



Annual Plan 2025/26



Braintree
District Council

Foreword

As we embark on the year ahead where we're entering a period of change and focus on delivering high quality services, projects and initiatives that matter most to our communities, our commitment remains to create a district of opportunity, where everyone has access to the resources and support they need. This plan outlines the actions we will take to achieve this, and our vision.

The rising cost of living places unprecedented demands on our services, and the economic uncertainties and financial challenges will no doubt continue to grow but we are a well-run council which makes prudent financial decisions and we will keep adapting and innovating to meet these challenges to enable us to invest in the services you rely on.

We have some exciting projects this year including town centre improvements in Halstead and Witham, the new 3G pitch at Witham Sports Ground and the Witham community centre, providing spaces for people to come together and engage in various activities.

Ensuring that our residents have access to high-quality, affordable housing is a top priority for us. We'll be working to enhance supported housing options that are tailored to resident's needs as well as providing more support for those at risk of sleeping rough.

We want to make sure our communities can play a role in shaping their areas, especially when it comes to planning. We will revise the Local Plan, develop a design code to ensure future development is of the highest design standards and drive forward new neighbourhood plans for local villages – all using local insight and feedback to help inform our decisions.

We see the fantastic community projects happening locally, and we're making sure funding pots are available to support these activities because we know they really do make a difference to people's lives. We'll also continue to support those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and deliver projects to reduce health inequalities and support active lifestyles in the community.

Collaborating closely with our partner organisations is crucial to delivering better outcomes for all, to implement various initiatives that help our communities feel safe and new strategies to protect natural habitats, address climate change and improve air quality.

One of our focuses is to attract and support business growth, we'll do this through initiatives like the Horizon 120 site development and our continued business support including access to funding. Our job fairs have been hugely popular in the past, and we'll host more of these in the district to support people to connect with employers and explore new career opportunities.

The plan also identifies areas for protecting and enhancing our natural and built environments through initiatives such as refurbishing play areas with inclusive play equipment and doing what we can to minimise waste and increase recycling across the district.

Complementing this whole plan is our ambition to always be a high performing organisation, to do the very best that we can together for all those who live and work here, whilst being responsive to changing needs. We look forward to what's to come over the next 12 months.



Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of
Braintree District Council



Dan Gascoyne
Chief Executive



Communities

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our **communities can thrive**, our people prosper and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduce health inequalities focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Title: Support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through initiatives raised by the £1m new homes bonus.

Outcome: Targeted assistance provided enabling residents to easily access food and essential goods.

Additional support reaching those most in need to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

Young people can access physical and emotional health and wellbeing support.

End date: August 2026

Title: Deliver activities to support the priorities of the LiveWell Strategy

Outcome: Reducing health inequalities, improving mental well-being, promoting active lifestyles, empowering residents, supporting the vulnerable and enhancing community capacity.

End date: March 2026

Title: Administer the Health and Wellbeing Panel Grants

Outcome: Distribution of Public Health Grant funding to projects across the district that reduce health inequality

End date: March 2026

Title: Procure and implement a 3-year contract for leisure services in the Braintree District

Outcome: Residents and visitors to the district will have access to improved leisure facilities

Achieve value for money through a cost-effective agreement

End date: October 2025

PRIORITY

2

Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents.

Title: Revise the Local Plan in line with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Outcome: To set a refreshed framework for sustainable development across the district until 2041.

End date: June 2026

Title: Work with Essex County Council on the outcomes of the research from the Housing Learning and Improvement Network to develop a Supported Housing Strategy

Outcome: Strategy developed alongside an action plan to enhance supported housing options and provide tailored support that meets residents' needs.

End date: December 2026

Title: Establish a Landlord Register as part of the regulations introduced by the Renters Rights Bill

Outcome: Create a transparent system where landlords must be officially recognised and held accountable for their properties ensuring only compliant landlords are permitted to operate.

End date: March 2027

Title: Through the Homelessness Prevention Partnership distribute the rough sleeping winter pressure fund.

Outcome: Additional support provided to safeguard vulnerable people at risk from sleeping rough

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop options and feasibility to provide Temporary Accommodation that is fit for the future needs of the district

Outcome: Provide affordable temporary accommodation options that meet the needs of our residents.

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

3

Reduce social isolation and loneliness and support communities to build positive social networks and connections.

Title: Build Witham Sports Ground 3G Pitch

Outcome: Provision of a high quality, all weather playing surface that will encourage more people to get involved in sports.

End date: June 2025

Title: Continue to work with partners to deliver activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation.

Outcome: Providing opportunities for individuals to connect with each other.

Implementation of targeted interventions to address loneliness and social isolation.

End date: March 2026

Title: Build Witham Community Centre

Outcome: Provision of a modern Community Centre bringing people of all ages together for various activities and events.

Provision of a Sport England sized badminton court.

End date: July 2026

PRIORITY

4

Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents.

Title: Deliver projects to prevent violence against women and girls in public, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour in Halstead, with the support of the safer streets funding

Outcome: Delivering practical support and change for women and girls across communities within Halstead.

Investment in transformative crime prevention initiatives.

Change in attitude and behaviours, lowering crime rates.

End date: September 2025

Title: Deliver a Councillor Community Grant Scheme for Councillors to support local projects and groups in their ward.

Outcome: Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.

End date: March 2026

Title: Work with partners to deliver the Community Action Safety Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime.

Outcome: Collaboratively addressed community safety issues and interventions implemented to reduce crime and disorder enabling residents and communities to feel safe in their local area.

Strategic assessment carried out to aid future local, strategic decision making.

End date: March 2026

Title: Support local investment in communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 4).

Outcome: Funding provided for community activities and initiatives to support a wide range of interventions building pride in place and improving life chances.

End date: March 2026



Prosperity

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, **our people prosper** and our environment is cherished for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure.

Title: Deliver physical improvements to Halstead and Witham Town Centres

Outcome: Providing enhanced urban environments with diverse community appeal through improved signage, wayfinding, and street furniture.

End date: September 2025

Title: Support the development and adoption of Neighbourhood Plans in Earls Colne, Wethersfield and Finchingfield and Bures/Bures St Mary's.

Outcome: Enabling communities to play a role in shaping their areas.

Neighbourhood Plans used in the determination of planning applications.

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop a design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance to ensure the future development of the district is of the highest design standards.

End date: December 2026

PRIORITY

2

Attract and support business growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries.

Title: Build on inward investment activity through the North Essex Economic Board to create an action plan for Braintree

Outcome: Attract new businesses and grow existing businesses.

Bring new and better jobs into the district.

End date: March 2026

Title: Complete the final infrastructure delivery elements of Horizon 120 by removing excess soil.

Outcome: Final plots are levelled and prepared for sale and development to offer new employment sites.

End date: September 2025

Title: Finalise an approach to zone A at Horizon 120

Outcome: Alignment with the overall vision for Horizon 120 to deliver quality buildings to support the Braintree economy.

End date: December 2025

Title: Sell plots 5 –8 at Horizon 120

Outcome: Attract further investment into Horizon 120 and support key industries to locate and stay in our district

End date: September 2025

Title: Take forward the recommended option from the viability study for the Witham Enterprise site

Outcome: Ensuring a financially viable option is progressed for the Witham Enterprise site.

End date: March 2026

Title: Support the work on developing a North Essex Growth Plan that will inform and promote positive engagement with the emerging plans for Devolution in Greater Essex

Outcome: North Essex and Braintree District Councils views are reflected in the emerging work of the economic growth and infrastructure work of the shadow Mayoral County Combined Authority

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

3

Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate.

Title: In association with the North Essex Economic Board, provide business support services focussed on enhancing financial management and business growth.

Outcome: Businesses are supported to grow and innovate.

End date: March 2026

Title: Support businesses and residents across the district through delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 4) projects.

Outcome: Funding provided for projects to support a wide range of interventions supporting businesses to thrive across the district.

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

4

Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic wellbeing.

Title: Support school engagement to access University of Essex open days

Outcome: Year 9 students experience University opportunities

End date: March 2026

Title: Organise and deliver jobs fairs across the district.

Outcome: People are connected to prospective employers to explore new career opportunities.

End date: March 2026

Title: Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver year 2 of the Green Skills Programme.

Outcome: Supporting people to gain qualifications and employment in green skills that are needed in new and existing sectors.

End date: March 2026



Environment

To create a district of opportunity – a place where our communities can thrive, our people prosper and **our environment is cherished** for all to enjoy.

PRIORITY

1

Protect and enhance our built and natural environments across the district, providing good access to open spaces and increasing biodiversity.

Title: Enhance the play areas at Beckers Green, Braintree, Kings Rd, Halstead, Spa Rd, Witham and Rickstones Rd, Witham

Outcome: Play areas fully refurbished incorporating inclusive play equipment that improves play value for individuals of all ages.

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop a renewable energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Detailed guidance on the range of renewable technologies accepted by the Council including how to calculate the renewable energy requirement for future developments.

End date: December 2025

Title: Work with partners on the requirements to deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy across Essex

Outcome: Clear framework for protecting natural habitats, promoting sustainable land use and increasing green infrastructure in alignment with local and national environmental goals.

End date: March 2026

Title: Revise the Councils Tree Strategy.

Outcome: Manage and maintain the Councils own tree stock.

Secure new landscaping through the planning process.

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

2

Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Title: Work with Essex Air Consortium to finalise and adopt a joint Essex Air Quality Strategy

Outcome: Action plans developed to help improve air quality and reduce the impacts of air pollution on people's health.

End date: December 2025

Title: Through the North Essex Councils Climate Partnership, develop a shared risk register and best practice for adapting to climate change events

Outcome: Better understanding of collaborative approaches to mitigations. Ability to prioritise and plan policies around severity of risk.

End date: March 2026

Title: Work with partners to address the complex challenge of fuel poverty

Outcome: Providing households with access to more affordable and sustainable energy sources as well as enhancing energy efficiency in homes.

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

3

Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts.

Title: Work with Essex County Council and our partners in Essex to promote the Essex Flood guide.

Outcome: Single reference point for residents to identify the appropriate contacts during a flood.

Support business and residents to develop their own flood plans.

End date: September 2025

Title: In partnership with Groundworks, deliver the extended Green Doctor Service, advising residents on energy efficiency

Outcome: To support residents to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs of energy consumption.

End date: March 2026

PRIORITY

4

Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more.

Title: Implement new waste collection arrangements following the conclusion of the waste service public consultation and Cabinet decision

Outcome: Compliance with the Governments waste reforms (Simpler Recycling).

Divert as much waste as possible from landfill and increase recycling

End date: April 2026

Title: Work with other Authorities including Essex County Council to develop and deliver waste minimisation and recycling initiatives that deliver on the requirements of the Waste Reforms and Essex Waste Strategy

Outcome: Influence and change attitudes and behaviours to reduce waste, reuse and recycle.

End date: March 2026

Title: Develop a waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Outcome: Support planning policies by providing detailed guidance on the storage and management of recyclables and waste and the implementation of high-quality on-site waste management systems.

End date: December 2024



Fit for the Future

Priorities:

- Using the opportunities that new technology offers us to improve services, remove demand and reduce costs.
- Working more closely with our partner organisations in Essex and beyond to share resources, assets and information to deliver better outcomes for our residents and businesses.
- Becoming an organisation that can flex and be responsive to changes as the volatility in our world continues.
- Finding new ways of delivering which allows us to meet the needs of our residents and businesses while continuing to be financially resilient as demand increases due to demographical and other changes.
- Understanding and putting plans into place for the skills our workforce will need in the future.
- Making sure that we continue to be an employer of choice, offering fulfilling and rewarding careers for our people.

Actions that will be undertaken in year:

- Review the Fit for the Future programme to align with work to support Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
- Develop the transitional approach to new local government structures within Essex
- Deliver service reviews to align with the fit for the future priorities and implement outcomes of reviews as appropriate
- Evaluate the level of maturity and effectiveness of the council's data management practices to identify areas for improvement and enhance our data-driven decision-making capabilities.
- Carry out workforce planning to assess gaps and interventions required to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right places, at the right time to fulfil our strategic objectives.

- Consider the suitability for refurbishment of operational assets ahead of Local Government Reorganisation and refine plans to best fit for both short and medium-term requirements
- Review the Councils digital strategy to align with revised fit for the future programme and identify early technology opportunities relating to Local Government Reorganisation.



Measuring success

KPI	Target
Number of affordable homes delivered	250
Participation levels across our sport centres	Data only **
Number of homelessness cases prevented	Data only
Percentage of major planning applications decided on time	60%
Percentage of minor planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of other planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of planning applications overturned on appeal	10%
Number of new startup businesses	Data only
Number of businesses accessing business support	Data only
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	53%
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	390 kgs
Percentage of recycling contamination	15%
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100%
Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescale	80%
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre	65%
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days	98%
Number of people transacting with the Council online	Data only
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	16 days
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	5 days
Percentage of stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale	90%
Collection for Council Tax	97.5%
Collection for Business Rates	98%

*** This Performance Indicator will be 'Data Only' for one year while the Leisure Contract is being finalised*

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

