we provide our services*
- *Identified joint working opportunities with other agencies such as joint enforcement activities for illegal waste*




In 2011/2012 we will:

- > *Improve accessibility to the website to encourage a higher level of transactions*
- > *Implement a cost reduction programme to achieve zero council tax increase for the next two years*
- > *Improve our service delivery to our customers through working with local communities and other public and private sector providers*
- > *In response to customer feedback, streamline our decision making and reduce red tape/bureaucracy*















How we measure our effectiveness

We are measured internally and externally against a set of national and local standards to check how well we're doing or where we need to improve.

The main measures we use for these are:



Description	Actual		Target
	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012
The environment is clean and green			
The number of kilograms of household waste that is not re-used, recycled or composted per household	460kgs	426kgs	412kgs
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	49.48%	53.87%	56%
 Cost of household waste collection per household	£68.92	£68.50	£67.50
The number of missed bins not collected within 24 hours of being reported per 100,000	34.86	12.29	17.00
The percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	12%	8%	10%
Business is encouraged and the local economy prospers			
New business registration rate per 10,000 population (aged 16 and above)	88.7	Not yet available	Activities that we monitor with our partners
 Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least five GCSEs (Grades A – C) or equivalent	60.2%*		
Overall employment rate (working-age)	77.6%		
Everyone can enjoy a healthy lifestyle			
Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	6.13	5.17	Targets yet to be agreed with Essex Police
Violent crime per 1,000 population in the local authority area	9.43	9.66	
 Racial incidents reported to the local authority per 100,000 population	2.81	1.4	This is not targeted
Food establishments in the area which are broadly compliant with food hygiene law	93%	91%	93%



* This figure represents a January – December 2009 outturn

Description	Actual		Target
	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012
Housing and Transport meets Local Needs			
 Net additional homes provided	342	428	252
 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	171	131	100*
 Number of households living in temporary accommodation	36	30	50
People take pride in their local area			
 Surveys will take place throughout the year measuring customer satisfaction in a number of areas including satisfaction ratings on: how well public land is kept clear of litter and refuse, recycling collections, provision parks and open spaces and provision of sports and leisure facilities.			
Delivering excellent, cost effective and valued services			
 Working days lost due to sickness absence	9.66 days	8.45 days	8.00 days
 Percentage of complaints responded to in seven working days	87.6%	92.0%	88.0%
 Percentage of enquiries resolved at first point of contact within the Customer Service Centre	91.33%	92.82%	85.00%
 Telephone response time in the Customer Service Centre	16 seconds	9 seconds	15 seconds
 Percentage of direct customer contact that could have been avoided	14.6%	7.8%	This is not targeted
 The percentage of council tax collected in the year	98.46%	98.45%	98.50%
 The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received for the authority	98.38%	99.39%	98.50%
 Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and changes	8.3 days	6.8 days	8 days
 Planning Appeals allowed	38%	17.61%	30.00%
 Processing of minor planning applications within eight weeks	87.94%	84.33%	77.00%

* Our target is to enable an average of 100 new affordable homes to be provided across the district each year over a four year period. At the time of publication, we are expecting 67 new affordable homes to be provided in 2011/12.

Below are some of our key projects which will assist the Council in delivering the Corporate Strategy for 2011 / 2012.

Activity	Target Date
 The environment is clean and green	
Introduce separate weekly food waste collections to 40,000 properties	5 th September 2011
Involve high street fast food businesses and others in taking responsibility for the impact on their local area	31 st March 2012
Educate young people about the problem of litter and use enforcement to reinforce the educational message	31 st March 2012
Deliver programmed estate clean ups and targeted enforcement in partnership with Greenfields Community Housing and community led groups	31 st March 2012
To plant a legacy Jubilee Oak in every village and town in the District involving the local community in the location and care of the oak tree	31 st March 2012
Reduce Braintree District Council's carbon footprint by 5%	31 st March 2012
 Business is encouraged and the local economy prospers	
Commence construction of new business incubator units at Springwood Drive	31 st March 2012
Increase the prosperity of the three town centres by investing in improvements to attract new retailers and shoppers	31 st March 2012
Undertake a broadband study across the District to establish the needs of businesses for funding to improve broadband speeds	30 th November 2011
Work in partnership with retailers to establish and set up the 'Braintree BID' for future improvements to the town centres	31 st March 2012

Activity	Target Date
 Everyone can enjoy a healthy lifestyle	
Commence the build of the new Witham Leisure Centre	31 st December 2011
Continue to improve the facilities in Witham Town Park	31 st March 2012
Refurbish the remaining three play areas across the District: Clare Road, John Ray gardens and Brooke Meadow	31 st January 2012
Implement the older persons 'action plan' to improve access to information and services for older people	31 st March 2012
 Housing and transport meet local needs	
Increase the number of passengers on our Community Transport scheme by promoting and publicising the service	31 st March 2012
Provide a further 67 affordable homes across the District	31 st March 2012
 People take pride in their local areas	
Establish a scheme and operate a fund to support and encourage enterprising communities to deliver more activities and services for themselves	31 st March 2012
Devise a devolutionary framework to engage local communities in decisions that affect them	31 st March 2012

Activity	Target Date
 We deliver excellent, cost effective and valued services	
Implement a new website to increase the number of services available on line and encourage more customers to use the web to carry out business with the Council	31 st March 2012
Refurbish Causeway House to enable more efficient use and improved access to services	31 st January 2012
Reduce costs to achieve 0% council tax increase for the next two years	31 st March 2012
Work in partnership with others to deliver more efficient and improved services	31 st March 2012

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 e-mail our Customer Service Centre at csc@braintree.gov.uk.
- You can drop written comments off at one of our main offices:
Braintree – Causeway House, Halstead – the Centre, Witham – the library
Or at any other library in the District but please make sure that it's addressed clearly to Braintree District Council.
- 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.