

An aerial photograph of a village in Braintree, showing a church with a red brick tower, a road, and surrounding fields. The sky is filled with large, white clouds. The text 'ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24



This year's Annual Plan outlines the key projects and targets to deliver our shared priorities in our Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 and turn our ambitions into a reality.

The past year we've been able to proactively respond to challenges our communities have faced, working together with our partners, to provide support to residents through the cost-of-living crisis and doing all we can to ensure our Ukrainian guests and sponsors have all the support they need – and we'll continue to do this for as long as needed.

The cost of living is still at the forefront of all our minds, which is why we're investing £1million this year to strengthen the safety net for those who need it most.

We'll continue our drive towards becoming a carbon neutral district – helping our communities and businesses adapt to climate change, working with our partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings and protecting and improving our natural environment. Prioritising sustainable travel and transport will be harnessed by introducing more walking and cycling networks across the district.

There is a continued demand to support positive and sustainable economic growth which we'll deliver through working with our partners to deliver business support programmes and training and the ambitions in our new Economic Growth Strategy.

There are some exciting projects set for completion in our district this year too - a new medical centre in Sible Hedingham and a new multi-purpose community centre and enterprise centre in Witham which will support our district's economic growth and improve its infrastructure.

We know we must look into opportunities to deliver more for our residents and businesses as we face future budget pressures and increasing demand for services. We'll continue to work closely with North Essex authorities to explore ways we can create greater resilience to benefit our district and help us reach its full potential, whilst building on opportunities to level up our rural communities.

The future for the Braintree district looks very exciting as we reach the final year of our Corporate Strategy, continuing our journey in achieving our vision for our people and communities to make the Braintree district the best that it can be.



Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of
Braintree District Council



Dan Gascoyne
Chief Executive

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

Priorities:

- Grow the district in a sustainable way supported by the required services such as health, leisure and community facilities
- 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



We will:

- Complete the physical improvements to Witham and Halstead town centres to improve public realm
- Enable the delivery of 250 affordable homes across the district
- Improve the district's housing stock by addressing energy efficiencies and exploring best practice to tackle empty homes
- Develop a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2028
- Improve our health and leisure facilities by replacing the studio and sports hall floors at Braintree Leisure Centre and refurbishing the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre

Working with others we will:

- Engage in the pre-application and examination processes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in and around the district
- Develop our plans to introduce walking and cycling networks across the district
- Enable the delivery of a new build, multi-purpose community centre in Witham bringing people together to socialise, learn and access key services
- Continue to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham
- Work with the Integrated Commissioning Board to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing services at the Victoria Square development





ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Priorities:

- Ensure our district is clean and well maintained with high quality parks and green spaces
- Encourage others to change their behaviour to protect and enhance the environment
- Minimise pollution by promoting sustainable energy sources, construction and transport
- Ensure Braintree District Council reduces its own environmental impact and be carbon neutral where practical by 2030
- Support residents and businesses to reduce, re-use and recycle



We will:

- Enhance biodiversity by refurbishing the wildlife garden in Halstead Public Gardens
- Improve the facilities in our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham
- Deliver improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road, Halstead
- Respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 in relation to air quality, biodiversity, water and waste reduction
- Protect our communities by implementing the requirements of Martyn's Law
- Deliver campaigns and work with our communities to
 - Report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles
 - Minimise food waste to help households save money and avoid unnecessary waste
 - Improve awareness and understanding of climate change

Working with others we will:

- Deliver projects in our Climate Change Action Plan to contribute to our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district such as working with communities and businesses to build climate resilience, developing baseline data for a tree strategy, piloting the ECC green accreditation scheme (before rolling out to businesses) whilst continuing to reduce our resilience on fossil fuels
- Develop opportunities for increasing the renewable energy and fuel security within the district
- Increase biodiversity and the attractiveness of the district by re-wilding open spaces and wild seed highway verges
- As part of a two-year safer streets programme, tackle enviro crime in the focused area of Witham





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Braintree
District Council | Essex County Council

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



We will:

- Over a two-year period, use £1m of New Homes Bonus to support residents of the district through the continued cost of living crisis by:
 - Providing food security and access to essential goods across the district
 - Helping community groups and organisations provide additional support to our most vulnerable residents
 - Enabling physical and emotional health and wellbeing support with a focus on young people who find it difficult to access these services
- Support local projects and initiatives through the Councillor Community Grants scheme
- Support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on their pathway to independent living through supported housing and move-on accommodation



Working with others we will:

- Build more resilient communities to response to emerging issues
- Equip young people with the skills required to face challenging situations by delivering crucial crew workshops to schools across the district in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership
- Review our Livewell Strategy to support the changing needs of our residents and wider health and care priorities
- Address the health inequalities of the district through the Mid-Essex Alliance partnership by designing integrated health services in local communities and neighbourhoods
- Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night-time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham
- Deliver two changing places toilets in Witham and Halstead allowing people with complex needs to have greater access to public places to take part in everyday activities

PROMOTING PROSPERITY

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



We will:

- Build on the current success of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park by selling the remaining site plots and promoting the development of the phase 2 land
- Continue to develop the Witham Enterprise Units to bring forward new business premises for SME's
- Develop and deliver a business support programme based at the Plaza to help District businesses start, grow and increase productivity, especially in key sectors

Working with others we will:

- In partnership with NEEB, deliver a shared prosperity funded programme of support focusing on
 - Financial and debt management support and advice alongside signposting to other areas of financial support to create and safeguard jobs across north Essex
 - Digital skills support to businesses across the district enabling them to grow digitally
- Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/workshops to introduce students to new industries and sector course pathways
- Support productivity and prosperity in our rural areas through the allocation of grant funding from the Rural England Prosperity Funding

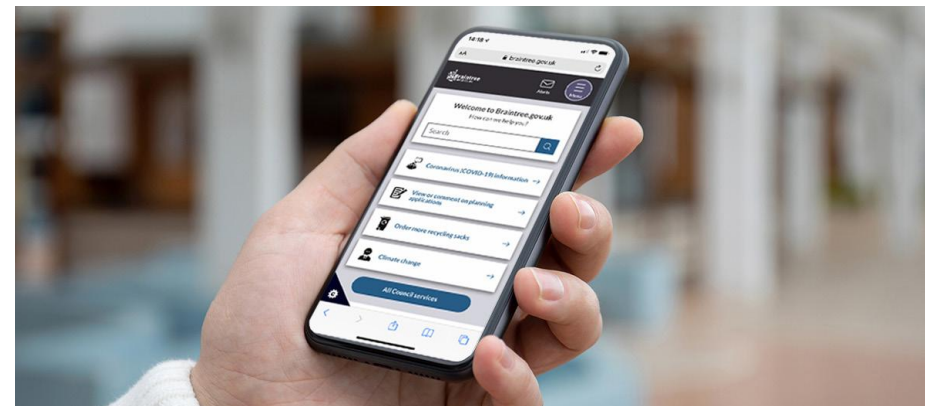




DELIVERING AND INNOVATING

Priorities:

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



We will:

- Develop plans to sustainably close our budget gap by capitalising on commercial opportunities to increase our income stream and identifying a deliverable efficiencies programme
- Develop an Asset Management Strategy to implement a more coherent approach to all property interests across the district.
- Consider an operating model for residents and business to potentially subscribe to the garden waste collection service
- Continue to develop our online and digital services to support changes in customer demand and expectations
- Understand the impacts of the reforms to national planning policy and mainstreaming biodiversity net gain in the planning system
- Provide fit for purpose car parking machines across our car parks

Working with others we will:

- Inform and influence negotiations with Government around a Greater Essex Devolution deal to ensure the benefits are felt locally for residents and businesses.
- Deliver on the plan for North Essex Authorities to work more closely together on shared priorities and improving resilience
- Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including the rural pilot with Essex County Council
- Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex





MEASURING SUCCESS

In addition to the projects and actions described in this annual plan we also measure these indicators which focus on some of our broader priorities

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Number of homes granted planning permission

ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household
- The percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported
- Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures (annually reported)

Climate change KPI's will be reported through the performance of the Climate Change Action Plan yearly to Cabinet.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

- Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant for critical grants and substantial grants.
- Participation levels across all our sports centres
- Percentage of adults being active for 150 minutes per week
- Number of customers using our Handyman scheme
- Number of homelessness cases prevented
- Achieve at least a 1% increase in adults being active for 150 minutes per week (annually reported)

PROMOTING PROSPERITY

- Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 -64)
- Number of new business startups across the district
- Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support

DELIVERING AND INNOVATING

- Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre
- Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt
- Number of people transacting with us online
- Time taken to process housing benefit/ council tax benefit new claims
- Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes
- Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days
- Collection rate for Council Tax
- Collection rate for Business Rates
- Customer satisfaction with the Council (reported at the end of consultation period)



COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

We always welcome comments, suggestions and feedback (critical or otherwise) on our plans and improvements and in the way that we write our documents and communicate them.

- You can go online and make a comment at **www.braintree.gov.uk/comment**
- You can e-mail our Customer Service Centre at **csc@braintree.gov.uk**
- You can drop written comments off at our main office - Causeway House, Braintree
- You can telephone our Customer Service Centre on **01376 552525**
- You can speak to your local Councillor who will be able to pass your comments back if you wish. Contact details for your Councillor can be found on our website: **www.braintree.gov.uk**