

CORPORATE STRATEGY

2020-2024

FOREWORD



This Corporate Strategy builds on what we have achieved over the last four years.

The past decade has seen a seismic change in the role of local government and the way it is funded. Expectations are rising but budgets are shrinking. Over the last decade we have had to address both a reduction in Central Government Grant of £6.7million and an increase in the cost of providing services. We have balanced our budget by bringing in income, largely through careful financial management and investments including the buying of commercial buildings to rent out, and by reducing our costs without impacting on the services received by residents.

Since our last strategy we have invested £11.6 million into the district and have committed a further £45.7 million to tackle some of the big challenges we face. In many ways we face the same issues as districts up and down the country but what I'm really proud of is the way we've approached these challenges head on. We knew that if we didn't think the district was worth investing in, then who would? And our approach has paid off, unlocking more interest, excitement and investment into our towns and villages.

I am proud of our Health, Homes, Journeys and Jobs agenda. It has seen us invest in the things that are making a tangible difference to the lives of our residents. It has meant that businesses have seen what we are doing and want to be part of it too. A great example of this is our investment in the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park in Great Notley which will be a major new employment park that will set the standard for modern businesses. If we had not had that foresight, we would not now be home to the first Electric Forecourt under construction in the UK. That project alone puts our district on the map as facing the future with ambition and pride.

Growing the economy with investment, opportunities and our support for new and existing businesses is vital for us. The more innovation we can encourage, the better for our economy and the better the life chances for our residents.

We haven't shied away from our commitment to the climate either. Last year we declared a climate emergency and we have started the important journey to making sure that our activities are, as far as possible, carbon neutral by 2030. We all have to act fast to deliver on this ambition.

It has never before been more important to work in partnership as an outward and forward-looking district of Essex, with businesses, with our colleagues across local, regional and central government and, of course, with our communities. We all have a role in making sure our rural and urban hamlets, villages and towns can thrive. I am grateful to residents, businesses and partners for their contribution to this plan. It is not a plan that is ours alone, this is for the whole district. You have given us an important steer on what you want to see and what you expect from us and we commit to addressing the issues you have raised.


Cllr Graham Butland, Leader,
Braintree District Council

INTRODUCTION



Welcome to our Corporate Strategy which sets out the objectives and priorities for the district over the next four years.

Firstly, I am proud of the progress we have made delivering the current corporate strategy. A key factor in making this progress has been the support we have received from our partners, residents and businesses.

That's why we wanted our partners and residents to be at the very heart of the process to shape the future of our district through our new corporate strategy.

Through consultation we've done lots of listening and learning and we will continue to listen to what residents and businesses expect from us and learn from their experiences of the Braintree District as a place to live, work and enjoy life.

It is important to recognise that this plan has been developed against a backdrop of huge changes to the local government funding system, notwithstanding this I am pleased to say that our customer satisfaction rates remain higher than the national average and we've been awarded the Customer Service Excellence Standard for the fifth year in a row.

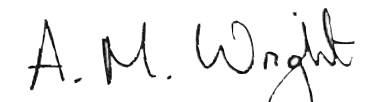
We've looked at the changing nature of how services are designed and delivered. We've also looked at local, regional and national trends that could affect our communities' future needs and their demand for our services throughout their lives and, of course, what residents want and need to keep healthy and happy.

That work resulted in a list of draft priorities which we put out to our residents and partners for their thoughts and comments and you can read the final priorities throughout this document.

Our Corporate Strategy looks to a future where we will help connect people and places, enhance and protect our environment, support our communities to reach their potential, promote prosperity and, importantly, continue to deliver and innovate.

A huge thank you to everyone who gave us their thoughts, opinions and ideas.

We will work with you over the coming four years to provide a thriving and sustainable future for current and future generations.


Andy Wright, Chief Executive,
Braintree District Council



Great **Towns**
and **Villages**
making up one
Great District

OUR DISTRICT

Our yearly satisfaction survey tells us that our residents are proud of their district and they should be. With the colourful, bustling market towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham together with picturesque villages set in the most beautiful rolling countryside, the district of Braintree is a great place to live, work and visit.

90% of the Braintree District is classified as green space which is important for community cohesion, wellbeing and our wildlife

31 parks and open spaces

612 km² of largely rural land (2nd largest in Essex by size)

The district is made up of:

19.2% 0-15 year olds
(predicted to fall to 17.1% by 2035)

60.7% 16-64 year olds
(predicted to fall to 58.8% by 2035)

20.1% people aged 65+
(predicted to increase to 24.1% by 2035)

The Braintree District is the fourth most populated district in Essex with 151,561 (mid 2018) residents which is predicted to reach to over 164,000 by 2035.

There are an estimated **248 residents** per square kilometre, the third lowest population density in Essex

Our district has had a rich and varied history since the Bronze Age and is home to medieval barns, a Norman Keep, steam railways, magnificent houses with stunning gardens and listed windmills.

The oldest timber-framed barn in the world is at Cressing Temple near Braintree and is the largest of its kind in Europe

The 14th century woollen cloth trade brought prosperity and has left a legacy of fine architecture and listed buildings, whilst the 18th century heralded the arrival of silk weaving and the famous name of Courtauld.

Nowadays, the location of the district between London and the regional growth centres of Colchester, Chelmsford and Cambridge attracts new businesses and data now shows that the district is well established in construction, manufacturing and technology. Unemployment rates are low and businesses across the district are providing more employment opportunities than there are unemployed people to work in them, and this is a positive trend we want to continue to see.

979 miles of road in the district (major roads to narrow country roads)

Over 9,800 Businesses in the district of which 89% are micro businesses (0-9 employees)

3.2% unemployed below the Essex average of 3.5%

However, we need to see an increase in skills and productivity and high quality employment opportunities, especially in key economic sectors.

Average weekly income is **£630** which is higher than the average for Essex and England

The median salary for residents in our district is just over £600 per week due to the number of people who commute out of the district, probably to London. The median wage of employees working within the district is £514, slightly lower than the Essex average of £520. However, part-time workers in the district earned £194 per week, which is 6% more than the average for Essex.

31% of adults in the district are qualified to **NVQ level 4 or above** which is lower than the national average of 38%

93% of working age residents have some form of qualifications

The percentage of children achieving a good level of development and achieving early learning goals has improved since 2015 and is now above the average for Essex. Although we are doing

well for our younger children, since the introduction of the new GCSE grading system, pupil performance for 16 year olds across the district has gradually fallen. More needs to be done to ensure children are inspired to do well to provide a skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers in the future.

63% of pupils achieved a grade 4+ in English and Maths which is just below the average for Essex

The district is one of the least deprived areas nationally and is ranked 7th out of the 12 districts in Essex as only 2% of our residents live in deprived areas compared to an average for Essex of 8.6%. The most significant factors affecting deprivation in our district are employment, health and crime. In the last few years, positive changes in income, education and skills and reducing the barriers to housing and services, have helped to ensure the district has improved its ranking.

8.8% of households classed as fuel poor which is slightly higher than the Essex average of 8.6%

12.4% of children are recorded as living in low income households Lower than the Essex average of 14.4%

The overall crime rate for the district is low and we know from our recent consultation that feeling safe is the number one concern of our residents. We are aware that nationally, the number of crimes recorded by the police is increasing and it is no different for our district. Over the last four years, the number of crimes recorded across the district has increased by 48%.

This increase may be linked to the improvements in making people aware of reporting crimes following initiatives carried out by the police.

The crime rate across the district is **24% lower** than the average for England

Residents across the district are relatively healthy. Physical activity in adults has increased over the last few years with a high percentage of residents involved in organised sports.

60.84% of residents across the district aged over 18 are classed as **overweight or obese** which is lower than the average across Essex and England

Physical activity in adults across the district has **risen by 9.75%** and is the largest increase observed across all Essex districts

We still want to do more as taking part in physical activity plays an important role in the prevention of health issues and in maintaining physical and mental wellbeing. We also want to be well placed in understanding the demands on health and social care as the age of our population grows over the coming years.

83.3 years is the average female life expectancy

80.2 years is the average male life expectancy

ACHIEVEMENTS 2016 - 2020

These are just some of our achievements over the last four years. Details of all our achievements can be found in our Annual Plans.



Secured planning consent for the Manor Street development in Braintree Town Centre

Approved funds to develop up to seven council-owned sites to deliver new mixed tenure homes across the district

Secured £4.95m of Government funding towards new slip roads linking the A120 with Millennium Way

Launched a number of successful campaigns to tackle fly tipping and littering

Upgraded the lighting in our car parks with new energy efficient LED lights

Introduced the Braintree District Volunteer Awards recognising and rewarding extraordinary individuals who are making a difference in their community and inspiring others

Introduced a number of activities to benefit those living with dementia and their carers such as dementia friendly cinemas, tea dances, swimming and walks

Delivered a range of 'age well' activities across the district encouraging inactive over 60's to become active again

Introduced a Handyman scheme to help our disabled and frail residents lead more independent lives

Engaged 10 of our schools in the Livewell Child project to halt the rise of obesity in children across the district

Redeveloped 18 play areas and 5 sports pitches across the district

Enabled the delivery of over 430 affordable homes

Completed the acquisition of a new 65 acre Business and Innovation Park at Great Notley providing additional land to support business growth and create up to 2,000 jobs

Launched the 'Grape and Grain Trail' at the Essex Festival of Food and Drink enabling visitors to sample wines, beers and spirits from the finest local producers

Implemented a new discretionary business rate relief scheme aimed at helping businesses that have had a sharp increase in their business rates following the 2017 revaluation

Provided a rural business hub in Sible Hedingham for local start-ups and small businesses looking to grow in our rural communities

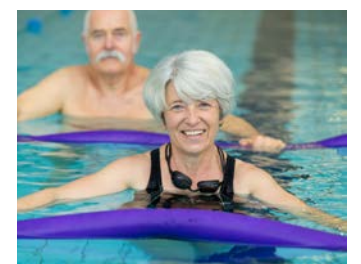
Established the Employment and Skills Board to address educational attainment and employment skills needs within the district

Regenerated the Spa Road shopping area in Witham, improving the visual impact and the facilities

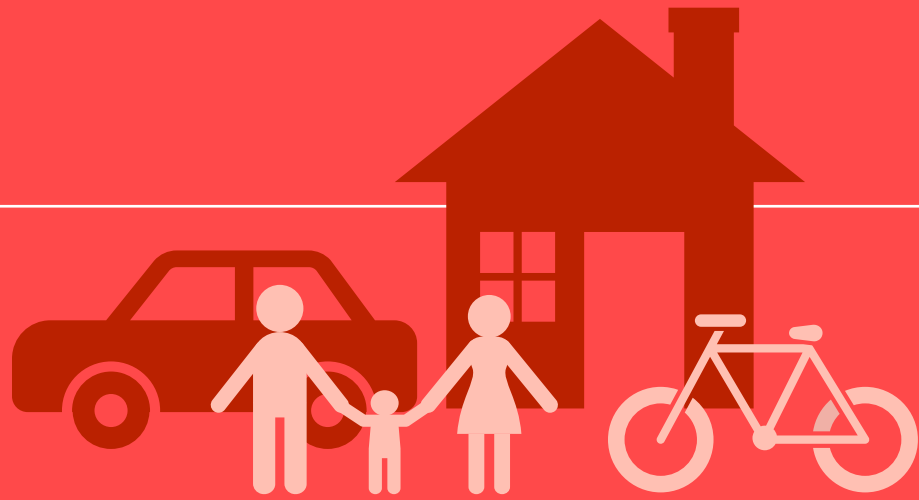
Completed the construction of four new industrial units and a 40 space car park providing much needed grow-on space to small businesses

Launched the Business Engagement Strategy to develop our support service, provide access to grants and funding as well as offering mentoring and training, to help businesses across the district grow

Retained the Customer Service Excellence accreditation demonstrating the high standard of customer service delivered in putting our customers at the core of what we do



Invested in local health facilities across the district to support the delivery of improved health care provision



CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

The connections that link our people and businesses together provide the foundations of our district. They can be ‘physical’ – like homes, roads and good transport, or they could be virtual, like the digital connections and infrastructure behind it that helps our residents and businesses trade, access services and communicate online.

We need to build 14,000 homes by 2033. Through our Local Plan, we will guide development and plan for infrastructure as well as control where development is located rather than it being delivered in an ad hoc way. We will drive investment in rail, roads and the cycling infrastructure as well as looking at new modes of public transport.

We all value our town centres and want to see them thrive. We are on a journey to re-invent our town centres as a destination of choice and a place in which people connect and enjoy recreational activities.

Improving digital connectivity is vital in helping our communities and businesses to thrive. It is not good enough that only 85% of our district can access superfast broadband, so by 2022 we aim to reach 97% as well as providing free public wifi in our town centres.

OUR PRIORITIES

- Grow the district in the right way supported by the required services
- Develop our infrastructure leading to improved journeys in and across the district
- Deliver good quality affordable homes for local people
- Create thriving town centres for everyone to enjoy
- Improve the districts’ digital connectivity and harness innovation in technology to meet future digital needs

CASE STUDY

Creating a destination of choice



Our town centres are changing; with shopping habits changing nationally we know there are 21st century challenges. The towns are no longer just hubs for retail, but places to live, spend time, socialise and connect.

We also know, through consultation with residents and businesses, that having a thriving town centre is

something our residents value and will continue to support and we have seen this through the success of the monthly street markets in Braintree.

Braintree is set to undergo significant change over the next two years with the Manor Street regeneration and the pedestrianisation scheme. By 2021 the town will be home to 35 new apartments, a 70 bed Travelodge bringing visitors and generating new jobs, a bigger bus interchange that will have the capacity to provide services to a growing population and the first ‘livewell’ health hub providing residents with access to more integrated health services. There will also be a café or restaurant, and a new high quality public open space linking the new buildings to the new resurfaced pedestrianised high street providing a focus for events and activities, increasing the appeal of the town centre, connecting people and businesses both socially and economically.

It is an exciting journey ahead.

DID YOU KNOW...

We have invested
£962,000
in Superfast
Broadband
across the district



We provide over
45,000
Community
Transport journeys
each year



90%
of the district
is classified as
green space



There are currently
1,687
people on our
housing register





ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

This year we declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set an ambitious target to make the Council's activities carbon neutral where practical by 2030. We also committed to reducing district-wide energy consumption and emissions and to support our communities to adapt to climate change. To achieve this, we have created a community-wide Climate Change Working Group which is busy developing our strategy and introducing projects to achieve our targets.

Ultimately, we want a greener and environmentally sustainable community that is prepared for the future and that we can all be proud of, where people can enjoy cleaner air, cleaner streets and access to parks and green spaces.

Our built and natural environment significantly contributes towards people's quality of life and is key in making the district a more attractive place to live. We know our residents are proud to live here and together we have worked hard to keep the district clean and green. We want to keep up this momentum and encourage residents, businesses and other organisations to continue to work with us to further protect and enhance our district.

OUR PRIORITIES

- Develop and drive our Climate Change Strategy forward:
 - Working towards our target of making the Council's services carbon neutral as far as practical by 2030
 - Supporting the district to reduce waste, energy consumption, carbon emissions and pollution
 - Supporting Council services, residents and businesses to adapt to climate change impacts
- Ensure our district is well maintained with high quality parks and green spaces
- Continue to keep the district clean and tidy

CASE STUDY

Local group leading the way to a greener community

In 2019 Braintree District Council declared a Climate Emergency and set up a Climate Change Working Group to develop our 10 year Climate Change Strategy. Cherry McKean, a local resident from Earls Colne, is an active member of this group.

Cherry set up the 'Eco Colnes & Halstead' community group to give people passionate about the environment a place to chat, provide tips and ask for advice on making environmental changes and becoming more sustainable.

Over the past year the group has created two new terracycle collection points, planted 40 trees, held its first village event giving away upcycled cloth bags, courtesy of a Love Essex grant, and taken its climate emergency motion to parish councils.

Cherry said: "I started the group as I wanted to know what environmental changes other local people were making. People are more likely to make changes if they see someone doing it but also if they can actually see changes happen – that's why the group has been a success and has really helped bring the community together".

The group now has 763 members and has expanded to a sister group in another local village 'Eco Feering & Kelvedon'. Find out more about the work of the group by searching 'Eco Colnes & Halstead' and 'ECO Feering & Kelvedon' on Facebook.



Members of the ECO Colnes & Halstead Group

DID YOU KNOW...

Last year
we received

39 awards



from the Essex Playing
Fields Association for the
standard and quality of the
Council's playing fields and
play areas

Since 2005 the Council
has reduced its
emissions by over

3,000

tonnes of CO₂



and across the district,
residents and businesses
have reduced emissions by
over 720 kilotonnes

Since 2014 we have helped
residents install over

8,700 energy

saving measures
resulting in a
saving of over

1,000

tonnes

of carbon emissions



We have recycled

147,148

tonnes of waste

in the last
5 years





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Our communities must remain at the heart of everything we do and we have listened to what you have told us is important to you when developing this strategy. We want to continue to have informed, open conversations with our residents and businesses to understand how we can support them to build resilient communities. We know the strength and value that our communities have when they come together and want to build on this and support them to make a difference connecting people and creating strong and friendly communities that care about each other.

We already know, through recent consultation, that feeling safe is a top priority for our residents. Crime rates remain low in the district and our Community Safety Partnership will continue to work relentlessly to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour and develop community led solutions.

The Braintree Health & Wellbeing Board is made up of partners from across the public, private and community sector who are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of our communities. We want to support people in taking control of their own health and wellbeing, helping them to be as independent as possible through early intervention and prevention. We especially want to work with the most vulnerable people in our communities.

OUR PRIORITIES

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

CASE STUDY

Maltings Lane Community Facility Steering Group

Local residents and community groups are involved in shaping plans for a new community facility in Witham. The development, which is funded from section 106 contributions from various planning applications, will be located behind Aldi supermarket off Owers Lane and Duncombe Close in Witham.

Braintree District Council and the local community are now directly involved in the delivery of the project ensuring that the money is spent on what residents and community groups want.

The local community has contributed its thoughts on the layout of the overall site, the design of the building and the outdoor space. Proposals include a main hall and smaller hall to cater for various activities including indoor sports, community events, meetings, children's activities, a café and social area and changing rooms for the outdoor sports space.

This facility will create a centre that will be run by the community for the community with more indoor and outdoor space available for people to come together and take part in social and sporting activities.

It will create opportunities for communities to come together, reducing social isolation and loneliness and increasing emotional and physical wellbeing.



DID YOU KNOW...

Since its launch
in 2016, over

320
grants



have been provided to local groups through our Councillors' Community Grant Scheme **totalling over £230,000 investment into our communities**

We have provided over

550
Disabled
Facilities Grants



in the last four years

61%

of our adult
population are **active**
for more than **150**
minutes a week



(Based on Sports Englands Active Lives Survey)

Over

280

residents
have accessed
our handyman service



PROMOTING PROSPERITY



Thriving high quality businesses are fundamental to our long term local economy in that they create jobs, wealth and wider prosperity.

The district is ideally located between London and the regional growth centres of Chelmsford, Colchester and Cambridge as a global technology research and development centre; and the international transport hubs of Stansted Airport and the Haven Ports, providing a significant competitive advantage to attract and grow businesses.

Our 'Plan for Growth' sets out our approach in creating the right conditions to support and grow the district's existing businesses as well as attracting new businesses. Our aim is to attract companies to our district from a number of business sectors and to help our businesses to grow, offering residents high quality job and training opportunities in an attractive setting closer to home. We will look to ensure that people in our district have the right skills to fill jobs.

We also want to grow our visitor numbers by promoting everything the district has to offer including visitor attractions, our heritage offer, locally produced food and drink, street markets and our vibrant market towns and picturesque villages.

We know we cannot deliver economic growth alone. The North Essex Economic Strategy sets out the shared ambitions of the North Essex local authorities for long term sustainable and inclusive prosperity. Looking forward to 2040, by working closely with our partners, businesses and residents we will make our district a place of ambition and growth where opportunities are plentiful and businesses thrive, delivering a stronger economy for all.

OUR PRIORITIES

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

CASE STUDY

Horizon 120 Business & Innovation Park

We recently purchased a 65 acre site in Great Notley with a vision of creating an employment site which attracts exciting new businesses into the district offering residents high quality job and career opportunities.

This new business park is set to be an exemplar site offering modern flexible work spaces, amenities and facilities, electric vehicle charging points and best in class fibre optic internet connectivity.

Horizon 120 appeals to many businesses because of its ideal strategic location, close to the A120 and well connected to Stansted Airport, the Harwich port, London and Cambridge and is already attracting a great deal of interest from a number of locally and regionally based well-established businesses across a number of sectors. It has the potential to create 2,000 jobs offering local residents better access to skilled jobs and apprentice and training opportunities in an attractive setting close to home.

The park will be a great place to work with extensively landscaped areas, scenic views over the countryside and is set to become a real business community, where employees can socialise, exercise at a gym, participate in social events, drop their children off at childcare and enjoy a lunchtime run in Great Notley Country Park.

For more information, visit: www.horizon.com



Artists impression @ Horizon 120

DID YOU KNOW...

There were **934** new business start-ups across the district in 2018/19



£788,602 of funding secured to support businesses in 2018/19

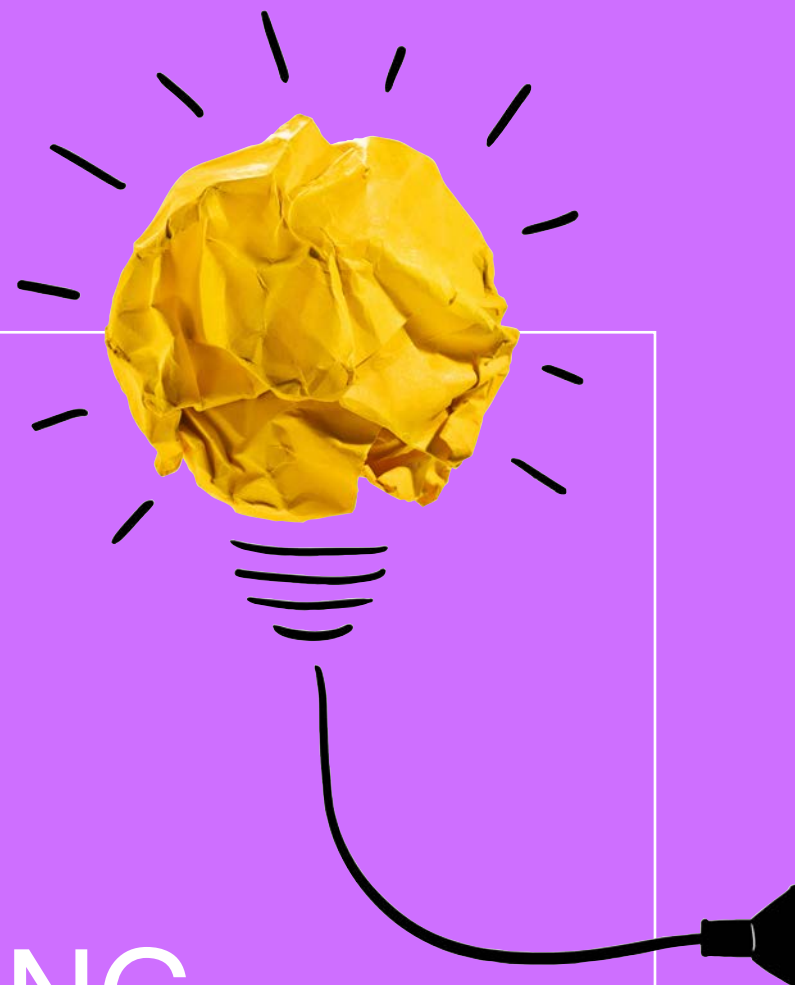


7% of the working age population are in apprenticeships



87.2% of working age adults (16-64) are economically active (higher than the Essex average of 80.8%)





DELIVERING AND INNOVATING

Key to the success of this strategy is how it is delivered. We recognise the importance of listening to and engaging with our residents and we aim to improve engagement through regular communication and consultation, providing opportunities for people to have their say, making sure we balance their needs and protect the things they value most.

The challenges facing us are ones that we need to work on together and across our strategy you will notice a much stronger focus on delivering together through partnerships and working more closely with communities.

We will maximise opportunities to develop stronger relationships with our partners in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors and other stakeholders. Our aim is to create safer, healthier, stronger communities ensuring there is mutual understanding between us all of the shared issues, challenges and solutions.

We recognise that our successes will be judged by the outcomes we achieve, not by the processes we follow. We will explore innovative approaches to address the challenges we face driven with a determination to achieve financial self-sufficiency, commitment to excellence and continuous improvement in responding to the changing needs of our district and the lives of the people within it.

OUR PRIORITIES

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

CASE STUDY

Livewell

Braintree District Council set up a Health and Wellbeing Panel consisting of partners from across various sectors who are passionate about the health and wellbeing agenda and share the vision of working together to make a greater impact.

This effective partnership across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors has been instrumental in delivering a number of initiatives to reduce obesity, getting all ages and abilities active and improving their diet, working with others to support residents to improve their emotional health and wellbeing and introducing interventions to prevent illness and injury.

To ensure all the activities and information are easy to follow, a Livewell brand and website has been developed providing a joined-up approach and consistency across health and wellbeing messages in our district and across Essex.

All partners appreciate there is still much work to do to find solutions that contribute towards wellbeing in order to reduce the cost to health and social care but we have started the journey, are starting to have an impact, have been recognised nationally, and will continue to work together to maximise opportunities and support our communities.



in the Braintree District



Children from Ridgewell Church of England Primary School in Halstead

DID YOU KNOW...

By 2034 it is expected that there will be

12,000

more people

living in the

district with

the greatest

growth being

in the over 65's



The Council generates over

£1.3m

each year through our

commercial activity to

invest into front line

services



Each year, over

75,000

people access our

services digitally and

transact with us on line



Our latest satisfaction results show that

80%

of residents

in the district are happy

with the way the Council

runs things

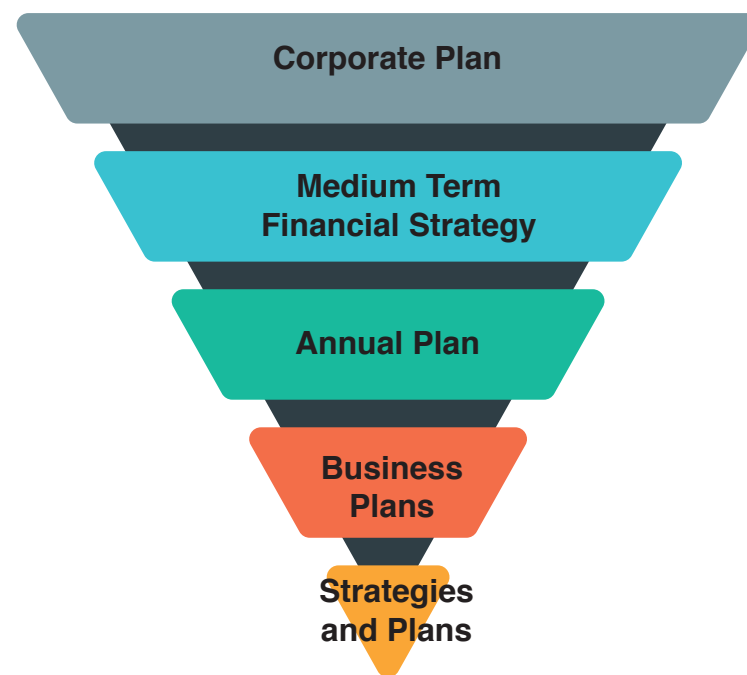


HOW OUR PLANS FIT TOGETHER

The Corporate Strategy sets out our priorities up to 2024. To deliver this, we have an Annual Plan which will set out our actions against each priority together with how we measure our success. Progress against the Annual Plan is regularly reported to Cabinet.

Underneath our Annual Plan sits our business plans for each service. They set out how the service will meet the priorities and actions required of it over the year to support the delivery of the Annual Plan and the Corporate Strategy.

We also have a number of Strategies and Plans that will support delivery of actions.



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** Library or **Witham** Library

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/councillors**

If you require this booklet in an alternative format, please call 01376 552525

