

# FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1ST JANUARY 2021 TO 31ST MARCH 2021

# AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

2020/21

## Contents

<b>Section 1: Introduction and Summary</b>	<b>page</b>
• Purpose of the Report	3
• Summary of the Projects	3
• Summary of the Performance Indicators	4
 <b>Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy</b>	 5
Connecting People and Places	5
Enhancing our Environment	7
Supporting our Communities	9
Promoting Prosperity	11
Delivering and Innovating	13
 <b>Section 3: Managing the business</b>	
• Performance Indicators in detail	15
Connecting People and Places	15
Enhancing our Environment	15
Supporting our Communities	15
Promoting Prosperity	16
Delivering and Innovating	16
• Complaints	18
• Our Organisation	19
• Health and Safety	20
• Financial Performance	21
Financial Position Statement	21
Capital Investment	31

## 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 the 'Annual Plan 2020/21'. This sets out the key activities and measures used to check our performance for the year and along with the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 sets out the priorities we are working towards. 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 fourth quarter/financial year in relation to the key activities in the 'Annual Plan 2020/21'




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	1	6	3	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	4	2	2	0	1
Supporting our Communities	2	8	4	0	0
Promoting Prosperity	1	9	0	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	2	7	1	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

#### KEY:




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

### **Summary of the 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 the quarterly reported Performance Indicators that have targets set as defined in the 'Annual Plan 2020/21'.

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	2	0	0	1
Enhancing our Environment	2	1	1	0
Supporting our Communities	0	0	1	5
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	5
Delivering and Innovating	2	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>

KEY:

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

### **Summary Position**

Over the last year, the far reaching impacts of the pandemic has seen the Council go above and beyond to deal with the challenges, supporting our residents, communities and businesses as well as adapting how we delivered services to keep key services running. We have continued to deliver the priorities of our Annual Plan although in the fourth quarter, there is an increasing number of projects feeling the impact of the pandemic more acutely than others.

In March, Cabinet agreed to extend the existing Annual Plan until September 2021 to allow those projects impacted by the pandemic, the time to reflect on what they needed to complete what they set out to achieve.

As at the end of March 2021, ten projects are complete, 32 are on track and progressing and ten projects have an amber status due to the impact of the pandemic.

Targets have not been set for all our performance indicators this year due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic. For the targets that remain, six performance indicators have met or exceed target and eight performance indicators have missed their target. Five have missed target by less than 5% and three missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to recycling rates (>5%), average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%), average call answering time in the Customer Service Centre (>5%), the kilograms of waste collected (<5%), the percentage of complaints responded to within timescale (<5%), the collection rate for Business rates (<5%), the collection rate for Council Tax (<5%) and the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days (<5%).


## Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy

# CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES







### Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Develop the Braintree District Local Plan and provide a vision for the future growth of the district</b>	
Section 1 of the Local Plan which it shares with Tendring District Council and Colchester Borough Council was approved at a meeting of full Council in February 2021 paving the way for work on Section 2 to continue. The 6 week period for High Court challenge has passed meaning the Plan is now adopted and should be given full weight in planning decisions. The Council will now continue to work on section 2, its individual plan which contains local policies and allocations. The section 2 Inspectors have been appointed and a provisional date of the first 2 weeks in July 2021 have been set for the examination.	
<b>Complete the pedestrianisation of Braintree Town Centre improving the attractiveness of the area and creating a safer and healthier environment</b>	
A new high quality resin surface has been laid in parts of the Town centre outside Tesco in Market Place and at Lower High street from Shake Express to the St Michaels Fountain as part of the pedestrianisation scheme. The scheme so far has seen the installation of new disabled bays in Bank Street and the creation of a new southbound bus and cycle lane on Fairfield Road. The Council is in the final stages of selecting new contractors to finish the final stages of work and it is hoped to start on site in April 2021.	
<b>Progress construction of the Victoria Square development creating a vibrant hub for the Braintree Town centre</b>	
Building work on the regeneration project continues to progress according to plan. Exchange of contracts was completed on 11th March 2021 with Eastlight Community Homes for the 35 residential units. Twelve of the properties will be available for social rent and the remaining 23 available for shared ownership.	
<b>Continue to work on the redevelopment of the entrance of Witham Town Park providing greater accessibility and improved public realm</b>	
The contract has now been awarded and works are starting on site to resurface the car park and the removal of the foundations of a previous building. The project has been extended until the end of June 2021 to take into account the delays incurred last summer bringing the project back on track.	
<b>Enable to delivery of 150 affordable homes across the district</b>	
In the fourth quarter of the year, a total of 41 affordable homes have been delivered across the district bring the total for the year to 220, exceeding the target set for the year of 150.	

<b>Support our town centres to open for business safely and recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic</b>	
Ongoing support has been provided to businesses in the town centres under our Safer Places working group. This includes keeping businesses updated in changes to legislation, offering advice and support at the employment of Covid ambassadors who are patrolling the town centres supporting businesses to follow Coronavirus regulations, and are also on hand to guide any shoppers and residents in staying Covid-secure. Millions of pounds of grants have been provided to businesses on the High Streets and elsewhere to keep them going, with restart grants the next tranche of funding to go out in early April 2021. The shop local campaign will be relaunched to coincide with the reopening of many businesses from the 12th April 2021. New pavement licences allowing businesses to place tables and chairs outside of cafes, restaurants and bars have also been approved	

## **Actions carried out in partnership with others**

<b>Project description and comments</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Invest in resource and connectivity to support business growth and expansion including the planning and delivery of highway schemes across the district</b>	
This is a long term action and there are a number of highway schemes planned across the district and Braintree District Council and Essex County Council meet regularly to discuss delivery of the schemes. The scheme to extend the A120 to the A12 is included in the Government's latest Road Investment Strategy as a pipeline project that will undergo further analysis and design work for consideration for potential future investment. The proposals for improving this stretch road were initially developed by Essex County Council. This project has now been passed over to Highways England and we are currently carrying out a validation exercise of all the work that has been done. Once completed, the validation will establish if further work needs to be done in order to progress the scheme. There will be full public announcements as the project is progressed. In respect of the A12 widening scheme between junction 19 and junction 25 to ease congestion and cope with increasing traffic demands, Highways England have been carrying out ground investigations and utility surveys together with archaeology trial trenching. A further public consultation will take place in 2021 to get feedback on the more detailed designs for the overall project	
<b>Continue to support and monitor Superfast Essex in the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the district</b>	
Currently 94% of the district are now able to access Superfast Broadband. Installing the infrastructure required for Superfast Broadband has been impacted by the pandemic delaying previously anticipated timescales set by Superfast Essex and their contractors. Residents are able to check the work happening in their area by viewing interactive maps now available on the Superfast Essex website ( <a href="http://superfastessex.org">superfastessex.org</a> ).	
<b>Continue to support NHS England to improve health facilities across the district</b>	
The Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group is currently focused on the Covid response including testing and vaccinations programmes. We continue to let them know we will support ongoing health projects particularly around the provision of health facilities in respect of the Livewell Hub as part of the regeneration scheme in Braintree Town, surgeries at Sible Hedingham, Silver End and Witham.	
<b>Support our residents and businesses to develop the skills needed to support the economy</b>	
We are signposting enquiries to the schemes that have been set up to support skills development. This includes the Kickstart scheme which provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit and the Restart scheme to help people find employment through training courses and local partnerships for people who have been out of work for more than 12 months, providing them with regular intensive support in finding work. The restart scheme is aimed at older workers in particular.	



# ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT



## Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Carry out improvements to our recreational open spaces including the provision of all-inclusive play facilities for young people to enjoy</b>	
Improvements have been carried out to Albert Moss Recreational Gardens in Rivenhall, Braintree and Bocking public gardens in Braintree and Notley Community Hall play area in Notley Green. The works required to the play area in Bramble Road, Witham have been delayed and are expected to be completed by the end of May 2021	
<b>Investigate the provision of an eco-friendly woodland alternative to traditional burials at Braintree Cemetery in London Road</b>	
A feasibility study has been carried out which concluded that an eco-friendly woodland alternative to traditional burials is not suitable at Braintree Cemetery. However, the feasibility study has identified that there is additional capacity at the cemetery for traditional burials subject to drainage works being carried out.	
<b>Create gardens of remembrance at some of our cemeteries providing peaceful environments for families to visit</b>	
Due to the impact of the pandemic, the project has been unable to progress as the majority of the works need to be carried out during the planting season. It has been decided to delay this project until the next planting season in the Spring/Summer of 2021.	
<b>Protect further areas of public open space against unauthorised encampments</b>	
Works are now completed in all four areas identified to install protection measures against unauthorised encampments	
<b>Respond to requirements from the Environment Bill in relation to waste and resources efficiency whilst supporting our climate change objectives</b>	
The Council are considering four new consultations received in the fourth quarter around Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, Environmental Principles Draft Policy Statement and a Waste Prevention Programme. The Council will provide responses to all the consultations by their deadline in June 2021.	
<b>Research and trial alternative fuel vehicles for some of our front line services</b>	
A Business Case is currently being pulled together for the green infrastructure to support the operation of electric vehicles. This has previously been delayed due to the pandemic and a change control will be processed to amend the end date of this project	
<b>Raise awareness of duty of care and fines in relation to litter and waste offences through targeted campaigns</b>	
The Council has continued to raise awareness through targeted campaigns on our social media channels regarding litter as people start to spend more time outside.	

## Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Trial anti-littering signage along some of our strategic routes across the district to discourage roadside littering.</b>	
The 12 month trial that commenced in November 2020 continues. Working in partnership with Essex County Council as the Highways Authority, the signs are being trialled in five locations and monitored by litter-picks, to see if they deter people from littering	
<b>Review and update the Climate Change Local Strategy for the next four years focusing on the areas below to support the delivery of our 2030 targets through the Climate Change Working Group.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources</li> <li>- Energy Use</li> <li>- Planning and Development</li> <li>- Transport</li> <li>- Council Assets and Operations</li> <li>- Natural Environment</li> <li>- Adapting to climate change</li> </ul>	
<p>The draft Climate Change Strategy was approved at Full Council in March 2021. The Strategy will go out to public consultation in May 2021 ahead of the final Climate Change Strategy being presented to Council in July 2021.</p> <p>A draft cycling strategy setting out how the Council will encourage more people to take up cycling and help improve the cycle network was also discussed at Full Council in March 2021 where a six week stakeholder engagement on the strategy was also approved.</p>	



# SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES




## Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

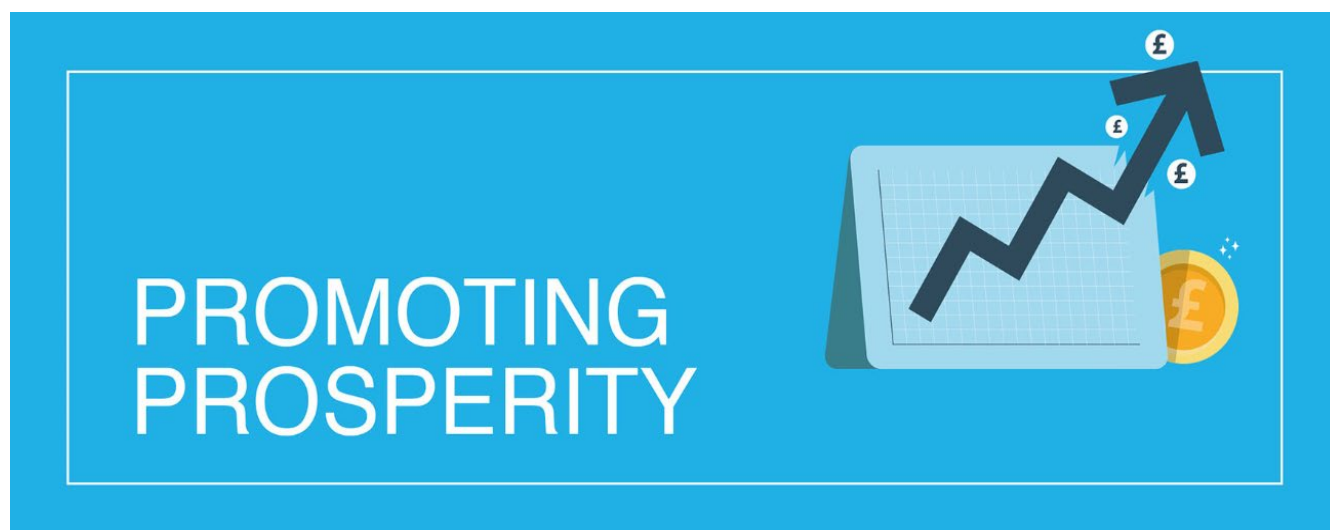
Project description and comments	Status
<b>Improve the sport facilities at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre, creating high quality amenities for the community to use</b>	
The planned improvements to replace the 3G surface at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre are currently on hold due the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The refurbishments to the athletics track at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre began in March 2021	
<b>Provide a new footpath and resurface the rear of Rivenhall village hall to improve accessibility to a much used community building</b>	
The works to provide a new footpath and to resurface the rear of Rivenhall Village Hall have now started. There has been a slight delay to the works and completion is now anticipated to be the end of April 2021	
<b>Upgrade the CCTV in Halstead and Braintree using new technology to improve the effectiveness of the systems</b>	
Open reach have installed the new fibre optic links and the new digital cameras were installed in March 2021.	
One camera in the town centre of Braintree has been replaced. Further upgrades will be carried out following completion of the pedestrianisation work which includes providing for the CCTV upgrade to ensure no further ground works are required.	
<b>Commence development of the 3G pitch at Halstead Leisure Centre</b>	
Councillors approved the funding for the works required at a Cabinet meeting in February 2021. Works are now underway. All tarmacking has been completed and we are awaiting delivery of the new artificial grass football pitch. Works are expected to be completed by the end of June 2021.	

## Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Continue with Livewell Child initiatives to support families to live healthier lives and become more active</b>	
With Schools closed during the fourth quarter up until the 8th March 2021, progress has been slow. Work has continued around introducing the BlitzFitMe app, once Covid restrictions allow. A promotional video has been made by BlitzFitMe and circulated to	




schools to encourage better engagement, which highlights what schools might benefit from if they were to implement the app. It is hoped this will be piloted in one of the Livewell Primary Schools for the wider school community to use and benefit from.	
<b>Improve awareness of mental health services, identifying gaps in service provision and potential opportunities for partnership working</b>	
The Young People's mental health meeting took place in January 2021. This included continuing plans for resource packs, discussing potential funding for the packs, how to identify the young people, the plans to engage with partners, releasing a podcast by the youth service and creating a list of useful apps. Research is taking place on Men's Mental Health to look at campaigns and gathering information from other Public Health colleagues of any targeted mental health work. Internal mental health work is also an important focus around promoting what we can to reduce stigma and raise awareness. A Mental Health Awareness week is being planned to take place in May 2021 and will include meeting the mental health first aiders, Pilates, meditation, Walk & Talk 4 Men and a craft session	
<b>Work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans</b>	
The Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan has now been completed and is awaiting referendum. The Saling Neighbourhood Plan is currently under examination. Other Plans in the District are proceeding at various stages with support from the RCCE and officers within the planning policy team. It is expected that Kelvedon will be the next neighbourhood Plan to reach examination stage.	
<b>Reduce the number of rough sleepers across the district by developing a range of support services</b>	
Funding provided by MCHLG to provide access to hotel accommodation for rough sleepers has been extended until March 2021. Through partnership working, the housing service are looking to share access to a mental health navigator to help individuals with more complex needs move away from rough sleeping	
<b>Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district</b>	
During lockdown, a number of social activities and services have not been available. A meeting was held in February 2021 with partner organisations to get updates from them and a further meeting has been arranged for May 2021 to discuss an action plan for when things start to remobilise.	
<b>Continue to work with Community 360 to support volunteers across the district harnessing the energy of new volunteers</b>	
We continue to work closely with Community 360 and have supported the recruitment of volunteers for the vaccination centres set up across the district. We also continue to offer support to Town and Parish Councils and voluntary groups to enable them to maintain the work they have been doing to support their communities during the pandemic	
<b>Provide support and assistance to the most vulnerable people across our district in response to Covid-19 through the Community Hub</b>	
Over the year the community hub has dealt with 413 referrals for a variety of support including food shopping, collection and delivery of food parcels, prescription delivery, mental health calls and befriending. We have made contact with 3121 individuals deemed clinically extremely vulnerable and 127 people identified as shielding.	
<b>Support our communities and local organisations to respond to issues that have emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic increasing long term strength and resilience</b>	
In partnership with Community 360, the Council has distributed £16,100 of funding from the DEFRA Emergency Assistance Grant for food and supplies to eight groups across the district that require funding to assist them in providing food and essential supplies to individuals most in need. In partnership with Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services, the Council has distributed £13,627 to children and young people groups to support them with re-mobilisation. A further £33,184 has been distributed to voluntary groups to enable them to continue to provide support to those deemed clinically extremely vulnerable within the Braintree District. In the fourth quarter, our Community Transport team has transported	

158 individuals to their Covid vaccination appointment. .	
In the fourth quarter, the Councillor Community Grant scheme awarded 24 grants to the value of £23,653 bringing the total number of grants awarded for the year to 67 with a value of £67,043 which represents 70% of the available funds. Full Council has agreed to carry forward the underspend to the new financial year, however, due to Purdah, the application process will not start again until May 2021.	▶






### Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Commence construction of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park</b>	
The contract remains within budget but the programme has been extended to July 2021 to allow for the completion of additional side roads	▶
<b>Commence the build of the I-Construct Innovation in Construction Hub at the Braintree Enterprise Centre</b>	
Building work is progressing well on the I-Construct hub and the building is taking shape. The two-storey hub is expected to open in the Autumn and will consist of workshop and demonstration spaces, a technology lab and conference facilities. It will become home to a team offering one-on-one mentoring, grant funding and support to small and medium sized firms connected to the construction industry. The hub's activities will be run by the Haven Gateway Partnership and will serve businesses in Essex, Kent and East Sussex.	▶
<b>Carry out restoration works to the Bocking Windmill to preserve the building for future generations to enjoy</b>	
Works to replace one of the sails on Bocking windmill continue with the sails being manufactured at the millwrights in Suffolk. All Ancient Monument and listed building consent has now been received.	▶
<b>Raise the profile of the Braintree District as a place to do business</b>	
As part of a joint project with the North Essex Economic Board, BDC have invested in a pilot programme to support independent retail businesses. 'Click it Local' have been commissioned to provide a six month service to deliver local goods within the district, which is likened to that of Amazon delivery, at a local level. To date, 17 district businesses have signed up to the scheme, with a further 20 potential businesses in the pipeline. It is expected that the programme will launch in April 2021 and anticipates additional businesses to sign up as the programme is launched.	▶
<b>Provide business and employment support and advice for those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic</b>	

Support continues to be provided to businesses and individuals through either the business newsletter, closed Facebook page, over the phone or through the daily patrols of the Town centres and interactions with businesses. The 'Additional Restrictions' grant scheme covering the impact of the Covid restrictions from December 2020 went live in February 2021 and unlike other schemes included businesses that do not have rateable premises.	
<b>Minimise the barriers to economic growth and support the needs of businesses to start up, innovate and grow.</b>	
The Council continues to provide support to businesses and to signpost those looking to start or to grow schemes to advice and support that will aid their business. In addition to plans to increase business units at the Enterprise Centre to be located at the Horizon 120 development in Braintree, there are plans to create a further centre in Witham and a detailed business case is being drafted for presentation to Cabinet in the Autumn.	
<b>Continue to work with businesses to make physical improvements to industrial areas in the district</b>	
Ten businesses across six industrial estates in the district have secured the funding needed to improve the external appearance of their premises. Grants of up to £5,000 were offered to businesses willing to match the funds.	

### Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Help to strengthen economic recovery across the district working towards the shared vision in the North Essex Economic Strategy</b>	
Working in partnership with colleagues in other authorities, the Council has secured 1.7million pounds to spend on business support across the area. An agreement programme of early phase projects has been completed which includes a local shopping network, the communications approach and how we will be supporting Essex County Council schemes including Kickstart and apprenticeships. A programme officer is being recruited to oversee this programme of works.	
<b>Identify education and retraining programmes and actively promote these enabling access new work opportunities</b>	
A skills workshop was held in March 2021 with key stakeholders (colleges, universities and skills providers) to discuss what skills support is required moving forward in the recovery from the pandemic and to define a pipeline of projects. The Council continues to promote Government skills based initiatives and local schemes to the business community on a regular basis via our Facebook group and business newsletter including opportunities available via the Essex Apprenticeship Hub and Essex Kickstart scheme.	
<b>Maximise opportunities for businesses in the district to access grant funding</b>	
All grant funding information is updated on a regular basis on our website and through the Braintree district business facebook page and business newsletter. Through the various business grant schemes that have been launched throughout the year, the Council has processed 9,452 grant applications issuing more than £46.8million in grants.	



# DELIVERING AND INNOVATING







## Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
<b>Address the challenges of reduced income from Government funding and as a result of Covid-19, by working collectively across the organisation to reduce costs and improve services without impacting on service delivery by being efficient, effective and commercially focussed.</b>	
It is expected that the majority of reduced income will be covered by support received from Central Government. The Government has provided the Council with Emergency Funding of £1.95m in 2020/21 to help meet the impact of the Covid pandemic on the Council's finances and has also introduced an income losses compensation scheme, under which the Council has received £700k for the year to the end of November 2020. A final claim will be made for the period December 2020 to March 2021 in May 2021. The scheme provides compensation at the rate of 75p in every £1 for losses above a threshold of 5% against budget. Against a difficult economic environment the Commercial team have worked to directly support traded income and savings of £120k over the financial year. An Investment and Development Programme has also been set up to address the challenges of reduced income from Government funding through a number of projects across different services	▶
<b>Address the challenges and recognise the opportunities of the changing work environment as a result of Covid-19 for the whole organisation including steering staff and members through the recovery journey</b>	
A further staff survey was undertaken in March 2021 to assess whether staff opinions had changed having been working from home for a longer period. The survey was adapted slightly to make it more relevant to the current situation with some questions remaining the same to enable a direct comparison with the survey carried out in June 2020. Information from the survey together with information captured from remobilisation opportunities discussed with heads of services and additional research carried out will be put into a report to be presented to the Joint Executive Team in May 2021. Actions agreed at this meeting will be taken forward.	▶
<b>Upgrade our website to comply with the web accessibility regulations enabling residents, visitors and businesses to transact with us easily</b>	
The Council's website has been upgraded and the new version went live at the end of November to comply with the web accessibility regulations.	✓
<b>Review our Asset Management Strategy to ensure Council assets are fit for purpose, managed effectively and provide a valuable income stream for the Council</b>	
The Asset Management Strategy has been reviewed and will be incorporated into the overarching Corporate Investment and Development Strategy.	✓
<b>Use customer information and feedback to improve services ensuring they remain customer</b>	

















<b>friendly whilst working towards retaining the customer service excellence standard for the authority</b>	
The Customer Service Excellence Assessment is scheduled to take place in April 2021. The evidence to support the assessment has been collated and a two day programme drawn up for the assessment to take place virtually.	
<b>Continue to develop relationships with Town and Parish Councils</b>	
We have monthly meetings with Town and Parish Clerks, and the agenda is determined by all parties based on emerging issues. Key officers are invited depending on the agenda items and attendees are steadily increasing. Weekly newsletters are sent out updating on the latest District news, Covid related issues and emerging priorities. The feedback received from Parish Clerks is positive to date	



### **Actions carried out in partnership with others**

<b>Project description and comments</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Consider and determine the future approach of our leisure services</b>	
The Council is in discussions with Fusion around the options for the future approach of our Leisure Services. This includes looking at the financial recovery of Fusion Lifestyle after the impact of the pandemic.	
<b>Look to develop health priorities in various localities within the district in partnership with the newly formed NHS Primary Care Networks</b>	
The focus for the NHS continues to be around the pandemic and the vaccination programme. Talks will resume with Primary Care Networks later in the year.	
<b>Continue to improve health and wellbeing across the district through our work with Health and Wellbeing partners</b>	
The Council continues to work with health and wellbeing partners to deliver the Covid response by supporting residents across the district including those in need such as residents who are shielding, children through holiday activities and the befriending programme. A review will take place in May 2021 to review the terms of reference and priorities in light of the pandemic.	
<b>Continue to protect local communities and tackle priority problems with the Community Safety Partnership</b>	
Community Hub meetings continue to take place on a monthly basis focussing predominantly on ASB/neighbour nuisance cases. The Local Exploitation Group met for the first time to discuss identifying hotspot areas within the district and trends in exploitation. Officers have started to attend a Mid Essex mental health forum which concentrates on individual cases of ASB where mental health is a significant factor to help improve our understanding in this area. Projects that have not been delivered due to Covid will be reviewed and carried forward if required. The action plan for 2021/22 is currently being developed.	













## Section 3: Managing the Business

### Our Performance Indicators in Detail

	2020/21 Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Yearly Target	Status at the end of the year
Performance Indicator									
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES									
Number of affordable homes delivered	0	84	95	41	37		220	150	
Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district	89%	89%	89%	94%	n/a	n/a	94%	n/a	n/a
Number of homes granted planning permission	288	395	696	1,468	212		2,847	845	
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT									
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	46.50%	53.47%	46.96%	45.23%	60%		48.04%	60%	
<b>Comments</b> The Q4 and end of year figures are estimated and awaiting validation by ECC. In the fourth quarter, we collected 4,360 tonnes of Dry Mixed Recycling which is the highest tonnage collected in a quarter for the past 10 years, which reflects the concerted effort being made to encourage customers to recycle as much of their waste as possible. As expected the tonnage of Bio-waste was down by 978 tonnes, (garden waste suspension). The residual waste tonnage was slightly up by 241 tonnes which may reflect the fact that residents are continuing to working from home									
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	120kgs	117kgs	118kgs	117kgs	117kgs		472kgs	470kgs	
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a	1%	5%	7%	6%		4%	6%	
<b>Comments</b> Recorded three times a year – July, November and March.									
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (282)	100% (202)	100% (184)	100% (207)	100%		100% (875)	100%	
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						Awaiting outturn		
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES									
Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (calculated in days from point of referral to approval)	86 days	149 days	246 days	136 days	90 days		154 days	90 days	
<b>Comments</b> The target has not been met throughout the year due to the pandemic and issues with supplies in building materials. In the fourth									

	2020/2 Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Yearly Target	Status at the end of the year
Performance Indicator									
quarter, we have managed to bring the average waiting time down despite the further lockdown and we will continue to monitor the situation and keep customers informed as we work towards getting back to pre-pandemic levels.									
Participation levels across all our sports centres	0	44,894	0	0	n/a	n/a	44,894	n/a	n/a
<b>Comments</b> Due to the third lockdown, leisure centres across the district have remained closed to deal with the pandemic. The targets have been suspended for this year due to the pandemic.									
Number of customers using out Handyman scheme	8	30	22	11	n/a	n/a	71	n/a	n/a
<b>Comments</b> The Handyman service for any internal requests is suspended during the lockdown periods. The Handyman scheme is currently only able to deal with external requests.									
Number of homelessness cases prevented	37	57	52	66	n/a	n/a	212	n/a	n/a
Number of vulnerable people assisted through the Community Hub	308	43	42	48	n/a	n/a	441	n/a	n/a
Achieve at least a 1% increase in adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						58%	n/a	n/a
<b>Comments</b> The figure reports from November 2019 to November 2020. The restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic have impacted on people's ability to take part in sport and physical activity with activity levels hit hardest during the first national lockdown. Sports England are working with partners to increase levels through a number of campaigns and funding opportunities.									
PROMOTING PROSPERITY									
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	5.0%	5.5%	5.2%	5.2%	n/a	n/a	5.2%	n/a	n/a
<b>Comments</b> Slightly below east of England rate of 5.6% and the national rate of 6.5%									
Number of new business start-ups across the district	205	352	299	283	n/a	n/a	1,139	n/a	n/a
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	699	364	807	1,805	n/a	n/a	3,675	n/a	n/a
Number of business grants processed	2,445	219	1027	1541	n/a	n/a	5,232	n/a	n/a
Amount of business grants paid out	£28,470,000	£2,426,000	£1,400,000	£6,099,177	n/a	n/a	£38,395,177	n/a	n/a
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING									
Average call answer time in the Customer Service Centre	19 seconds	34 seconds	23 seconds	38 seconds	15 seconds		29 seconds	15 seconds	
<b>Comments</b> In the fourth quarter, the CSC handled 28,388 calls, an increase of 22% on the previous quarter. The service have dealt with an increasing number of request for clear sacks due to the libraries being closed through lockdown (where customers are normally able to collect clear sacks), an increase in calls from businesses in relation to the various new grants issued, Council Tax enquiries due to bills being issued and payments for the renewals of second green bins and bulky waste collections which continue to be very popular. Over the year, the CSC dealt with a total of 109,250 calls resolving 81% of the calls at first point of contact. A recent satisfaction survey carried out has shown that overall customer satisfaction when interacting with the CSC has risen to									



Performance Indicator	2020/21 Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Yearly Target	Status at the end of the year
98.59%. We will continue to monitor peak times of calls and enquiries along with resourcing levels during these busier periods.									
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	98.05%	96.86%	98.72%	98.65%	99.25%		98.13%	99.25%	
<b>Comments</b> In the fourth quarter, 3,289 out of 3,334 invoices were processed within 30 days of receipt. A new eProcurement system will go live in the new financial year which will assist in the payment of invoices in a timely manner.									
Number of people transacting with us online	21,330	27,849	24,449	30,980	n/a	n/a	104,608	n/a	n/a
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	12.38 days	15.19 days	14.91 days	14.99 days	22 days		14.37 days	22 days	
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	3.73 days	3.94 days	3.69 days	4.82 days	6 days		4.05 days	6 days	
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	94.91%	87.80%	88.49%	87.32%	90%		89.52%	90%	
<b>Comments</b> For the fourth quarter, there were 124 out of 142 complaints responded to within timescale. Delays in providing responses have occurred in Operations, Planning and Housing. Complaints are becoming more complex requiring additional time to investigate and provide a comprehensive response. Customers are kept informed when delays occur. For the year, a total of 496 stage one complaints were received and 444 responded to within timescale.									
Collection rate for Council Tax	29.91%	57.63%	84.63%	96.65%	98%		96.65%	98%	
<b>Comments</b> As reported during the course of the year performance is marginally down on the previous year. Recovery action has been limited due to the impact of the restrictions on residents and the Magistrates Courts have been closed for the majority of the year. The Revenues Team has focussed on sending soft reminders, telephoning and texting those council taxpayers which are in arrears and this has had a positive impact on the collection performance.									
Collection rate for Business Rates	26.94%	54.90%	81.99%	95.72%	98.50%		95.72%	98.50%	
<b>Comments</b> As reported during the course of the year performance is lower than the previous year. The net amount collectable was reduced for the year because the extended retail rate relief scheme meant that many businesses did not have anything to pay for the year. Approximately £19m of this relief was awarded during the year. The Revenues Team have been sending soft reminders, telephoning and texting those businesses which were in arrears. Application for liability orders, in respect of the arrears, to the Magistrates Courts will recommence in the new year.									

## **Complaints**

The quarterly complaints analysis for the fourth quarter of 2020/21 is detailed below. This is compared with 2019/20 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

<b>Complaint Category</b>	<b>Q1 2020/21</b>	<b>Q2 2020/21</b>	<b>Q3 2020/21</b>	<b>Q4 2020/21</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Justified	43 (45)	51 (52)	53 (51)	50 (44)	197 (192)
Not Justified	55 (54)	56 (69)	43 (49)	73 (49)	227 (221)
Partially Justified	19 (23)	22 (24)	19 (14)	28 (29)	88 (89)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2)	1 (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>117 (121)</b>	<b>129 (145)</b>	<b>115 (114)</b>	<b>152 (124)</b>	<b>513 (504)</b>

## **Comments**

The number of complaints received in the fourth quarter has increased in comparison to the previous quarters and for the year, there has been a slight increase in the number of complaints received. At the time of writing the report, one complaint at stage 3 of the complaints process was still being investigated.

The majority of complaints in the fourth quarter relate to the Councils Operations service and are mainly in respect of missed waste collections. There are a number of reasons for missed collections such as restricted access to collection points caused by parked cars or road closures, collections being overlooked by crews due to agency staff not being familiar with collection points and overlooked assisted collections.

The Planning service is also continuing to see a higher than normal number of complaints relating to the decision making process for planning applications. A number of these complaints have been escalated through the complaints process.

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

In the third quarter of 2020/21, of the 152 complaints received:

- 142 are stage one complaints
- 5 are stage two complaints
- 5 are stage three complaints

## **A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:**

In the fourth quarter of 2020/21, the LGO has received four new complaint enquiries and issued a final decision notice following investigations which found that there had been no significant injustice to the complainant or evidence of fault by the council.

The new complaints received by the LGO are in respect of Planning and Governance. Two of the complaint enquiries, one for Planning and Governance, the LGO have declined to investigate. In the planning instance, the customer had exercised their right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. In respect of the Governance complaint, this was not investigated as there was no

evidence of injustice. Two other complaints, both for planning, have been assigned to an investigator and formal enquiries are being made

## **Our Organisation**

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

<b>People: Indicators of Performance</b>	<b>Q1 20/21</b>	<b>Q2 20/21</b>	<b>Q3 20/21</b>	<b>Q4 20/21</b>	<b>Change on previous period</b>	<b>Yearly Target</b>
Total headcount	487	489	496	499	+ 3	-
Total staff FTE	436.74	437.5	445.3	449.84	+ 4.54	-
Level of employee turnover	1.44%	0.82%	1.41%	1.4%	- 0.01%	-
Number of leavers	7	4	7	7	0	-
Number of starters	2	6	14	10	- 4	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	0.68 days	1.62 days	1.91 days	1.31 days	- 0.6 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	94%	72.4%	61.3%	57.1%	Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1693.5	1538.5	1423	1459.5	+ 36.5	-
Number of delegates	58	89	60	73	+ 13	-
Number of apprentices **	19	16	14	16	+ 2	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	470	464	466	481	492	499

\*\* 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.

<b>Health &amp; Safety: Indicators of Performance</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	
	(2019/20 figure in brackets)				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	10 (11)	13 (4)	10(14)	12 (11)	<i>The majority of the reported accidents this quarter were as a result of slips trip and falls due to the icy conditions.</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	8 (9)	11 (3)	8 (14)	9 (10)	<i>In the last quarter all but three accidents were reported by the waste crews</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	2 (1)	2 (0)	1 (0)	3 (0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	0 (1)	0 (1)	1 (0)	0 (1)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	0 (6)	5 (4)	18.5 (7)	16 (0)	<i>Three accidents resulted in lost time from work.</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	2 (1)	4 (0)	1 (1)	0 (4)	
Number of near miss incidents	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	<i>An agency worker working with a waste crew narrowly avoided serious injury with an oncoming vehicle whilst crossing the road.</i>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	0 (1)	2 (1)	3 (0)	2 (1)	
Number of claims settled	1 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)	

## Financial Performance

### Summary

This part of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the year. It examines the 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 spend on capital projects in the year. The report provides a brief commentary on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the Council's budget position.

The outturn financial position for the year is as follows:

- An **overall adverse variance against the budget of £2.351million** before taking into account any exceptional financial support provided to the Council to meet the costs and losses of income from the coronavirus pandemic.
- The overall **budget impact of the pandemic** is an adverse variance of **£3.163million** (net of savings made by the Council and additional income received from activities that are directly linked to the impact of the pandemic on services). This budgetary impact has been offset by the additional exceptional funding received through various streams made available by government and other external bodies.
- The position regarding the **base budget** is a net **positive variance of £812,000**, after carry forwards, which is in line with the forecast that was reported at Q3 (-£813,000)
- Taking into account the reported budget variance, changes in earmarked reserves, and other planned movements in balances, the unallocated **General Fund balance** has **reduced by £883,000**.
- **Expenditure on capital projects** for the year was **£31.587million** with significant progress being made on Horizon 120 Business Park, Manor Street regeneration, and town centre improvements.

### Background

Full Council approved a net budget of £15.226 million for the 2020/21 financial year. Financing of the budget was to be from a combination of: general government grants (£22,000); business rates (£5.192 million); and Council Tax (£10.012 million). During the year budgets were updated in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure.

### General Fund Revenue Spending

Service	Updated Budget £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Adverse (Positive) variance				Total £'000	RAG Status
			Staffing £'000	Other Exp. £'000	Gross Income £'000	Carry forwards £'000		
Asset Management	(2,471)	(2,498)	(11)	40	(56)	-	(27)	G
Community Services	399	429	(9)	(40)	79	-	30	A
Corporate Management	1,462	1,457	(5)	(9)	5	-	(5)	G
Economic Development	200	206	0	6	0	-	6	A
Environment & Leisure	992	1,139	(111)	(84)	342	-	147	R
Finance	1,480	1,708	(216)	(64)	475	33	228	R
Governance	1,176	1,078	(26)	(63)	(17)	8	(98)	G
Housing Services	932	826	(19)	(64)	(63)	40	(106)	G
Human Resources	369	378	14	(22)	(3)	20	9	A
ICT & Facilities	1,651	1,633	29	(55)	(9)	17	(18)	G
Marketing and Communications	560	537	5	(54)	26	-	(23)	G
Operations	6,161	6,786	(38)	(46)	679	30	625	R
Strategic Investment	23	23	-	-	-	-	-	G
Sustainable Development	965	1,158	(211)	49	285	70	193	R
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>13,899</b>	<b>14,860</b>	<b>(594)</b>	<b>(406)</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>R</b>
Corporate Financing	1,627	1,744	-	(33)	150	-	117	R
Covid-19 central fund	0	973	69	904	-	-	973	R
Efficiency target	(300)	-	300	-	-	-	300	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>15,226</b>	<b>17,577</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>2,351</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>Emergency funding &amp; grants</b>		(2,255)	-	-	(2,521)	266	(2,255)	G
<b>National Leisure Recovery Fund</b>		(173)	-	-	(173)	-	(173)	G
<b>Income compensation</b>		(735)	-	-	(735)	-	(735)	G
<b>Net Total General Fund</b>	<b>15,226</b>	<b>14,414</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>(1,536)</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>(812)</b>	<b>G</b>

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

## **Analysis of the Total Budget Variance**

The total variance against the approved budget for the year (before exceptional funding) additional is an overall adverse variance of £2.351million.

It is difficult to be precise about the extent to which variances arise solely due to the Covid-19 pandemic and, therefore, judgements have been made in making this assessment:

Reason for budget variance:	Adverse (positive) variance					RAG Status
	Staffing <sup>1 2</sup> £'000	Other Expenditure £'000	Income £'000	Carry Forwards £'000	Total £'000	
Covid-19 <sup>3</sup>	119	969	2,075	-	3,163	R
Base budget	(344)	(504)	(182)	218	(812)	G
<b>Total Budget Variance</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>2,351</b>	<b>R</b>

<sup>1</sup> Excludes the value of staff time redirected towards Covid-19 related activities where this was met from existing resources

<sup>2</sup> Other staffing variances are shown net of the £300k corporate efficiency target

<sup>3</sup> Net of mitigating savings identified against losses on fees and charges, and additional income where activities increased e.g. sale of dry recycling material

The £3.163million budget variance attributed to Covid-19 was met from a combination of: government emergency funding; New Burdens grants for administering business grants and reliefs and payments to individuals; a portion of the overall funding awarded to the Council following a successful claim to the National Leisure Recovery Fund; claims made under a government Income Compensation Scheme for fees and charges; and other external income from partners e.g. Essex County Council.

The variance attributed to Covid-19 reduced from that projected at Q3 by £385,000. Some of the expenditure that was assumed at that time, including contractor claims under capital schemes, is now expected to be incurred during 2021/22. During the quarter mitigating savings were also identified which have also been reflected in the amount that could be claimed under the Income Compensation Scheme.

The positive variance of £812,000 to the base budget is in line with the equivalent figure that was projected at Q3 (-£813,000).

## **Commentary on the impact on the budget due to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

### **Staffing**

Whilst there was additional staffing expenditure incurred in some service areas, a significant amount of the Council's response has been met by reprioritising work, coupled with staff generally working increased hours. This element of the resource input to Covid has yet to be quantified, but part of the impact is reflected in the increased value of leave and flexi-time that staff have accrued during the year and which is being carried over (+£106,000). Where possible, staff were redeployed as the demand from customers for their service was reduced e.g. community transport staff were closely involved with the community hub and collection of shopping and prescriptions for vulnerable residents.

The additional cost of staff incurred on Covid-19 is split across expenditure reflected in services (£50,000), which is mainly due to social distancing measures introduced in operational service areas; and that charged to the central Covid-19 fund (£69,000) which reflected additional hours claimed for specific Covid related activities, e.g. marshals, enforcement, and supporting virtual meetings, etc.

### **Other Expenditure**

The majority of the £969,000 increase in expenditure was met through the central Covid-19 fund which totalled £904,000. Expenditure incurred from this fund included financial support to the Council's leisure management operator; investment in IT to support home working by staff and virtual meetings; additional cleaning and personal protective equipment in office spaces and for operational staff; publicity and

information; and to provide temporary housing accommodation for rough sleepers and those at risk of homelessness.

## **Income**

Fees and charges income which is derived from customers and service users was significantly impacted by the pandemic, particularly in areas such as car parks, planning, building control, market rents, trade waste, community transport, leisure management fees, and income from room hire at both the Town Hall Centre and the Braintree Enterprise Centre. Part of this shortfall was offset by savings in staff and other expenditure where this could be flexed according to the fall in demand, with the balance of the shortfall being included in claims to the government for support under its income compensation scheme. At the start of the year it was anticipated there would be a shortfall in fees from local searches of the land registry; however, the introduction of a stamp duty holiday reversed that position.

In waste management, there was an upturn in income from the sale of dry recyclate and glass, along with an increase in requests for the bulky waste collection service. Where the Council paid rent to provide temporary housing accommodation these costs were eligible for housing benefit leading to some recovery to the Housing Service.

Other areas of activity where shortfalls in income arose included dividends received from pooled fund investments and much lower levels of interest income as the ultra-low interest rates negatively impacted returns from short-term deposits. Reduced income was also received from the arrangement with the major precepting bodies, which is based on the collection performance on council tax which was lower than would normally be expected.

## **Government and other financial support**

Government provided financial support to local authorities through a number of different schemes, some of which required claims or evidence to be submitted, whereas other grants were paid based on assessments made by government with individual sums then allocated to local authorities.

The majority of financial support received was in the form of emergency funding which was paid in a number tranches. The total amount received in 2020/21 was £1.952 million. In addition, New Burdens grants totalling £483,000 (including £166,800 which was paid after the end of the financial year) were provided mainly in recognition of the extra work involved in administering business rate reliefs and grants, hardship funding, and self-isolation payments to individuals.

Claims were made for losses incurred on fees and charges through the government's income compensation scheme. The scheme covers net losses (after taking into account mitigating savings) that exceed 5% of the original service budget, with compensation being paid at a rate of 75p in £. The outturn figure includes a total amount of £735,182 as being expected from this scheme. Interim claims have been submitted and paid by government, but the final amount that the Council will retain is subject to a reconciliation and assurance review that will be undertaken during 2021/22.

Working with our partner operator, Fusion Lifestyle (Fusion), the Council was able to secure additional external funding through the National Leisure Recovery Fund, part of which has been used to offset some of the financial support given directly by the Council to Fusion in the year. The balance of monies from this fund is intended to assist Fusion in remobilisation of services in line with the government's roadmap to lifting restrictions.

Other funding, including that distributed via Essex County Council, has been available to cover eligible expenditure incurred on contact tracing, compliance and enforcement; and re-opening of the high street.

The total amount of exceptional funding received/ receivable for the year is £3.429million. A balance of £266,000 of this funding has been carried over into 2021/22, recognising that there are still ongoing aspects of the pandemic that will give rise to further financial consequences, including continuation of the administration of business grants and self-isolation and hardship payments, as well a requirement to undertake post payment assurance reviews.

## Detailed Commentary on Budget Variances

### Staffing

Staffing budgets include both directly employed staff, and bought-in/ agency staff, the latter being used where additional resources are required to meet increased service demands and/ or the need for specialist skills; to provide cover in cases of absence (e.g. vacancies, holidays, sickness, maternity etc.); or where in-house staff are assigned to work on other projects and priorities.

Service budgets were increased during the year to reflect an additional 0.75% increase in the cost of living pay award which was agreed at 2.75% from April 2020.

Further detail of the staffing budget variances is provided in the following table:

Service – Staffing Budgets	Updated Budget	Actual Spend	Adverse/ (Positive) variance	RAG Status
	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Asset Management	341	330	(11)	G
Community Services	410	401	(9)	G
Corporate Management	1,446	1,445	(1)	G
Economic Development	227	227	-	G
Environment & Leisure	1,862	1,751	(111)	G
Finance	2,834	2,618	(216)	G
Governance	726	700	(26)	G
Housing Services	1,049	1,030	(19)	G
Human Resources	291	305	14	A
ICT & Facilities	850	879	29	A
Marketing & Communications	448	453	5	A
Operations	6,103	6,065	(38)	G
Strategic Investment	754	754	-	G
Sustainable Development	1,667	1,456	(211)	G
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>19,008</b>	<b>18,414</b>	<b>(594)</b>	<b>G</b>
Corporate Financing	10	10	-	G
Covid-19 central fund	-	69	69	R
Efficiency factor	(300)	-	300	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,718</b>	<b>18,493</b>	<b>(225)</b>	<b>G</b>

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

### **Commentary on staffing variations:**

Across all service areas staffing budgets were underspent by £594,000 partially offset by £69,000 additional expenditure under the Covid-19 central fund. After allowing for the corporate efficiency factor of £300,000, the net underspend was £225,000.

The main service areas contributing towards this overall position were:

**Finance (-£216,000):** During the year 4 posts were vacant, although two of these have now been filled. Efficiency savings were made where work was absorbed by existing teams but external funding had been received. Other savings were generated from a flexible retirement, approved after the original budget was set, and from staff reducing hours and/ or being appointed at pay points lower than was assumed.

**Sustainable Development (-£211,000):** Mainly due to 3 vacancies within **Development Management** although two of these posts were filled in the latter quarter of the year. There was also a saving made from staff working reduced hours. The net underspend for the year was -£100,000 after deducting additional expenditure that was incurred on agency cover. **Landscape Services**, which is currently being restructured, had underspends totalling £97,000 due to vacant posts, reduced hours, and a change in management arrangements.



**Environment and Leisure (-£111,000):** Lower spend largely due to vacant posts in **Building Control** and **Health Development**.

### **Other Service Expenditure**

Other expenditure is overspent by a net £465,000. This includes the additional spending charged to the central Covid-19 fund of £904,000, which is partially offset by a net underspend across services of £439,000, the main reasons for which are as follows:

**Environment & Leisure (-£84,000):** With **leisure facilities** closed for much of the year the level of spend against the contract variations budget was lower than would be the case when facilities are operating normally. This coupled with lower **service charges for the Braintree pool** resulted in an overall underspend on **Leisure Management** of £47,000. The balance of £37,000 was spread across activities within this service area.

**Finance (-£64,000):** Additional **Housing Benefit** expenditure was incurred due to an increase in the number of claimants in receipt of benefits coupled with a slightly reduced rate of subsidy leading to an overall over spend against budget of £69,000. Additional expenditure of £45,000 was incurred on the **Local Tax system** for new modules required to administer business grants, hardship funding, and test and trace self-isolation payments. Across the service there were a number of areas where budget savings were also made: **Insurance premia** following a retender of the contract (-£38,000); **BACS system and bank charges** (-£34,000 including a prior year credit adjustment); **court fees** (-£16,000); reduced **recharges from Essex County Council** for services provided at libraries as these were closed for periods of the year (-£21,000); and other underspends totalling £61,000 across a range of budget heads: e.g. mileage claims, training budgets, bought-in support for internal audit, etc.

**Governance (-£63,000):** **Member and Civic** travel and expenses were lower (-£23,000) reflecting the limited opportunity to attend Council meetings and civic events due to the Covid-19 restrictions; whilst expenditure on **Members' allowances** was also less than originally estimated (-£20,000) - the original budget had been set based on the assumptions that all ward seats would be occupied for the whole year, and a certain number of special responsibility allowances would be paid.

**Housing (-£64,000):** With restrictions in place on landlords evicting tenants there was a reduction in demand for **temporary housing** arranged via Registered Social Landlords, coupled with a credit in respect of prior year spend, this led to an overall underspend of £50,000 against budget. In addition, the take-up of financial support through the Council's **rent advance scheme** was lower, for which there was also an improvement in the recovery of advances previously paid, giving a total underspend of £23,000 for the year.

**ICT & Facilities (-£55,000):** With the need for extensive home working by staff this resulted in a reduced amount of spend on **Causeway House** utilities than budgeted (-£26,000). In addition, the budget for Corporate Business Systems was under spent by £20,000 as the team focused on supporting the authority in the transition to home working and virtual meetings.

**Marketing and Communications (-£54,000):** Remote working reduced the usage of print facilities such as the multi-functional devices located within offices (-£15,000); coupled with a lower level of spend on non-covid related **publicity and promotion** and **graphic design & print** (-£31,000).

**Operations (-£46,000 net):** Variances to budget included additional expenditure on the transport and processing of **mixed dry recycling material** (+£100,000) for which higher tonnages were collected from households, which is likely to reflect the switch in trends towards more on-line shopping during the national lockdowns and whilst non-essential shops have continued to be subject to restrictions. A higher than budgeted spend on vehicle hire (+£66,000), which was initially as result of increased vehicle requirements to implement social distancing for staff, and then later to provide cover for vehicles requiring MOTs for which a backlog had formed due to the temporary suspension by the government on vehicle testing. Where demand for services fell during the year, budget underspends were recorded: disposal costs for **trade waste** (-£61,000), maintenance expenditure at **parks and open spaces** (-£38,000), and

operational expenditure at **Cordons Farm** due to the suspension of green waste collections for a period of time (-£16,000).

Whilst most service areas recorded net underspends against budget, there were some areas that had net overspends:

**Asset Management (+£40,000):** Additional running costs were incurred across the property portfolio, including maintenance and emergency works, surveys, valuations, non-recoverable service charges, and void costs on a property for which a prospective tenant pulled out just prior to completion at the beginning of the pandemic.

**Sustainable Development (+£49,000):** the **Landscape Services** incurred unbudgeted expenditure of £24,000 on trees damaged by storms; and unbudgeted legal fees were incurred on **Planning Enforcement** (+£34,000).

### External Income

A significant proportion of the Council's budget is reliant on external income. Grants and subsidies from government, alongside income from business rates are major elements. These income streams are fairly predictable or change in response to compensating changes in expenditure. Where uncertainty exists this is managed via earmarked reserves. Other external income is more susceptible to changes in external factors and demand, and is summarised in the following table:

Service	Updated Budget	Joint Financing & Other Reimburs.	Sales, Fees & Charges	Rents & Service Charges	Other Income	Total	RAG status
	£000	5,074	6,238	3,167	1,944	16,423	
<i>Adverse (Positive) Variance £000 against Budget :</i>							
Asset Management	3,374	-	11	(61)	(6)	(56)	G
Community Services	290	(2)	70	-	11	79	R
Corporate Management Plan	10	5	-	-	-	5	A
Economic Development	-	2	-	-	(2)	-	G
Environment & Leisure	1,350	9	326	-	7	342	R
Finance	2,510	362	-	-	113	475	R
Governance	197	(4)	(16)	-	3	(17)	G
Housing	92	1	(67)	5	(2)	(63)	G
Human Resources	4	-	(3)	-	-	(3)	G
ICT & Facilities	2	(9)	-	-	-	(9)	G
Marketing & Communications	165	26	37	-	(37)	26	A
Operations	5,484	(141)	777	58	(15)	679	R
Strategic Investment	378	-	-	-	-	-	G
Sustainable Development	1,706	(21)	290	-	16	285	R
<b>Service Total</b>	<b>15,562</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>1,425</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>1,743</b>	<b>R</b>
Corporate Financing	861	119	-	-	31	150	R
<b>Total before COVID-19 grants</b>	<b>16,423</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>1,425</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1,893</b>	<b>R</b>
<b>Emergency funding &amp; grants</b>		-	-	-	(2,521)	(2,521)	G
<b>National Leisure Recovery Fund</b>		-	-	-	(173)	(173)	G
<b>Income compensation</b>		-	(735)	-	-	(735)	G
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>16,423</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(2,575)</b>	<b>(1,536)</b>	<b>G</b>

RAG Status: G = positive or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = adverse variance greater than 5% and >£50k at Individual Business Plan level

### **Joint Financing & Other Reimbursements**

Budgets under this category cover a multitude of arrangements with other local authorities and public bodies, as well as recoveries from third parties:

- Essex County Council's contributions toward services, including waste management, community transport, public health, and horticultural services etc.;
- Council Tax sharing and investment agreement with the major precepting authorities;
- Services provided via the Procurement Hub and Payroll Shared Service;

- Business rate cost of collection allowance;
- Planning performance agreements;
- Sponsorship income;
- Housing benefit (HB) overpayment recoveries; and
- Local tax cost recovery for non-payment.

### **Commentary on Joint Financing & Other Reimbursements**

An adverse variance for the year of £347,000 across all services, mainly comprising:

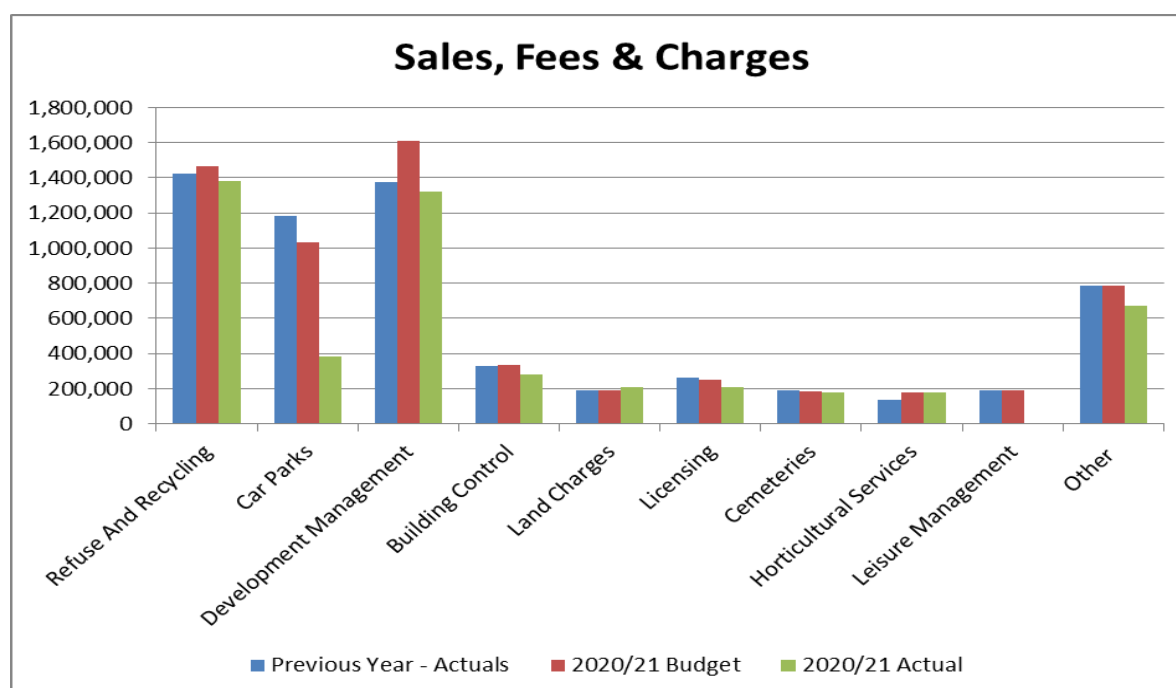
**Finance:** A reduction in **Housing Benefit overpayment recoveries** (-£140,000) and **Local Tax recovery costs** (-£238,000). Staff resources have been prioritised towards administering the Covid-19 business rate reliefs and grants, along with payments for those facing hardship including where having to self-isolate. Recovery procedures during the year were limited by the capacity and availability of the courts to deal with applications for liability orders. Amounts of council tax and business rates outstanding at the end of the year increased; however, the service will continue to recover amounts due in line with the normal recovery procedures.

**Operations:** Increased **recycling and disposal credits** (+£133,000) paid by Essex County Council due to the very high volume of domestic mixed dry recyclate (and contaminants) which is likely to be as a result of people spending more time at home and the increase in on-line shopping that was then reflected in the higher volume of packaging material in the waste stream.

**Corporate Financing:** with a reduction in the in-year council tax collection rate this meant the amount receivable under the **sharing agreement with major preceptors** reduced leading to an underachievement against budget of £121,000; however, with a slight upturn in performance towards the end of the year, this was an improvement over the position reported at Q3 when a shortfall of £229,000 had been forecast.

### **Sales, Fees & Charges**

The budget for income from sales, fees & charges was £6.238 million with an outturn net underachievement of £1.425 million. The following chart shows the position for the main income streams:



### **Commentary on Fees and Charges:**

- **Refuse and Recycling:** An overall net shortfall of £84,000, which is mainly due to the suspension and cancellation of accounts by commercial customers during the lockdown periods and period of restrictions. This was partially offset by increased demand from the bulky waste collection service.
- **Car Parks:** A substantial reduction in car park income from pay and display and season ticket/permits. The North Essex Parking Partnership also reduced enforcement during lockdowns resulting in a lower level of Penalty Charge Notice income than would normally be expected over this period. The overall under achievement against budget was £653,000.
- **Development Management:** After a sharp fall in the early stages of the year, the final quarter showed continued improvement with a significant amount of income received in March. The shortfall in income for the year was in line with that reported at Q3 of £255,000. Pre-application income was down against budget by £38,000.
- **Building Control:** The outturn was £280,000 which was lower than budget by £58,000 and reflects reduced orders during Covid. The service has responded to this shortfall through the non-filling of vacant posts as reported under the staffing variance.
- **Local Land Charges:** The scrapping of stamp duty on house purchases of up to £500,000 until 31 March 2021, led to an upturn in activity in the housing market which saw the service exceeding its income budget by £14,000 achieving almost £208,000, which was also higher than the previous year actual of £191,000.
- **Licensing:** A reduction in demand for both taxi private hire licences and temporary event notices, meant that the service generated £42,000 less than was originally budgeted.
- **Leisure Management:** To support the restoration of services in a safe and secure environment the leisure management fee paid to the Council by the operator was waived as part of an overall package of financial support (full year budget of £194,000).
- **Other Income –** The total budget was £786,000 across a wide range of differing services, including: Community Transport; the Town Hall Centre; Braintree Enterprise Centre conference income; non-commercial property service charges; and graphics and marketing income. Overall income was lower for the year by £113,000. The most significant areas within this shortfall related to the Community Transport service (-£70,000) and the Town Hall Centre (-£45,000) the use of both being adversely impacted by the pandemic. Income generated from advertising was lower than budget (-£15,000), as was the level of fee income from graphics and print room (-£22,000). Increased housing benefit income was claimed against payments made to provide temporary housing solutions (+£64,000).

### **Rental Income & Commercial Property Service Charges**

The budget for rental income from land & property was £3.167 million – comprising the investment and commercial property portfolio, markets, housing properties, and other let properties. The outturn for the year is a minor shortfall of £2,000; however, within this market income was down by £54,000, which was largely offset by increased commercial property income.

### **Other Service & Corporate Income**

Total budgeted Other Income was £1.944 million of which £740,000 related to internal recharges including staffing costs that were expected to be charged against capital projects (£608,000). Other external income was underachieved by £119,000.

Other external income includes:

- **Investment & Other Interest Income:** The budgeted amount was £1.061 million, against which the actual amount achieved was £889,000, a shortfall of £172,000.

## **Treasury Management**

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity to the end March		Amount Invested at end of the quarter
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
<b>£53.11m</b>	<b>£862.36m</b>	<b>£880.00m</b>	<b>£35.47m</b>
Average amount invested for the period			<b>£62.57m</b>
Highest amount invested			<b>£94.72m</b>

The amount of cash under management during the year was significantly increased due to government passporting Covid-19 financial support through local authorities; however, as spending on the capital programme accelerated this meant by the end of the year balances were almost £18million lower than at the start of the year. Where additional cashflow was managed this was primarily through placing deposits with the Debt Management Office Account Facility.

Investments totalling £19million continued to be held across a range of long-term pooled funds with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets. The remaining balance of investments were held in money market funds, with liquid cash held in a current account with Lloyds Bank. No new loans with local authorities were made, although some that had been arranged in the previous financial matured in 2020/21.

Interest and dividends earned to the end of the year totalled £888,502, which is equivalent to an annualised rate of return of 1.42%:

Investments	Average Amount Invested	Interest & Dividends Earned	Annualised Return %
Long-Term Pooled Funds	£19.00m	£775,162	4.08%
Short-Term	£43.57m	£113,340	0.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£62.57m</b>	<b>£888,502</b>	<b>1.42%</b>

At the start of the financial year there were indications that dividend income might drop by as much as 30% compared with the previous year; however, a recovery in the latter half of the year meant that the final return for the year was down by 18%. This source of investment income continues to enhance the overall treasury management returns as short-term investments continue to be impacted by the prolonged period of ultra-low interest rates.

The market value of shares and units in pooled funds at the end of March 2021 was £20.222 million, representing an unrealised gain of £1.222 million. This was an increase in value of £3.478million since the previous financial year-end, which occurred just shortly after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## ***Economic and Market Commentary***

The coronavirus pandemic dominated 2020/21, leading to almost all countries being in some form of lockdown during the year. The start of the financial year saw many central banks cutting interest rates as lockdowns caused economic activity to grind to a halt. The Bank of England cut Bank Rate to 0.1% and the UK government provided a range of fiscal stimulus measures. Some good news came in December 2020 as two Covid-19 vaccines were given approval by the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. Furthermore, the uncertainty surrounding Brexit reduced as a trade deal was agreed and written into UK law.

The Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) indices performed reasonably well during the period April to November, before being buoyed in December by both the vaccine approval and Brexit deal, which helped give a boost to both the more internationally focused FTSE 100 and the more UK-focused FTSE 250, however they both remained lower than their pre-pandemic levels. Ultra-low interest rates prevailed throughout the period.

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

- Long-term pooled fund investments £19million (allocated: £3 million property fund; £13 million equity funds; and £3 million in diversified asset funds);
- Low volatility Money Market Funds (MMFs) £10 million;
- Variable net asset value MMF £4 million; and
- Lloyds current account £2.47 million.

### **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 outturn set out above, the movements on the General Fund balances are:

<b>Balance at 1 April 2020</b>	<b>£'000</b>
	<b>6,882</b>
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted addition	222
Funding for one-off investment	(136)
Pension Fund triennial payment	(1,646)
Pay award funding (+0.75%)	(135)
Outturn variance	812
<b>Balance at 31 March 2021</b>	<b>5,999</b>

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

- The approved budget included an anticipated addition to balances of £222,269, reflecting savings anticipated being made in advance of future years' budget shortfalls.
- An allocation from General Fund balances was approved by Full Council in February 2020, to meet one-off budget requirements: £14,000 in total for upgrading the CCTV at the Town Hall Centre and funding a Legal Services case management system; and a total of £122,000 provision for loss of income during the redevelopment of the Manor Street area.
- A one-off payment was made to the Essex Pension Fund covering the period April 2020 to March 2023, which is being part funded from General Fund balances. A repayment back into balances will be made in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- The pay award implemented from April 2020 was 2.75% which was higher than originally allowed in the budget, therefore, service budgets have been adjusted with a contra amount reflected in the movement on General Fund balances.
- The outturn variance for the year, after Covid-19 exceptional funding, and net of budget carry forwards that were approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021, means an addition to balances of £812,000.

## **Risks and Assumptions**

The outturn is subject to finalisation of the Council's Statement of Accounts which is scheduled to be completed by the end of June. These will then be subject to external audit by BDO LLP. The outcome of the audit could lead to changes in the final outturn, details of which will be reported to the Corporate Governance Group and subsequently to Cabinet.

There are amounts of income included in the outturn that have yet to be confirmed as final in relation to a number of grant and subsidy claims which are subject to post claim assurance reviews and which will not be completed until sometime during 2021/22.

The outturn will be reviewed to ensure that any on-going issues have either been/ will be addressed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy as the financial position is reviewed ahead of setting the budget for 2022/23.

## **Capital Investment**

The total value of the Council's approved capital programme is £74million. Delivery of a number of significant projects spans a number of years, therefore, the amount profiled to be spent in 2020/21 was circa £38million:

	<b>Profiled Spend 2020/21 £000</b>	<b>Actual Spend at 31.3.21 £000</b>	<b>Actual Spend at 31.3.21 % of Profile</b>
Commercial and investment property	38	43	113%
Horizon 120 Business Park	12,466	10,866	87%
Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre	885	872	99%
Manor Steet regeneration	15,421	13,202	86%
I-Construct	1,144	685	60%
Town Centre improvements	2,487	1,918	77%
Springwood Drive business units and parking	50	47	94%
Planned maintenance to Council premises	439	398	91%
Replacement vehicles and plant	123	114	93%
Information technology systems & equipment	580	170	29%
Play areas, parks and open spaces	490	288	59%
Environmental improvements	115	103	90%
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	22	10	45%
Operational equipment	148	81	55%
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	222	356	160%
Waste management	1,228	1,228	100%
Climate change Initiatives	99	48	48%
Grants to registered social landlords	126	-	0%
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	494	509	103%
Capitalised interest	368	-	0%
Capital salaries	825	649	79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,770</b>	<b>31,587</b>	<b>84%</b>

Additions to the profiled programme during the final quarter included a project to provide a new artificial grass pitch at the Halstead Leisure Centre, and works to install new electric charging points in the Council's car parks, both of which have attracted external funding.

Total spend for the year was £31,587 million, leaving a balance of £6,183 million. Some of the smaller projects have been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic which has temporarily diverted in-house staff resources, and it is expected that progress on these will resume in 2021/22. Major projects for the H120 Business Park, Manor Street regeneration, Town Centre improvements, and I-Construct are all in progress and expect to complete in 2021/22.

The majority of the profiled budget remaining for the year will be carried over as continuing spend; however, there are underspends of £641,000 from out of the total programme budget which will be returned to corporate resources.

## **Capital resources**

New capital resources in the year included:

Receipts that were generated from arrangements with Eastlight Community Housing (Eastlight) which totalled £1.374 million from 11 right-to-buy sales. This is lower than the previous year when 15 sales were completed that generated a receipt of £1.878 million. An additional £27,500 was received from Eastlight from the sale of land.

Receipts generated by the VAT shelter agreement with Eastlight were £302,000 for the year, higher than last year's amount of £245,000.

Two serviced land plots were sold on the Horizon 120 Business Park generating a capital receipt of over £3million; however, conditions of sale meant that 90% of the proceeds were required to be paid into an escrow account until the Council satisfies obligations regarding the provision of certain infrastructure works.

Agreements for the development, sale and transfer of dwellings at the Manor Street regeneration scheme were completed during the year. These will generate a usable capital receipt in 2021/22.

The Council received £931,000 grant from the Better Care Fund, which has been used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants. A further top up grant of £125,000 was unexpectedly received in the final quarter of the year, increasing the resources available for this programme of work in the future.