

SPRING 2024

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RESIDENTS' MAGAZINE



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Growing a
Community –
Why community
gardens are
blooming

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to the 24/25
budget - Page 4

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your finances
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Great News - We're Expanding!

Residents of Panfield, White Notley, Shalford, Fairstead, Wethersfield, Finchingfield, Great Bardfield and surrounding areas will soon be able to use DigiGo!

Following Essex County Council's consultation on its support for local bus services, a decision has been made to replace four services with DigiGo. As a result, DigiGo's operational area will expand to cover the areas these bus services served

DigiGo offers greater flexibility, extended operating hours and days compared to the existing timetables

Four services will be replaced with DigiGo

They are: 9/9A, 21 (both Hedingham and Stephensons services), 345 and SB21

The 21 Sunday service replacement by DigiGo will commence on 24 March 2024

The remainder of the services will commence with DigiGo from 28 July 2024

More information to follow late spring/early summer

Follow our social media channels to stay up-to-date with all the latest DigiGo news

@DigiGoUK



Book, Track, Ride
via the **TravelEssex** app

www.digigo.uk

Be in the know with our e-newsletters

Get the latest news on a range of topics including planning, local development projects and news in your community.

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QR code
with your
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To find your
waste & recycling
collection dates,

view/download your annual
calendar, visit: [www.braintree.gov.uk/
collectioncalendar](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/collectioncalendar)



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Braintree, Essex, CM7 9HB**

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GARDEN WASTE

**Collections are
changing to a
subscription
only service
from March 2024**



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www.braintree.gov.uk/littering



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Making our council fit for the future



Local authorities across the country are facing budget pressures within a very challenging and uncertain economic environment. Government funding has not kept pace with the increasing demand and expectation for services which have been getting more expensive due to continuing inflationary pressures.

We are in a better position than most because of the £10m savings and extra income we have made over the past 10 years, but it does not make us immune to future challenges and difficult choices we'll have to make. We have already started the work necessary to address our future budget challenges through establishing a comprehensive

transformation programme, looking at how the council works and closely scrutinising how we use assets and resources.

It has been agreed to increase council tax by an extra 11p per week based on a Band D property. We are of course always reluctant to increase council tax, but this is essential to help protect statutory services, ensure that unavoidable cost pressures can be met this year and support our longer-term financial stability.

Braintree District Council's share of the overall bill will remain one of the lowest council tax rates in Essex and below the national average.

To support families who may struggle to pay council tax, the council has recently approved a new Council Tax Support Scheme to support the lowest income households. A further £50,000 has been set aside to be allocated through our Exceptional Hardship Fund.

An important consultation was held last year asking for your views on what our local priorities should be until 2028, shaping our spending on services as part of our future budget plans.

60% of the council's net budget is funded from council tax.

The financial pressures continue to affect households too with the cost of living crisis. That's why we already set aside £1million which we are using to work with our partners to support families and continue to help residents during these tough times – more on page 10 and 11.

Our budget plans for the next year will aim to ensure every penny is spent on safeguarding and improving on the vital services you rely on and securing financial stability for years to come.

Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of Braintree District Council



Delivering vital services

We deliver over

100 services

for around £3.85 per week

based on a Band D property.

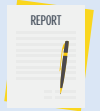
Here's a breakdown of some we delivered last year...



Provided
28,991
community
transport
journeys



906
fly tips
cleared



70
littering reports
investigated



Provided
support to
571
local businesses



260
anti-social
behaviour
incidents dealt with



86
councillor
community
grants issued
totalling £80,735



Emptied litter
and dog bins over
100,000
times



26,631
tonnes
of waste
recycled



Prevented
238
households
from becoming
homeless



135
disabled
facilities grants
processed



288
affordable
homes
completed



Cut over
100km
of grass
verges
and 2 sq miles
of grass



112
households
assisted
into the private
rented sector

www.braintree.gov.uk/budget

Service figures based on 2022/23

Creating a district of opportunity



The change in the role of local government, financial pressures together with rising service expectations makes setting our priorities to shape the council over the next four years – as part of our Corporate Strategy – even more crucial.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation last year. We asked you what your priorities are, how you feel about living/working in the district and approaches the council could take to save money or generate income, which will help the council manage long-term budget pressures.

Your feedback has been taken on board to ensure priorities for the district's future reflect the hopes and needs of everyone. This will be presented to councillors at Cabinet and Full Council meetings in March 2024.

Keep updated via our website at www.braintree.gov.uk/news

Following this consultation, this new strategy reflects **3 clear themes:**



With that comes making sure equal opportunities are at the heart of everything we do and ensuring council services are fit for the future.

These themes are aligned to our priorities in areas such as housing, developing safer communities, business growth and protecting and enhancing our environment.



Funded by
UK Government

GROWING A COMMUNITY

We had many interesting and inspiring applications for the 2023 UK Shared Prosperity Community Gardens and Open Spaces Fund last autumn. Applicants were asked to apply for their share of the fund to create a community garden or open space which benefits the local community and is accessible to all.

14 applications were approved by our panel and work has already begun across the district to create beautiful community gardens and green spaces.

The applications came from a mixture of parish councils, voluntary and community groups and also charities.

The planned projects include a community orchard with local trees, a wetland area and a mindfulness garden with a seating area. All the projects champion biodiversity and aim to create havens for wildlife, foster vibrant ecosystems and transform neglected spaces into beautiful sanctuaries.



The Community Gardens and Open Spaces project has received £37,000 from the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Cllr Mary Cunningham
Cabinet Member for
Stronger Communities
at Braintree District



Council said:
“Community gardens and open spaces benefit not just

the community but also the environment and biodiversity. They offer spaces for local people to share a common goal and socialise, and also engage in environmentally friendly practices such as rainwater harvesting and composting to preserve our environment.”

Previous applicants who secured funding were Bures Parish Council, Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council and Castle Hedingham Parish Council. They have created beautiful green spaces benefiting their communities.



If there is a community garden near you - get involved, share your green vision and help us build an environment where nature and community thrive together.



Community Garden
in Castle Hedingham

POWERED BY
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UP**

SAVE WATER

with a drought resistant garden

Climate change and hotter, drier summers pose challenges for gardeners in the Braintree District. Despite a wet winter, the area still experiences some of the driest conditions in the UK on average. Our Sustainability Team offers tips to create a drought-resistant garden, saving water, money, and time.

Cover up in the sun

– mulch your soil with bark, compost or gravel. This prevents evaporation by as much as 75%.

Butt out

– don't let rainwater go to waste: install a subsidised water butt from Essex County Council and fill your watering can for free. Go to www.getcomposting.com to claim.

Water wisely

– use larger quantities, less often.

Green, green grass

– choose drought-resistant grass seed or sow low-growing drought tolerant plants like dwarf thyme or clover to keep your lawn green.

Pond life

– install a small wildlife pond. A shallow container in a sheltered spot will do!



Let it grow

– mow less often to allow your grass to put down longer roots and stay green in the heat.

Yes we can

– use a watering can rather than a hose. A hose or sprinkler can get through up to 1,000 litres of water every hour.

Call in the experts

– introduce plants that are naturally better at tolerating extreme weather, like prairie grasses or annuals such as nasturtiums.

Power plants

– nettle and comfrey make great natural fertilisers and are so easy to grow.

Send us your ideas and tell us what has worked for you at climatechange@braintree.gov.uk



Our Horticultural team is now using **sustainable planting** throughout the district.

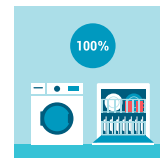
Check out our beautiful beds in all three town centres, which require less water and will not need to be replaced with the changing seasons.



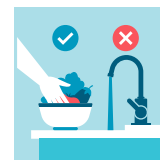
The DRIP, DRIP effect

Every single drop you can save will help us all to conserve water – and if you have a water meter, it will save you money too! Check out our tips below and see if you can come up with your own as you go about your day.

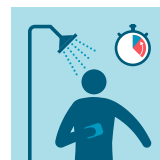
Make sure your washing machine and dishwasher are full before you put them on, to maximise the 10 to 15 litres of water used.



Wash fruit and vegetables in a bowl of water. A running tap uses 15 litres per minute.



Fill a jug and keep it in the fridge, instead of running the tap until the water is cold.



Put a water-saving device in your toilet. These are very simple and usually just involve putting an object in the cistern that takes up space, meaning you need less water to fill it.



Take a shorter shower. Cutting your time by just one minute will save around 10 litres of water per shower.

Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth and wash your face. This could save you two buckets of water every day.

SPRING

clean your finances



With spring on the horizon, why not take the new season as an opportunity to spring clean your finances and get on top of your money?



CREATE A BUDGET

Make a list of your income vs your outgoings every month and work out how much disposable income you have, then set yourself a budget each week to help you avoid overspending.

SELL AND SAVE

Whilst you're spring cleaning your finances, why not spring clean your home and sell things you no longer need? You can sell items online, to second hand stores, at a boot sale or even from outside your home!



DITCH THE DEBT

Many of us can find ourselves in debt – be it an overdraft, loan or credit card. But it's important not to let it get out of hand. Citizens Advice or Stepchange can offer advice and solutions so you can organise a manageable payment plan.



HELP TO SAVE

Help to Save is a type of savings account. It allows certain people entitled to Working Tax Credit or receiving Universal Credit to get a bonus of 50p for every £1 they save over 4 years.

INVEST IN A LISA

If you're aged 18-39 and trying to save for a mortgage or want to save towards your pension/retirement – you might want to look into a Lifetime ISA. You can save up to £4,000 a year and will earn a 25% government bonus.



OPEN A CREDIT UNION ACCOUNT

A credit union provides loans, savings, bank accounts and other services to their members. Our local credit union is Holdfast Credit Union Ltd based in Witham. You can call them on 01376 516994.



MAKE A SHOPPING LIST AND PLAN YOUR MEALS

It can be easy to overspend when it comes to the food shop if you're enticed by deals or impulse buys. Try to plan meals for the week and only buy what you need.

SOCIAL BROADBAND TARIFF

If you receive Universal Credit or other benefits, you could be eligible for a social broadband tariff and save up to £144 a year on your broadband bills.



CHECK YOU'RE GETTING THE BENEFITS YOU'RE ENTITLED TO

There could be benefits or financial help you're entitled to but not aware of. Use GOV.UK's Benefit Checker to see if there is any more support you could be getting.



SAVE FOOD WASTE

Whether you have things to use up at home, have grabbed a yellow sticker bargain or saved food from Olio or Too Good to Go – be inventive and make up a meal. Kitch is a great app to put in ingredients and find recipe ideas.

GET SUPPORT FINDING A JOB

Our Community Support and Employment Officer can provide you with help and advice to break down barriers in finding employment. Email alison.richardson@braintree.gov.uk or call 07395 851498 to see how we can help.



USEFUL LINKS

www.moneysavingexpert.com
www.stepchange.org
www.holdfastcreditunion.co.uk
www.gov.uk/welfare
www.braintree.gov.uk/costofliving



Improve the flood resilience of your home

Being prepared for flooding can help to keep you and your home safe.

- Have a bag ready with vital items like insurance documents and medications in case you need to leave your home
- Check you know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water mains supplies
- Plan how you'll move family and pets to safety
- Consider property protection products such as flood barriers or air brick covers. Check if you are eligible for a grant to help protect your property: www.flood.essex.gov.uk/get-a-grant-to-protect-your-home-from-flooding
- Make sure you have a list of useful contact numbers
- Make yourself an action plan to use in the event of a flood.

The National Flood Forum provides useful information on preparing for a flood, protecting and recovering your home and reducing risk.

 www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk

Councillor Community Grants

Did you know that your local community project could benefit from a Councillor Community Grant?

Each ward councillor has a maximum of £1,250 to give to local organisations. Ward councillors can pool their budgets to joint fund projects within the ward.

Dance Network Association received a Councillor Community Grant towards helping them continue to be able to offer their Dancing with Dementia programme to those living with dementia and their loved ones.

Classes currently take place at The Witham Hub. To take part or to find out more about DNA's classes email: info@dancenetworkassociation.org.uk or call 07490 37 47 17



Become a flood resilient community

- Check if your parish council has an emergency plan which includes response to flooding
- Do you have resources you could offer to your community during flooding? Let your parish council know



New policy gets strict on SIDE WASTE

FROM 1 APRIL

a new side waste policy will come into force meaning we will only collect waste which is in the grey bin with the lid shut.

We know many residents have already changed their behaviour to reduce their waste and recycle as much as they can, but more needs to be done to meet recycling targets and waste minimisation objectives that have been set for the future.

If you would like advice on how you can reduce the waste put into your grey bin please contact our Waste Minimisation and Sustainability Team: recycling@braintree.gov.uk Find out more: www.braintree.gov.uk/bins-waste-recycling/waste/1



Changes to missed bin collections

Our waste crews aim to return and collect missed waste within 2 working days of receiving a report where the crew has overlooked a collection.

The collection crews will not return to collect waste in the following circumstances:

- The waste is not at the normal collection point when the crew call
- The waste is not household waste
- The containers are too heavy to be lifted/tipped
- The waste has been stickered as 'contaminated'
- The waste is excess (side) waste
- The bin is unauthorised

- The contents are compacted or frozen inside the bin
- The bin has no subscription sticker and there is no valid subscription in force (garden waste only)

Missed bin reports may be verified by the crew records including photographs taken at the time of their visit.



Developing safer communities

The Braintree District Community Safety Partnership is made up of Braintree District Council, Essex Police, Essex Fire & Rescue Service, Probation, Health, Housing Associations, ECC and other community organisations.

Our enforcement officers work closely with Essex Police on a number of projects such as investigating reports of anti-social behaviour, drug use and stolen vehicles.



Halstead Safer Streets

Braintree District Council and the Police Fire & Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst have successfully brought over

£300,000 of funding to Essex to make communities even safer with extra street lighting and other crime prevention work.

The money has been match-funded with over £150,000 from Halstead Town Council, Essex Police, the Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse, Fusion Lifestyle, Neighbourhood Watch, Essex Youth Service, Essex County Council, Eastlight Community Homes and Crimestoppers.

This latest round of Safer Streets funding follows over £447,000 received last year for Witham which saw increased street lighting, CCTV, Street Wardens, free self-defence classes for women and girls, counselling for victims of sexual abuse and many other initiatives.



Halstead Community Fund

A total of over £394,000 has been allocated across five projects in the Halstead area as part of the Halstead Community Fund.

Applications were from voluntary, faith, community and social enterprise groups and not for profit organisations within three miles of Halstead.

Among the successful applicants was Halstead Community Shed who received over £296,000 for the purchase of the St John Ambulance Station and refurbishment as community shed.

Kevin Pryke, Chairman of Halstead Community Shed, said:



The grant will allow Halstead Community Shed to purchase the St John Ambulance Station and begin to support residents in their fight against loneliness, isolation, and depression.



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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

More than 2,000 new homes were built

in the district between 2019 and 2022 to address the housing shortage by providing high-quality new homes in sustainable locations, along with commercial and community facilities and new open spaces.

897 were affordable meaning they will be available to either rent or purchase at more affordable levels to help people who cannot afford to purchase or rent homes on the open market.

We're also continuing to refuse applications that come forward through the planning system that we feel are not suitable, poorly designed or unsustainable.

As part of the planning process, we require additional investment for other facilities like road and open space improvements.

Whilst we cannot set the amounts that are requested by statutory providers such as the NHS for health or Essex County Council for education or infrastructure, we are able to secure money contributions that are asked for in full and we have always done this. Whilst the council can encourage these authorities to spend these contributions we do not control precisely how or when these other authorities spend the contributions.

We are committed to doing all we can to secure more money for the district through the planning process to benefit our communities and ensure it is kept at pace with the planned growth of the district.

Recent commitments we've helped negotiate include:

- Over £200,000 committed for new tennis courts at Courtauld Sports Ground in Halstead
- New multi-use games area at Shalford Village Hall
- Over £1m committed for four new third generation artificial grass pitches in Braintree and Witham

We consult on all planning applications to give you an opportunity to express your views. Keep up to date on planning applications in your area: www.braintree.gov.uk/pa

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Braintree's new medical hub: A great example of modern healthcare



The new Livewell Hub on Manor Street is a great example of how our work with partners is delivering modern healthcare to residents within our communities. Having different services available on one site is helping professionals work together and more closely around the needs of their patients.

People registered at any GP practice in Braintree can access services delivered through a collaboration of GPs based at the practice. The collaboration, which includes Mount Chambers, Blandford Medical Centre, Blyth's Meadow Surgery, Church Lane Surgery and Silver End Surgery, is offering joint services that can be booked through people's usual practice.

Some of the patients registered at Mount Chambers are being seen in the new treatment rooms too. Alongside this, the hub also provides sexual health, speech and language therapy, diabetes and pulmonary care clinics.

The Livewell Hub - which forms one part of our £30m Braintree Town Centre regeneration project - is giving thousands of residents access to GP services as well as a wide range of other integrated health and wellbeing services.

 www.locatebraintreedistrict.co.uk/victoriasquare

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ELECTIONS:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Elections for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex will take place on **2nd May 2024**.

Register to vote online

at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. Deadline is midnight on 16 April.

Apply to vote by post:

Download and complete an application form:
www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote. Deadline is 5pm on 17 April.

Apply to vote by proxy:

Download and complete an application form:
www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote. Deadline is 5pm on 24 April.

Visit www.braintree.gov.uk/elections for full details,
email elections@braintree.gov.uk or call us on 01376 552525.

Make sure to bring photo ID

You'll need to take photo ID with you if you're voting at the polling station for some elections. Check the list of accepted forms of photo ID online at www.gov.uk

Don't have ID? Apply for free voter ID, known as a Voter Authority Certificate, online at www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate. Deadline is 24 April.



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