



First Quarter Performance Management Report

1st April to
30th June 2025



Braintree
District Council

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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 quarter in relation to the Annual Plan 2025/26. This sets out the key activities being implemented to deliver the corporate priorities and summarises the measures in place by aligning key performance indicators to the priorities within the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2028. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people, 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 quarter

Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Communities	1	15	-	-	-
Prosperity	-	12	1	1	-
Environment	2	9	1	-	-
TOTAL	3	36	2	1	-




KEY:

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

Summary of the Key Performance Indicators position for the end of the quarter

Status of indicators			
			Data Only
9	3	4	5

KEY:

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

Summary Position

The performance in the first quarter is broadly in line with expectations with most projects underway and progressing well. 36 projects are on track at the end of the first quarter.

Three projects completed in the first quarter, where the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy was adopted, the 3G pitch was constructed at Witham Sports Ground, and the Green Doctor Service secured funding to extend until March 2026.

Two projects have an amber status. Projects with an amber status are:

- The Witham and Halstead Town Centre Improvements, where further approvals are required to complete works on non-Braintree District Council land, and;
- The development of a renewable energy supplementary planning document, where resources are focused on delivering the local plan, and there is uncertainty around future renewable energy policies.

One project has a red status, where the Green Skills programme has reported challenges in sourcing learners, and is under review as to whether the programme continues.

Further information regarding the completed, on track, amber and red statuses can be seen within the detail for the respective projects.

Nine performance indicators have met or exceeded target and seven have not met target. For the performance indicators that have not met target, three have missed target by less than 5% and four have missed target by more than 5%.

Performance indicators which have missed target by less than 5% are:

- Percentage of fly tips cleared within 24 hours, where increased time to gather evidence prior to clearing caused a number of breaches of timescales.
- Percentages of invoices paid on time which is considered to be due to changes in staffing in areas where there are high payment volumes, and;
- Business rates collection rate had a reduction against target. It is expected that this will be on target by the end of the year as minor variation year to year is expected.

The following indicators missed target by more than 5%:

- Kilograms of residual waste per household, where despite an improvement against last year a new, lower target was not achieved. As part of the waste review, trials, engagement events and opportunities to drive behaviour change are underway to reduce residual waste.
- Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescale, where applications effected by funding challenges last year are being approved during this reporting period.
- Percentage of enquiries resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre where there is a continued need to transfer complex calls through to specific departments where the customer needs a more detailed response, and;
- Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes where changes to the local council tax support scheme has changed the profile of cases resulting in fewer but more complex cases.



Further details of all performance indicator out turn can be found in the 'Performance Indicators in detail' section of the report.





Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy



Communities




Priority 1: Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduce health inequalities focusing on prevention and early intervention

Project title & progress	Target date & status
<p>1.1 - Support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through initiatives raised by the £1m new homes bonus.</p> <p>The community supermarket has launched and is supporting 40 people per month on average. The steering group will meet in July to determine other areas the supermarket should visit, considering Sible Hedingham, Ashen and White Colne.</p> <p>The quarterly report for the foodbank was received looking back at the period February – April, showing that usage fell by 11% in this time, and notably saw a large drop in the number of children’s parcels required (-22%). This has been linked to better support via the outreach worker and in-house citizens’ advice bureau.</p> <p>As a part of the cost-of-living support initiatives, the Council is exploring how to distribute information on means-tested benefits to low-income households, as it has identified a lack of central information on eligibility across schemes. The Council is also planning work with partners to deliver information hubs and roadshows based on hot spots for Council Tax arrears.</p> <p>The small grants scheme awarded 10 micro-grants worth £9,730, and 9 small grants worth £86,732. Recipients of the small grants included community initiatives such as the Kinetix Academy, Mid & North Essex Mind, Age Well East, RiSE Community Boxing, and Trusted Money Confidence amongst others.</p>	<p>August 2026</p> <p></p>
<p>1.2 - Deliver activities to support the priorities of the LiveWell Strategy.</p> <p>The Livewell Strategic Action Plan was refreshed for 2025 outlining a schedule of activity to take place to deliver the strategy. The first quarterly Livewell infographic report launched for councillors highlighting events hosted, grants distributed and referrals. The 2024/25 Public Health Grant infographic report on 2024/25 was completed with £15,866 awarded.</p> <p>The Beat the Street scheme ended on 16 April with over 11,400 players registered (127% of target), 76 teams, and 67,685 miles covered. The final Beat the Street report is due in August.</p> <p>Town Hall and Halsted Queens Hall hosted Essex County Council’s ‘Healthy Habit’ hub which delivered a multiagency support event. Healthy Housing working groups were established by the Mid Essex Alliance to focus on respiratory conditions and the influence of housing with a partnership session held in June at Causeway House.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p></p>




<p>Development of actions under Agewell and Diwell domains took place with Livewell stakeholders and were included in the Strategic Action Plan, with an Agewell fair taking place in Causeway House in June.</p> <p>Work took place with Active Essex and Active Braintree Foundation to organise summer holiday events for families - linked to the free school meals provisions. Work continues with St Helena Hospice, Farleigh Hospice and Essex County Council to develop a 'Compassionate Communities' approach in the district with workshops to be planned with Livewell Stakeholders for September 2025. Public Health Grants were awarded to Careers Connect peer support group and CARA to offer specialist counselling support.</p> <p>Active Essex was supported to allocate additional funding to support Children and Family events over the summer holidays – Kinder Essex Teddy Bears Picnic at Earls Colne Rec, Braintree Museum Trust and Gt Yeldham Parish Council Youth event.</p>	
<p>1.3 - Administer the Health and Wellbeing Panel Grants.</p> <p>Three grants were awarded in the first quarter. Fusion Lifestyle received £800 to deliver Gentle Exercise Classes aimed at older adults to increase physical activity, independence, provide valuable social time and decrease falls. The funding covers 20 weeks sessions to the end of September.</p> <p>Carers Connect received £1000 to continue the community support group for unpaid carers in the Braintree district. The sessions include a gentle Pilates, meditation class, a social to connect and provide support, and refreshments. The sessions take place once a month, on the first Friday of the month, funded from May 2025 to April 2026.</p> <p>CARA Essex received £1000 to provide specialist counselling for young people from the Halstead area, who have been victims of sexual violence and sexual abuse. This work follows on from the Halstead Safer Streets project, which enabled CARA to obtain a room in Halstead to support young people. CARA currently support 5-6 young people from the Halstead room each week. The grant would enable work to continue, supporting the fees of the specialist counsellor for 33 one-to-one sessions.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>1.4 - Procure and implement a 3-year contract for leisure services in the Braintree District.</p> <p>A successful contract award has been made to Freedom Leisure and the 3-year contract will commence from 1 September 2025. The contract is currently in its transition and mobilisation phase as information sharing and inventory activities take place.</p>	<p>October 2025</p> 

Priority 2: Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents




<p>2.1 - Revise the Local Plan in line with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The process for assessing small sites has been completed with Local Plan Sub Committee meetings considering allocations for small sites. Large and Strategic Sites will be considered by the Local Plan Sub Committee in September and October, together with any updated evidence base documents. Currently the Local Plan is on track to carry out a Regulation 18 consultation in December 2025.</p>	<p>June 2026</p> 
<p>2.2 - Work with Essex County Council on the outcomes of the research from the Housing Learning and Improvement Network to develop a Supported Housing Strategy.</p> <p>A draft Specialist and Supported Housing and Accommodation Needs Assessment was completed in May and shared with district officers for comment. The document lists housing needs by district and shows the estimated future housing need for various cohorts in Braintree District up to 2044. Districts were required to review and share comments by mid-June to enable the project to progress to the next stage.</p> <p>The Supported Housing Advisory Panel, proposed by the Supported Housing Partnership Board, has now scheduled its first meeting for July. The panel currently includes representatives from Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, and Colchester City Council. This panel is a key mechanism for shaping the countywide response to the Supported Housing Act and ensuring local authorities are aligned in their approach. The panel aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote consistency and good practice across Essex.• Support implementation of the Supported Housing Act.• Coordinate assessments of need, supply, and resources.• Explore joint working opportunities for licensing, inspections, and strategic development. <p>The Council's participation in the panel is also strategic. The panel is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shape the future licensing and inspection expectations.• Influence the development of shared data tools.• Align housing and social care commissioning strategies.• Respond to national consultations and funding opportunities. <p>Participation ensures the Council is proactive in shaping supported housing policy. It provides continuity and leadership during a period of structural change through Local Government Reform, and supports evidence-based planning and strategic investment in supported housing.</p>	<p>December 2026</p> 


<p>2.3 - Establish a Landlord Register as part of the regulations introduced by the Renters Rights Bill.</p> <p>The Renters Rights Bill is currently undergoing the required parliamentary process and is anticipated to gain Royal Assent in the third quarter. To prepare for the implementation of the legislation, the Council has set up an internal working group to establish the anticipated implications of the legislation and begin to form recommendations for its response.</p>	<p>March 2027</p> 
<p>2.4 - Through the Homelessness Prevention Partnership distribute the rough sleeping Winter Pressure Fund.</p> <p>Referrals to the Winter Pressure Fund (WPF) have continued to increase through the first quarter, reflecting ongoing demand for early intervention and targeted support for individuals at risk of homelessness. The scheme has received 13 referrals to date, for reasons such as rent arrears, tenancy sustainment, rent payments to support benefits transitions, and to provide warm and cold winter sleeping bags. The total value of funds distributed to date is £4,675.</p> <p>An allocation to Peabody is pending internal governance approval. In the interim, the Council continues to administer the grant to ensure there is no disruption in the application process. While this has caused a delay, it has not impacted overall outcomes.</p> <p>The Council is also working to merge its reported rough sleeping data with verified data from Chess Homeless to better identify individuals eligible for WPF support. This work will now be led by the newly established Rough Sleeper Partnership (RSP), which is funded by the WPF. The RSP is now ready to operate awaiting formal sign-off.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>2.5 - Develop options and feasibility to provide Temporary Accommodation that is fit for the future needs of the district.</p> <p>The temporary accommodation review confirmed that the need for accommodation needed to deliver across 3 key themes. Quantity and type, location and support needs. The findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity & Type: Minimum of 4 self-contained units. At least 50% must be accessible. Suitable for single adults with complex needs, families with children, and individuals with physical disabilities. • Location: Within Braintree District, ideally within Braintree town centre which has access to a range of services and transport, to maintain community ties and reduce costs. • Support Needs: Must support floating or on-site support models and accommodate households with high and multiple support needs. <p>In line with these findings, the Council has proceeded with the disposal of Bradford Street and is exploring options to acquire an alternative property, which is now in progress. A high-level briefing outlining the temporary accommodation requirements has been provided so that Asset Management can support the feasibility assessment and acquisition of any Bradford Street replacement options.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 

Priority 3: Reduce social isolation and loneliness and support communities to build positive social networks and connections.

<p>3.1 - Build Witham Sports Ground 3G Pitch.</p> <p>Practical completion was achieved on 30 May marking the project as complete. A photoshoot is planned to mark a soft launch opening on 11 July before a full launch in September to coincide with the start of the new football season.</p>	<p>June 2025</p> 
<p>3.2 - Continue to work with partners to deliver various activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation.</p> <p>Social isolation and loneliness awareness week took place on 9 – 13 June. To help break the stigma around social isolation and loneliness, the Council facilitated 3 pop-up lounges in Braintree, Witham and Halstead. The lounges were set up in the town centres and provided an informal setting with comfortable furniture and carpets supplied by the Salvation Army. The events gave staff an opportunity to engage with residents in a unique and spontaneous way, and recorded interactions with over 90 residents.</p> <p>The Social Isolation and Loneliness (SIL) partnership met in June and has identified that there is overlap with the work being undertaken by the Mid Essex Neighbourhoods (MEN) Partnership, with many partners represented in both groups. The SIL partnership has agreed to work more closely with the MEN to strengthen relationships and deepen the understanding of local community assets.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>3.3 - Award contract and start to build Witham Community Centre.</p> <p>The land transfer documentation was signed in May, and a groundbreaking ceremony took place in June. Work has started on site with ground clearance beginning and infrastructure being established.</p>	<p>July 2026</p> 




Priority 4: Develop safer and more resilient communities empowering residents to take ownership of local projects and initiatives

<p>4.1 - Through the safer streets funding, prevent violence against women and girls in public, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour in Halstead.</p> <p>The eleventh Safer Streets steering group took place on 7 April where partners provided updates on their interventions. There were discussions regarding future funding of deliverables after the Home Office Safer Streets funding had ended. Partners were requested to complete the Halstead evaluation and share their thoughts on the implementation of the programme.</p> <p>Additionally, during the first quarter, the Council gained agreement from the office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to fund a Braintree Safer Streets Programme.</p>	<p>September 2025</p> 
<p>4.2 - Continue to administer the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.</p> <p>There have been 21 councillor community grants distributed in the first quarter, totalling £15,407. 12 grants were agreed in April, two in May and seven in June. Recipients of the grants included Witham Boxing Club for competition equipment, Braintree Youth Project for food parcels, Braintree MENCAP for a walkie-talkie system, Braintree Islamic Centre for hall hire, The Creamer Fund for sensory lighting and decoration, and Old School Rooms for fence panel replacement.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>4.3 - Oversee the coordination of the Community Safety Action Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime.</p> <p>Patrols of the Braintree Town Centre Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) have been ongoing by Essex Police and the Street Scene Protection Team. 18 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued to persons witnessed breaching the PSPO since its implementation in October 2024. Four of these have been paid, ten remain unpaid pending further legal action and four have been cancelled.</p> <p>The Community Safety Partnership Annual Report 2024/25 has been submitted to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), along with the Strategic Assessment and Action Plan for 2025/26.</p> <p>There are currently two Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews in progress for the Braintree District. Two Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Case Review requests have been received since April. One Case Review has been rescinded to allow further time for the complaint to be investigated.</p> <p>Two Community Engagement Days were delivered in Braintree Town Centre on 30 May and 27 June. This was part of the PFCC funded Operation Dial/Guardian to tackle ASB in the town centre. The events saw partners such as Essex Police, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, Braintree District Council Housing/Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 







<p>Officer/Community Safety/Services, Open Road drug and alcohol support service, Healthwatch, Community Speed Watch, ACL and others engaging with the public about services available and discussed crime trends and prevention tactics.</p> <p>As part of the Action Plan for 2025/26, the 999 Football Event for Year 8 students across the district was delivered in June 2025 and saw over 200 students attend and take part in a football tournament which enabled support services such as Braintree District Council Community Safety, Essex Police, Salvation Army and the Children's Society to discuss important issues surrounding drugs, crime and child exploitation.</p>	
<p>4.4 - Continue to support local investment in communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 4).</p> <p>The Council has received a further £339,081 in funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and a further £176,724 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, which was noted at Cabinet in May.</p> <p>Cabinet approved the decision to utilise this funding on a number of existing schemes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Community Engagement Officer post • Braintree District Cultural Education Partnership • Down to Earth at the Braintree Community Garden • Mental Health Training Workshops • Food and Health initiatives, and; • The North Essex Economic Board <p>Cabinet also approved the decision to fund a number of new schemes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key safe and handyman scheme to help protect vulnerable residents • Park Play re-development • Mobile Automated Number Plate Recognition cameras to assist Braintree Community Policing Team, and; • Employability training. 	<p>March 2026</p> 



Priority 1: Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure



Project title & progress	Target date & status
<p>1.1 - Deliver physical improvements to Halstead and Witham Town centres.</p> <p>The work on Braintree District Council land is now complete in both towns. Phase 1 works on Highways land are now complete in Halstead, and the contractor has moved back to Witham to complete the rest of the Phase 1 works. The Phase 2 minor works agreement is progressing with Highways, and the Council awaits a response to the comments returned to Highways in early June.</p> <p>Highways have also provided a detailed quote for the further traffic modelling in Witham, and work continues with the Council's planning policy team to clarify if the proposed road layout changes are overlapping with work that may be undertaken for the Local plan. Highways suggest the best time to carry out the modelling would be September 2025; therefore the project is marked at amber as this would take completion of the works beyond the current target date of September 2025.</p>	<p>September 2025</p> <p></p>
<p>1.2 - Support the development and adoption of Neighbourhood Plans in Earls Colne, Wethersfield and Finchingfield and Bures/Bures St Mary's.</p> <p>Work is ongoing on a number of neighbourhood plans including the joint plan for Wethersfield and Finchingfield, and plans for Bures/Bures St Mary and Great Bardfield. Currently the work required for the plans is with the relevant groups, but support will be provided by the Local Plan team as required.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p></p>
<p>1.3 - Develop a design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>Work on the design Supplementary Planning Document was paused in the first quarter to allow a focus on other critical pieces of work, and to facilitate recruitment. Recruitment to the team was successful, and as a result the team is now fully resourced.</p> <p>During the second quarter a revised project timeline will be prepared, with the project anticipated to deliver at pace from the third quarter.</p>	<p>December 2026</p> <p></p>

Priority 2: Attract and support growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries


<p>2.1 - Build on inward investment activity through the North Essex Economic Board to create an action plan for Braintree.</p> <p>The Council is working closely with Essex County Council (ECC) in relation to their inward investment branding strategy, Extraordinary Essex. ECC are developing an Essex-wide website and are working to deliver inward investment activities collaboratively with the Council.</p> <p>The Council is also developing a series of video case studies with the Marketing and Communications team, to showcase businesses in the district. This work is set to continue, alongside the delivery of enhancements to the Locate Braintree District website.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>2.2 - Complete the final infrastructure delivery elements of Horizon 120 by removing excess soil.</p> <p>Negotiations continue with the developer following the procurement exercise to achieve the best value outcome for the Council. The project involves the removal of excess soil from Plots 5–7, and discussions are ongoing to agree the most cost-effective and practical solution. Options for phasing and timing of the works are also being considered to minimise impact on the wider development programme.</p>	<p>September 2025</p> 
<p>2.3 - Finalise an approach to zone A at Horizon 120.</p> <p>Planning have been engaged in discussions, with proposals received from the developer for use of the site in accordance with planning requirements. Further review is underway to ensure alignment with policy objectives, and to assess deliverability and long-term benefits for the Council.</p>	<p>December 2025</p> 
<p>2.4 - Sell plots 5 – 8 at Horizon 120.</p> <p>Negotiations are currently taking place with a developer for plots 5 through 8. An updated position and way forward are anticipated in the second quarter.</p>	<p>September 2025</p> 
<p>2.5 - Take forward the recommended option from the viability study for the Witham Enterprise site.</p> <p>A land valuation has been commissioned and is due by 4 July. The Request for Quotes aspect of the procurement for property marketing services closes on 10 July. This information will inform the decision on how to proceed with the site.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>2.6 - 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.</p> <p>The Council continues to play a leading role in the development of the Growth Plan. Drafts of the four main chapters on Inclusive Growth, Jobs and Economy, Future</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 



<p>Growth and Transport and Connectivity are now complete and being reviewed to consider common drafting and messaging across the chapters and the document as a whole. An initial set of priorities and asks for the area have also been drafted. It is anticipated that the Plan, which will include the full strategy document, a document focussed for Mayoral candidates and a short 'pitch' document, will be finalised by late Summer or early Autumn 2025.</p>	
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Priority 3: Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate

<p>3.1 - In association with the North Essex Economic Board, provide business support services focussed on enhancing financial management and business growth.</p> <p>The first quarter saw the tender period for the business support programme concluded, with evaluation due to be completed in early July. Once the tender has been awarded, the programme will seek to deliver 10 business support events across five local authority areas ahead of the 31 March 2026 deadline.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>3.2 - Support businesses and residents across the district through delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 4) projects.</p> <p>The Sole Trader Business Incubation Scheme is a fully funded membership to The Hatchery, a co-working space with dedicated desks or hot desks within an open plan shared workspace at The Plaza. Aimed at Sole Traders, each membership is worth up to £1170 and will be valid up to 31 March 2026. The membership also includes free parking and access to the on-site cafe.</p> <p>Information on the scheme and the application process has been advertised across the Council's social media platforms. To date, the Council has received 4 applications from interested parties, and the first successful applicant is being inducted in July.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 

Priority 4: Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic well-being




<p>4.1 - Support school engagement to access University of Essex open days.</p> <p>Notley High School visited the University in June and positive feedback was received from their experience. They have been reimbursed their transport costs through the scheme and a social media post was published by the Council celebrating this visit.</p> <p>The University has paused applications for visits until September 2025 as all resources for this purpose are at capacity until the new academic year. Prior to the school holidays, the Council facilitated a careers lead meeting with all secondary schools and highlighted again the offer to provide an annual allocation for transport costs for a student visit/orientation at the University of Essex for all Year 9s. Schools were</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
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<p>reminded that they must contact the University in September to secure any chance of a booking for the new academic year. Some interest has already been expressed by Tabor and Alec Hunter who missed out on the opportunity this year.</p>	
<p>4.2 - Organise and deliver jobs fairs in the district.</p> <p>The Spectrum Works event due to take place on 15 July has had all stands filled. The Department for Work and Pensions are promoting the event to claimants via work coaches, and the Council has distributed fliers and posters in accessible public spaces across the Braintree District.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>4.3 - Through the Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver year 2 of the Green Skills Programme.</p> <p>The first quarter of the Green Skills Programme has observed a sustained low level of interest from businesses and learners. This is thought to be partly due to the changes in qualifications instigated by central government, and partly due to the lack of perceived urgency by business in developing retrofitting skills. Despite greater than anticipated interest in the Domestic Energy Assessment qualification, the delivery partner for this project is experiencing difficulty in sourcing a sufficient number of learners across the programme.</p> <p>A meeting between stakeholders is scheduled for early July to discuss Key Performance Indicators and to agree next steps, as there is little indication that the programme is likely to achieve its targets despite recent increased marketing activity.</p> <p>Following the meeting in July it is anticipated a decision will be made as to whether the programme continues with a reduced budget, or whether the programme ceases with any unspent budget returned to the Shared Prosperity Fund pot.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 






Environment

Priority 1: Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure



Project title & progress	Target date & status
<p>1.1 - Enhance the play areas at Beckers Green, Braintree, Kings Rd, Halstead, Spa Rd, Witham and Rickstones Rd, Witham</p> <p>During the first quarter the tender process for Spa Road and Rickstones Road play areas concluded, with the Council receiving a single submission. This submission did not meet the relevant criteria, and as such the tender process was ceased.</p> <p>To achieve both best value, and attract interest from contractors, a tender is being prepared to group all four works into one tender. This is anticipated to launch in the second quarter.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p></p>
<p>1.2 - Develop a renewable energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>The Local Plan review is the highest priority project within the Local Plan team which is taking up the majority of staffing resource. The review of the Local Plan includes reviewing policies relating to renewable energy, both in terms of requirements for new developments as well as potential renewable energy proposals. Additionally, the team are monitoring how other Essex Authorities (Uttlesford and Chelmsford) are progressing with their renewable energy policies in their Local Plans which are more advanced. The outcomes of neighbouring authority examinations will inform the approach taken by the Council. Given the current uncertainty around future renewable energy policies, officers are reviewing the requirement for an SPD.</p>	<p>December 2025</p> <p></p>
<p>1.3 - Work with partners on the requirements to deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy across Essex.</p> <p>The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been adopted by Essex County Council and is due to be published on the Essex County Council website in early July.</p> <p>The primary purpose of the LNRS is to identify locations to create or improve habitat most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The Essex LNRS describes the problems faced with biodiversity loss and how they can be addressed. This includes information about some of the mechanisms available to help support developers, landowners, farmers and others to improve biodiversity. The maps indicate where actions could be carried out that will create, expand and connect existing spaces for nature. In accordance with a key principle of nature recovery known as the Lawton Principles, these actions come under three main headings, designed to make habitats: Bigger, better, and more connected. The LNRS is now adopted, marking this project as complete.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p></p>

<p>1.4 - Revise The Council's Tree Strategy.</p> <p>Permanent recruitment is underway to secure new arboriculture officers and a Landscape Services Manager. Interviews should be completed in early September and it is hoped that new staff will be onboarded before the end of 2025. In the meantime, some interim resource remains in place and therefore tree survey work remains the priority. Once the team is fully resourced, the development of the tree strategy will be underway.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
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Priority 2: Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation



<p>2.1 - Work with Essex Air Consortium to finalise and adopt a joint Essex Air Quality Strategy.</p> <p>The drafted Air Quality Strategy is due to be taken to the Chief Executive Officers and Leaders Forum on 18 July 2025 for approval. Once the strategy is approved it will move to be adopted at Essex County Council (ECC) through its Cabinet in September. The Strategy once adopted by ECC will be adopted by the Council at the following Cabinet meeting in November.</p>	<p>December 2025</p> 
<p>2.2 - Through the North Essex Councils Climate Partnership, develop a shared risk register and best practice for adapting to climate change events.</p> <p>During the first quarter, the North Essex Councils Climate Partnership successfully developed a local climate risk register, based upon the risks identified in the national climate risk register. This work will now be presented to the North Essex Council Chief Executives in the second quarter.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>2.3 - Work with partners to address the complex challenge of fuel poverty.</p> <p>The Council is awaiting further information on the Warm Homes Grant, which is replacing the previous 'Home Upgrade Grant' scheme. It is anticipated that the Warm Homes Grant is likely to be directly managed by Essex County Council.</p> <p>In addition, the solar auction has taken place allowing residents to benefit from group buying to secure discount on solar infrastructure, and the Green Doctor service has been extended.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 

Priority 3: Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts

<p>3.1 - Work with Essex County Council and our partners in Essex to promote the Essex Flood guide.</p> <p>The Council is awaiting publication of the Essex Flood Guide, which is being led by Essex County Council. Upon publication, the Council will begin promotion.</p>	<p>September 2025</p> 
<p>3.2 - In partnership with Groundworks, deliver the extended Green Doctor Service, advising residents on energy efficiency.</p> <p>The Green Doctor Service offers residents who are in fuel poverty or struggling to keep their homes warm support in controlling energy usage. The service, which is in pilot, has secured additional funding to extend the provision until March 2026. Officers in the sustainability team continue to direct residents to the service.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 

Priority 4: Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more

<p>4.1 - Implement new waste collection arrangements following the conclusion of the waste service public consultation and Cabinet decision</p> <p>Following the conclusion of the public consultation in the first quarter, a full review of the consultation report was undertaken to ensure that the new proposed waste collection policy aligns with the consultation findings.</p> <p>The Property Assessment and Analysis work continued through the first quarter and has now assessed all properties in the district to categorise properties as “standard” or “non-standard” when considering future collection arrangements.</p> <p>On 27 May Cabinet approved the proposal to implement the preferred option for future waste collection arrangements, and work has continued to ensure that publication of the proposals have been visible and informative across a range of council communication channels.</p> <p>Additionally, a storage location has been secured to accommodate all new bins ahead of delivery across the district.</p>	<p>April 2026</p> 
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<p>4.2 - 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</p> <p>In April the Council recruited a Waste Minimisation and Sustainability Manager who has been leading on initiatives to address the topics of waste minimisation and recycling. During the first quarter the planned events calendar was reviewed and updated to support the delivery of an outreach programme.</p> <p>As a part of the outreach programme, the waste minimisation team aim to visit one community group per week to deliver presentations and workshops. Currently, the team is scheduled to visit schools, scouts and guides groups, special education needs schools, and garden centres.</p> <p>The team continues to review and refine the presentation material, ensuring that the presentations are suitable for a wide range of audiences, and can be tailored depending on the subject of interest.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p>4.3 - Develop a waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>A review of the waste SPD within the context of the changes to kerbside waste collection requirements is underway within the Development Management team. This includes considering how kerbside collections can be best managed in new estates where roads may remain under the care of management companies rather than becoming adopted highway. Once the team have worked through these matters, the document will be prepared for consultation.</p>	<p>December 2025</p> 

Climate Change Action Plan



Introduction

Following work by the Climate Change Delivery Board during the last quarter, the 2025-26 Climate Action Plan has been approved. The team are now working on delivering the 2025-26 climate actions.

As part of the review process this year many of the projects have been identified as business as usual, or they have been superseded by legislation changes. Therefore, the number of projects being reported on during 2025-26 has reduced to 44 actions.

Resources

With the launch of the new Simpler Recycling legislation for businesses, the Council has introduced separated recycling streams at its offices, alongside printed guidance and information in its staff e-newsletters. This will increase the quality of its recycling and ensure more of it can be processed.

Following the decision by Cabinet in May to improve recycling collections from June 2026, the Council has begun public facing communications on the changes. These include: information pieces in the Braintree and Witham Times, Halstead Gazette and free magazine, Within Reach; social media posts and videos giving reassurance and information; e-newsletter articles and a media release.

Energy Conservation

Ongoing support has been provided to the cost-of-living partnership by signposting various partners that are receiving requests from residents for energy efficiency relating to the support programmes.

The Council is continuing to promote home energy efficient grant funding including Energy Company Obligation (ECO); ECOFlex, Energy switching for a cheaper energy tariff, and the Green Doctor Service for residents. The Council is preparing with Essex partners to launch the new scheme Warm Homes Local Grant in September 2025 which will run for 2 years.

Transport

The workstream for the delivery of on-street charging through Low Emission Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding will be developed throughout 2025 with priority sites. As an initial start to Essex County Council's (ECC) on-street charging workstream, ECC have requested the installation using Low Emission Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding of EV chargers in Easton Rd car park in Witham. ECC intend to lease to a charge point operator under a cluster or three-party agreement, giving them the authority to deal directly with the operator. A basic collaboration agreement is necessary between Essex County and the Council, and a draft of this agreement is currently being reviewed.

The Council is now operating 14 electric vans from two sites, Lakes Rd and Causeway House in Braintree with charging infrastructure. The vehicles support a variety of roles including enforcement, pest control and horticulture.

Built Environment

The Council is working with the North Essex Council Climate Partnership in preparing a portfolio of suitable local authority sites for solar investment. The energy review of opportunities for solar has identified several sites to put forward for consideration of green energy development.

Business & the Green Economy

In April the Council worked with KOcycle to produce a video, highlighting the Council's use of this local business to recycle redundant technology. This allows the Council to recycle e-waste at no cost, while supporting a local business.

In May the Council published a business continuity special newsletter, advising on preparing local businesses for climate change related risks such as flooding.

Natural Environment

The Council has continued to support the development of Essex County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS sites submission meetings were attended by Landscape and Planning staff at the Council and all the proposed sites in the Braintree District for inclusion were approved. The Strategy is due for publication in early July.

Officers at the Council are progressing the S106 for the habitat bank proposals at Wildfell.

Adapting to Climate Change

The Council continues to promote weather related health warnings through social media and communications channels as part of its statutory Warning and Informing role. Information is received from MET Office, UK Health Security Agency and Environment Agency. Fortunately, no significant risks to health have occurred this quarter.

Essex County Council have been working on the Essex Flood Guide which will be published shortly. The Essex Flood Executive will advise partners when it is available in July for the Council to promote to residents and businesses in the district.

The Council have prepared Beat the Heat materials for potential heatwaves over the summer months

The North Essex Council's Climate Partnership has completed its Climate Risk Register for the north of Essex, based on local risks identified in the National Risk Register, which will support future policy decisions and strategies.

Braintree District Council is part of the Essex Resilience Forum's (ERF) partnership Community Resilience Group developing collaborative approach and sharing best practice on engaging with community groups. The Community Resilience Group is preparing a workshop for ERF partner organisations in July with a Community Resilience focus



Fit For The Future

Following the publication of the Government's English Devolution White Paper, which positions Greater Essex as a priority for the devolution programme, the local government landscape is expected to undergo substantial transformation. Preparation is underway for a revised local government structure by April 2028, with the establishment of a shadow authority from May 2027. While the structure of the future organisation is yet to be determined, the transformation programme is acknowledged as a critical enabler to ensure service resilience and continuity throughout this period of transition.

During the first quarter, a comprehensive reassessment of the Transformation Programme was conducted. In May, the resulting Programme Review Report, outlining a revised focus with new objectives and adjusted workstreams, was formally presented to and approved by the Council's Investment and Development Programme (IDP) Board. This review coincides with ongoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), increased service demand, evolving community needs, and new legislative requirements. With constrained resources, the transformation agenda is designed to alleviate operational pressures while facilitating sustainable change.

Following this review, programme objectives have been streamlined to ensure clarity, achievability, and measurable impact within the available timeframe. The revised objectives are as follows:

- **Optimised Working Methods:** Ensure that appropriate tools and systems are in place to enable efficient and effective operations both now and during the transition phase.
- **Transition Preparedness:** Equip staff and the organisation to adapt confidently and with resilience to the changes anticipated under LGR.
- **Digital Strategy Implementation:** Enhance operational processes and community engagement through advanced digital tools, managing demand and improving delivery.
- **Service Reviews:** Continually assess and reconfigure services to address emerging demands, improve quality, and align with the strategic direction of the future organisation.

The programme continues to deliver and has now progressed to the design and development phase for new workstreams, underpinned by a structured framework that sets out key projects, deliverables, milestones, success metrics, and resource requirements.

Recent key achievements include the approval of the Programme Review Report by the IDP Board; the scoping and endorsement of a refreshed 'Fit for the Future' programme; identification and sponsor approval of work packages aligned to updated objectives; and the commencement of activities to redefine the scope, timeline, and deliverables of revised workstreams through business cases and delivery plans.

Progress across each workstream is as follows:

- **Causeway House Refresh:** A more targeted approach is being taken to prioritise practical improvements that support flexible working and optimise utilisation of available space, while suspending large-scale changes.
- **Digital Strategy:** Introduction of a new workstream dedicated to modernising internal operations and customer engagement, maximising the use and benefits of existing and future digital tools.
- **Shared Services:** Focus remains on the delivery of current shared services. Exploration of new collaborative opportunities to enhance organisational resilience in preparation for 2028 has begun with this work expected to step up once the structure of the future organisation is finalised.
- **Service Reviews:** Expansion of the review process to include previously excluded services, with prioritisation based on potential financial and operational impact.

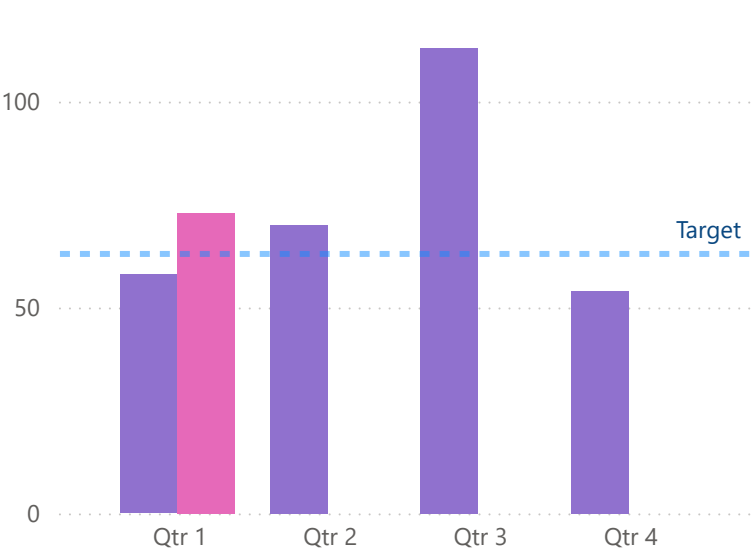
- **Organisation Design:** Considering prevailing uncertainties, the full-scale redesign workstream has been suspended. In its place, a new **People & Processes** workstream will focus on cultural and change-readiness initiatives.
- **Asset Management:** Significant progress has been achieved, including the completion of a new Asset Management Strategy. Remaining tasks, such as implementation of the Corporate Landlord model, are being prioritised to support new ways of working.

The Transformation Programme remains central to addressing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) gap and securing sustainable, high-quality service delivery over the coming three years. The current realignment positions the Council to remain 'Fit for the Future', supporting robust service provision whilst facilitating a smooth transition to the anticipated new local authority model.

Performance Indicators in detail

Number of affordable homes delivered

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Status:

Year to date position:

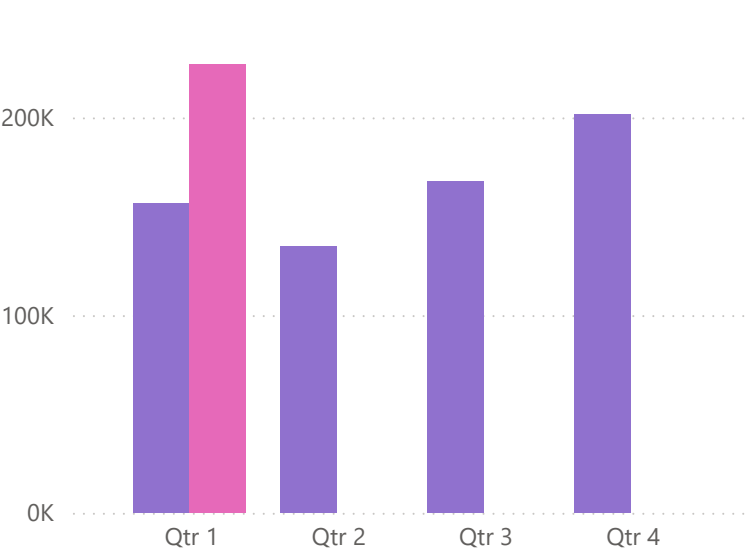
73

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	58	63
24-25	Qtr 2	70	62
24-25	Qtr 3	113	62
24-25	Qtr 4	54	63
25-26	Qtr 1	73	63

Comments: The number of affordable homes delivered in the first quarter exceeded target, and demonstrated an increase on the same quarter last year. Whilst this metric is dependant on housing developers completing properties, a positive first quarter contributes to the annual target of 250.

Number of visitors to our leisure centres

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

Year to date position:

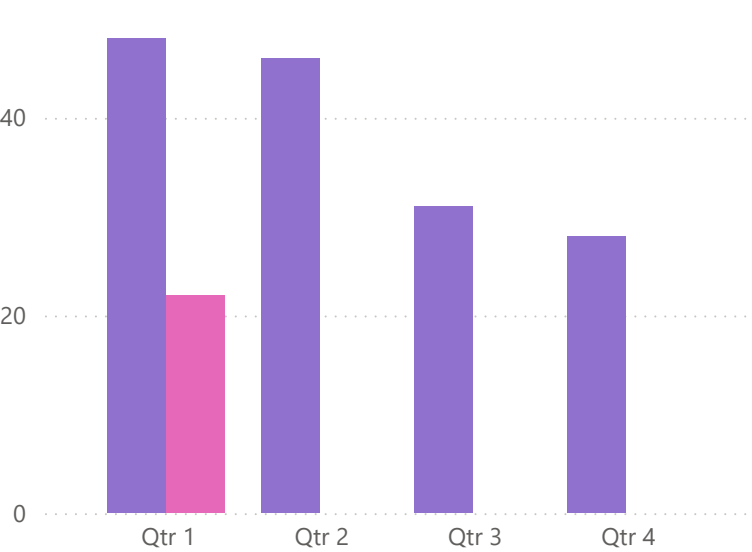
226,836

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	156,554	228,341
24-25	Qtr 2	134,916	208,939
24-25	Qtr 3	167,508	171,666
24-25	Qtr 4	201,461	175,513
25-26	Qtr 1	226,836	

Comments: The target for this metric has been paused for the 25/26 financial year whilst the leisure services contract changes provider. The first quarter outturn shows a clear improvement on the same quarter last year, though it should be noted the leisure services provider experienced system issues in 24/25.

Number of homelessness cases prevented

Financial year 24-25 25-26



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

Year to date position:

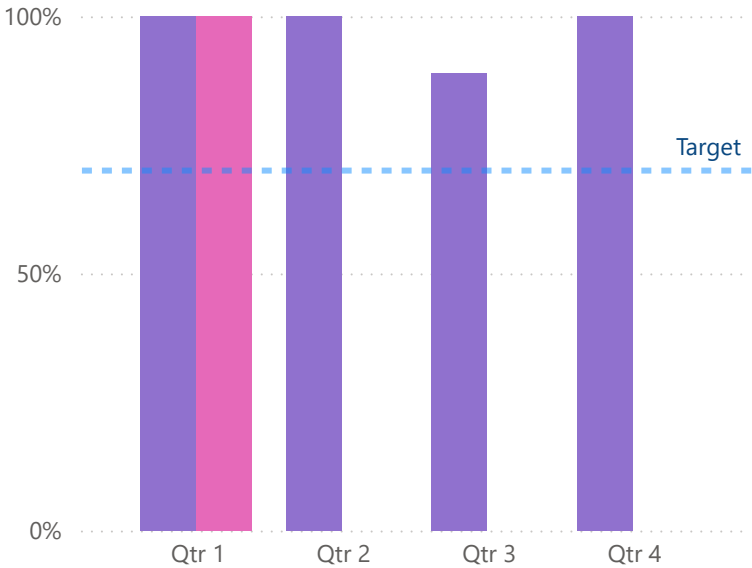
22

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
24-25	Qtr 1	48
24-25	Qtr 2	46
24-25	Qtr 3	31
24-25	Qtr 4	28
25-26	Qtr 1	22

Comments: The number of homelessness cases prevented has seen a steady reduction over the past year. This reflects an increased focus on early intervention , where working with households to achieve positive outcomes earlier in the process resolves cases before they are owed a statutory duty of prevention.

Major planning applications decided on time

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Status:

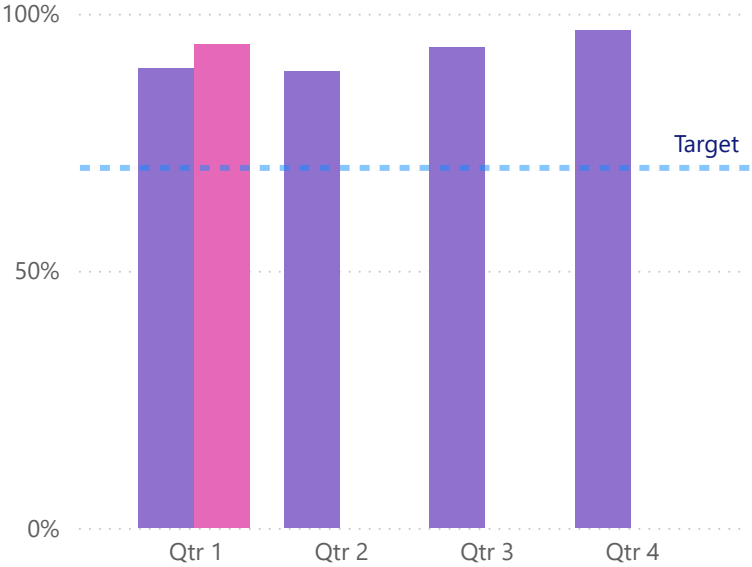
Year to date position:
100.00%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	100.00%	70%
24-25	Qtr 2	100.00%	70%
24-25	Qtr 3	88.89%	70%
24-25	Qtr 4	100.00%	70%
25-26	Qtr 1	100.00%	70%

Comments: All 7 major planning applications were decided on time in the first quarter. This continues a positive trend where the target has been achieved every quarter since 2019.

Minor planning applications decided on time

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Status:

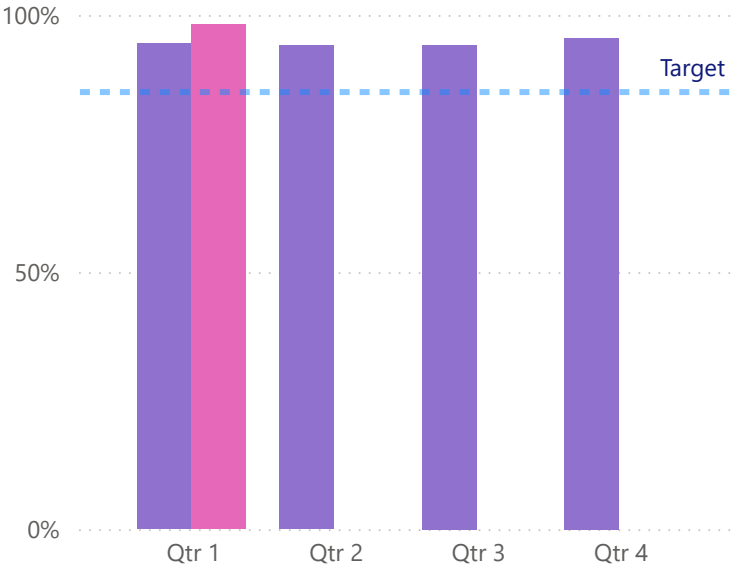
Year to date position:
93.98%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	89.29%	70%
24-25	Qtr 2	88.71%	70%
24-25	Qtr 3	93.42%	70%
24-25	Qtr 4	96.67%	70%
25-26	Qtr 1	93.98%	70%

Comments: 93.98%, 78 out of 83 minor planning applications were approved in time in the first quarter, meaning that the target has been exceeded for the ninth consecutive quarter.

Other planning applications decided on time

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Status:

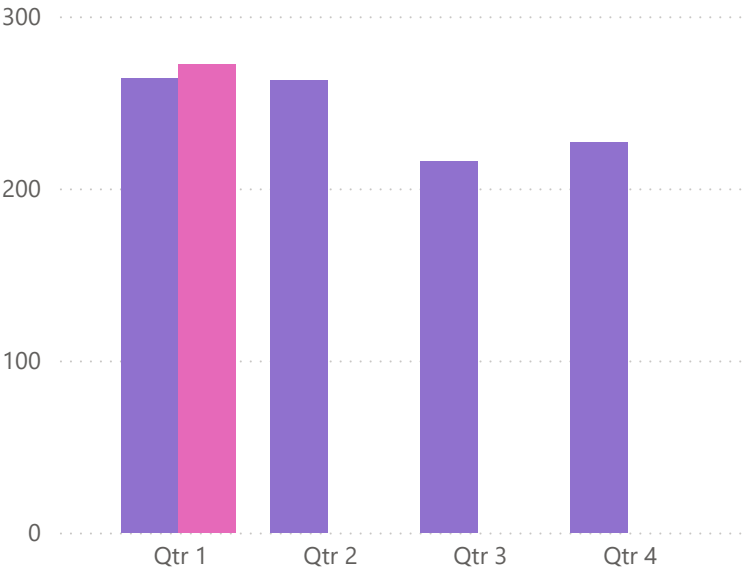
Year to date position:
98.17%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	94.41%	85%
24-25	Qtr 2	94.05%	85%
24-25	Qtr 3	94.16%	85%
24-25	Qtr 4	95.52%	85%
25-26	Qtr 1	98.17%	85%

Comments: The first quarter outturn for other planning applications decided on time was 98.17%, representing 161 out of 164 applications. This was well in excess of the 85% target, and exceeding any quarter's performance in the past year.

Number of new start up businesses

Financial year 24-25 25-26



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

Year to date position:

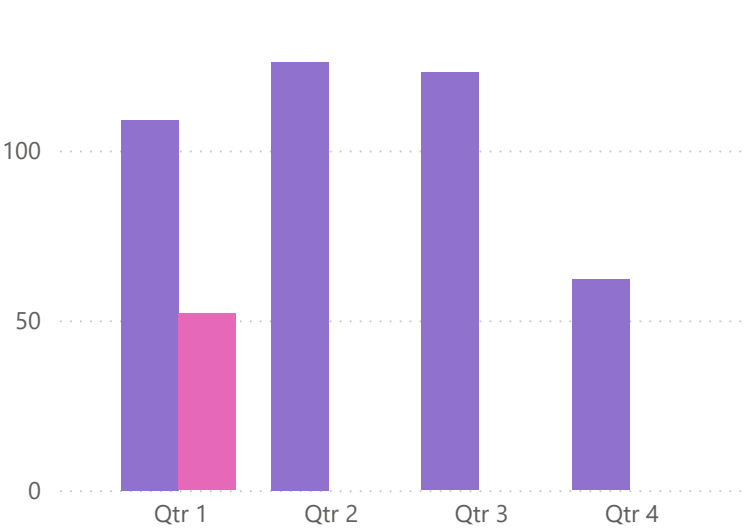
272

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
24-25	Qtr 1	264
24-25	Qtr 2	263
24-25	Qtr 3	216
24-25	Qtr 4	227
25-26	Qtr 1	272

Comments: 272 new businesses were registered in the first quarter, which is a greater outturn than any quarter in the previous year.

Number of businesses accessing business support

Financial year 24-25 25-26



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

Year to date position:

52

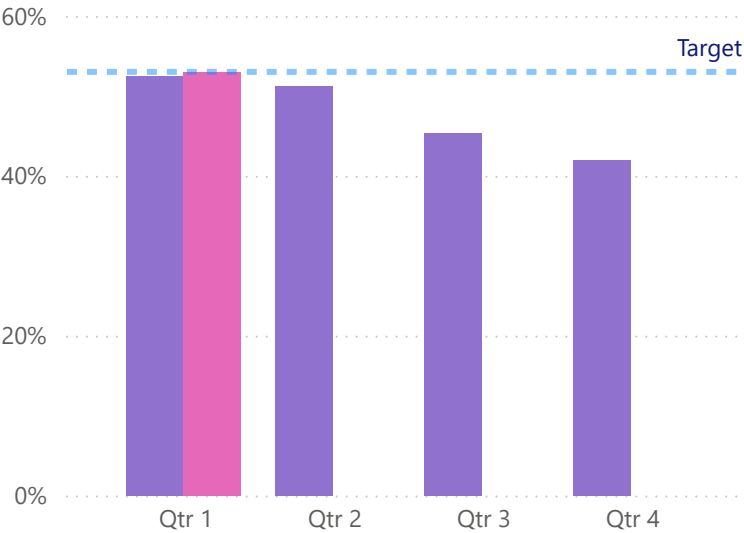
Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
24-25	Qtr 1	109
24-25	Qtr 2	126
24-25	Qtr 3	123
24-25	Qtr 4	62
25-26	Qtr 1	52

Comments: The number of businesses accessing business support dropped to its lowest figure in the first quarter. This is due to the confirmation of renewal of UK Shared Prosperity Funding not occurring until May. This is anticipated to increase in the second quarter in line with up coming activity which can take place now funding has been made available.

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Higher



Status:



Year to date position:

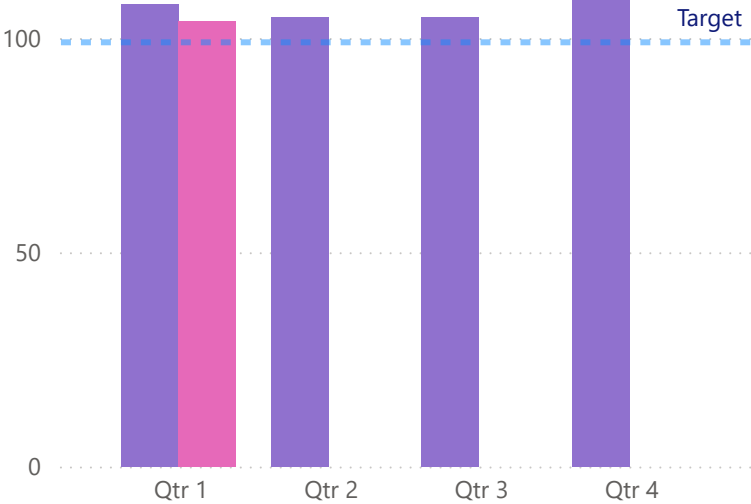
53.0%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	52.5%	50%
24-25	Qtr 2	51.3%	50%
24-25	Qtr 3	45.4%	50%
24-25	Qtr 4	42.0%	50%
25-26	Qtr 1	53.0%	53%

Comments: First quarter outturn for recycling rate has achieved the new and higher target, and demonstrated an increase on the first quarter of last year. This is increase due to the tonnage of residual waste collected reducing.

Kilograms of residual waste per household

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Lower



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	108	100
24-25	Qtr 2	105	100
24-25	Qtr 3	105	100
24-25	Qtr 4	109	100
25-26	Qtr 1	104	98

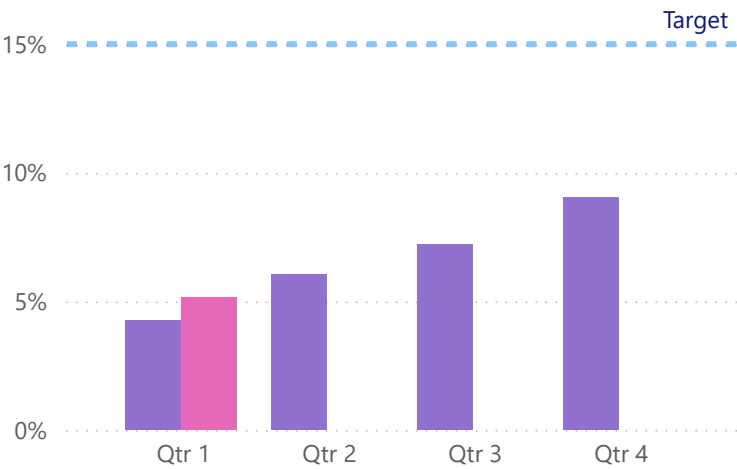
Year to date position:

104

Comments: The first quarter outturn for residual waste missed the new, lower target, returning 104 kgs per household. However, the first quarter outturn is 4kg lower than the same quarter last year. As part of the waste review, trials, engagement events and opportunities to drive behaviour change are underway to improve recycling and reduce residual waste. These types of behaviour change take time, but challenging targets have been set ahead of the significant collection changes coming in June 26.

Recycling contamination rate

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Lower



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	4.24%	15%
24-25	Qtr 2	6.06%	15%
24-25	Qtr 3	7.21%	15%
24-25	Qtr 4	9.03%	15%
25-26	Qtr 1	5.17%	15%

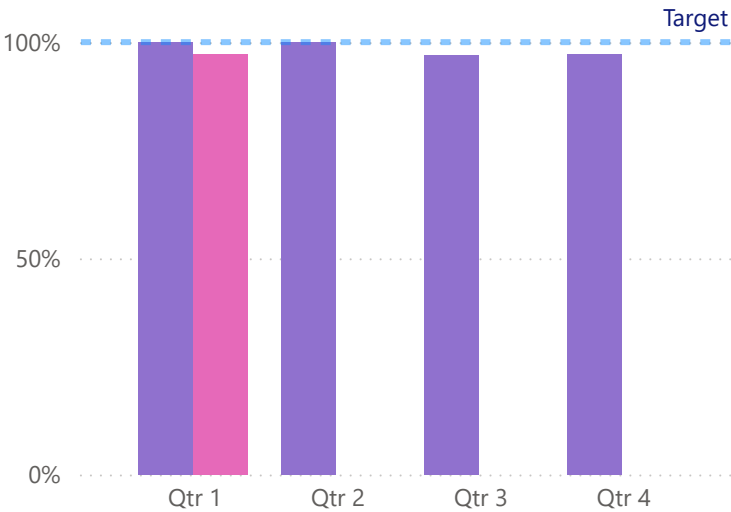
Year end position:

5.17%

Comments: Recycling contamination rate was below target for the first quarter returning a rate of 5.17%. Despite a small increase on the same quarter in the last year, the outturn remains significantly below the target.

Percentage of fly tips cleared within 24hrs (numbers reported within table)

Financial year 24-25 25-26 Desired trend: Higher



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Number	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	173	100%	100%
24-25	Qtr 2	218	100%	100%
24-25	Qtr 3	196	97%	100%
24-25	Qtr 4	214	97%	100%
25-26	Qtr 1	224	97%	100%

Year to date position:

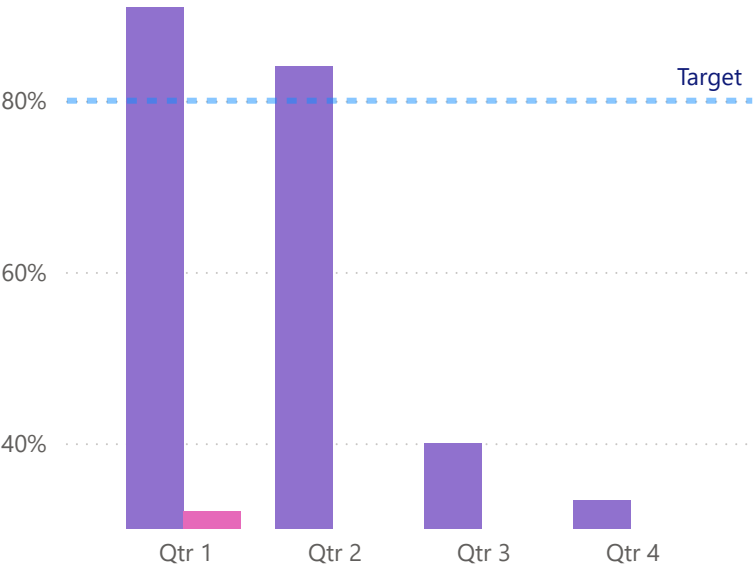
97%

Comments: In the first quarter, 97% of fly tips were cleared within 24 hours (217 out of 224). The main reason for the delayed clearances resulted from taking increased time to gather evidence for enforcement before the fly tips were able to be cleared.

Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved on time

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Higher



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	90.9%	80%
24-25	Qtr 2	84.0%	80%
24-25	Qtr 3	40.0%	80%
24-25	Qtr 4	33.3%	80%
25-26	Qtr 1	32.0%	80%

Year to date position:

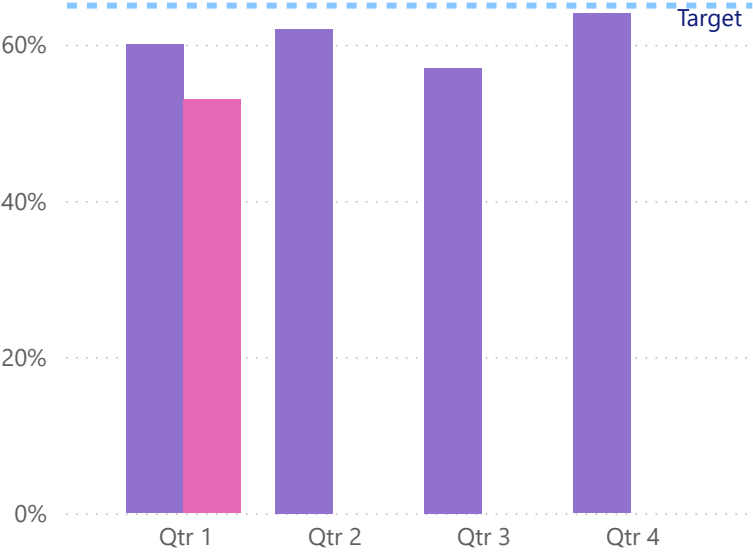
32.0%

Comments: The percentage of DFGs approved on time missed target in the first quarter, returning 30% (8 on time out of 25 approved). This is the result of applications now being approved which were delayed by the availability of funding during the previous year. During this time the Council has prioritised urgent grants, ensuring that critical requests have been able to be actioned.

Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Higher



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	60%	65%
24-25	Qtr 2	62%	65%
24-25	Qtr 3	57%	65%
24-25	Qtr 4	64%	65%
25-26	Qtr 1	53%	65%

Year to date position:

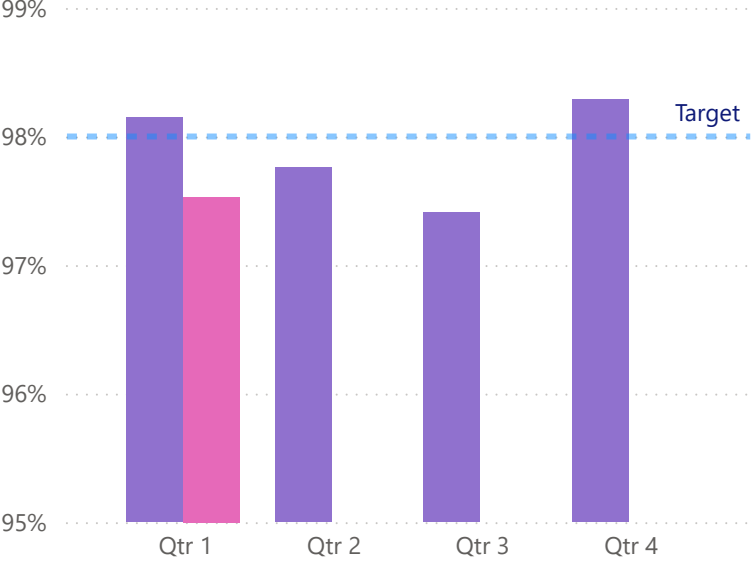
53%

Comments: In the first quarter, the Customer Services team handled 21,621 calls, resolving 11,540 at first contact - 53%. Whilst many enquiries are addressed directly by the CSC, complex issues are regularly transferred to departments such as Council Tax, Housing, Environmental Services, and Planning for specialist support. Meetings with Council Tax and Housing are planned to review customer contact workflows and identify areas for improvement and the Customer Services service review has started aimed at identifying operational improvements.

Percentage of invoices paid on time

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Higher



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	98.2%	98.5%
24-25	Qtr 2	97.8%	98.5%
24-25	Qtr 3	97.4%	98.5%
24-25	Qtr 4	98.3%	98.5%
25-26	Qtr 1	97.5%	98.0%

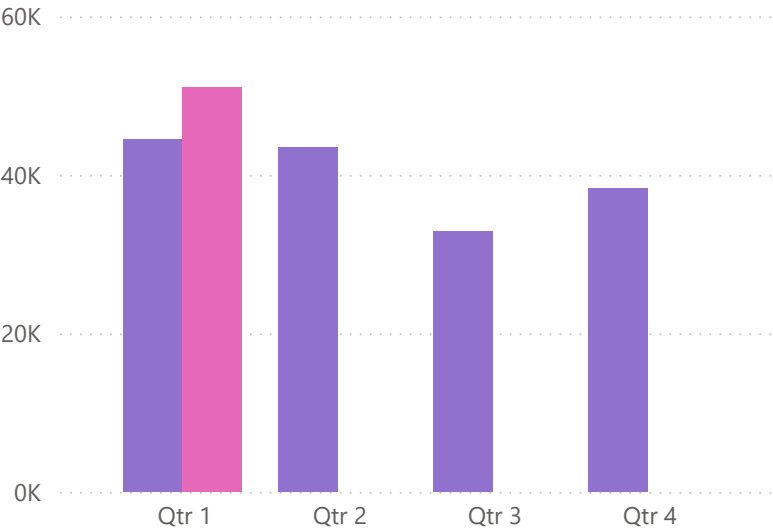
Year to date position:

97.5%

Comments: The percentage of invoices paid on time was 97.5% in the first quarter, missing the target by 0.5%. The reason for underperformance continues areas of the organisation with high payment volumes. The Finance team continues to work with members of staff these areas, in addition to work to understand if any process changes could improve performance.

Number of people transacting with the Council online

Financial year 24-25 25-26



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
24-25	Qtr 1	44,532
24-25	Qtr 2	43,440
24-25	Qtr 3	32,904
24-25	Qtr 4	38,253
25-26	Qtr 1	50,991

Year to date position:

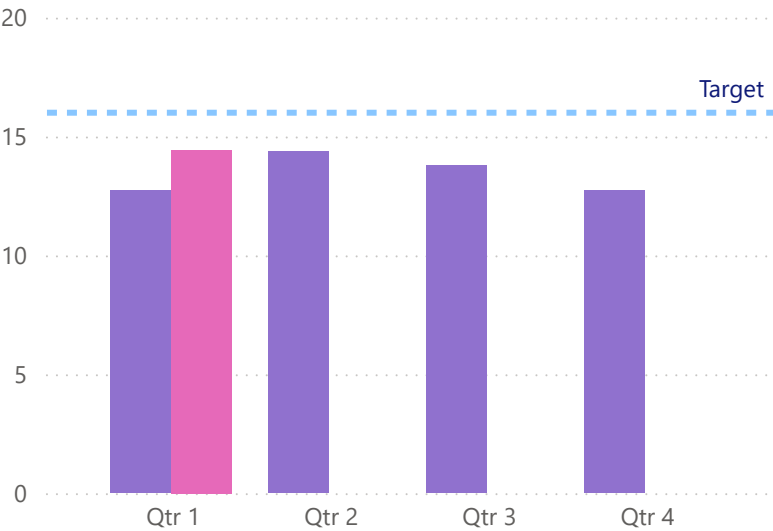
50,991

Comments: The Council observed an increase in web transactions in the first quarter when compared to the previous year. This is due to the garden waste sign-up service being available online this year.

Days taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Lower



Status:



Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	12.73	16
24-25	Qtr 2	14.37	16
24-25	Qtr 3	13.77	16
24-25	Qtr 4	12.74	16
25-26	Qtr 1	14.44	15

Year to date position:

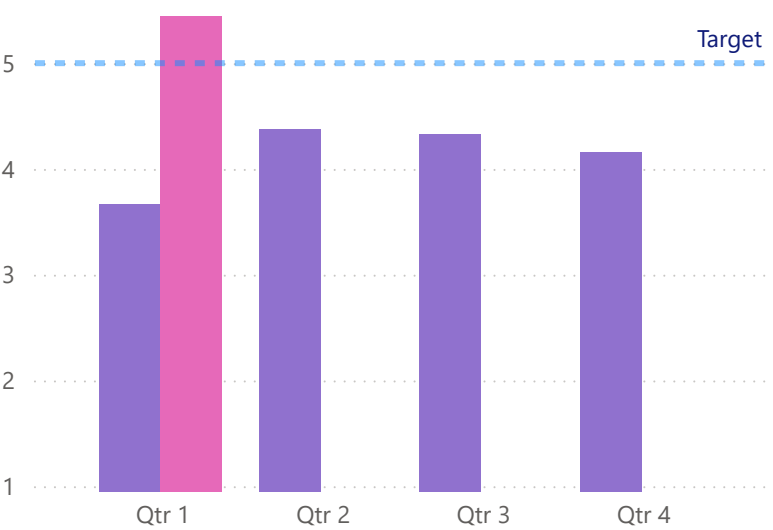
14.44 days

Comments: The time taken to process new benefit claims has remained below the lower target for 25/26 in the first quarter with an outturn of 14.44 days.

Days taken to process housing benefit claim changes

Financial year 24-25 25-26

Desired trend: Lower



Status:



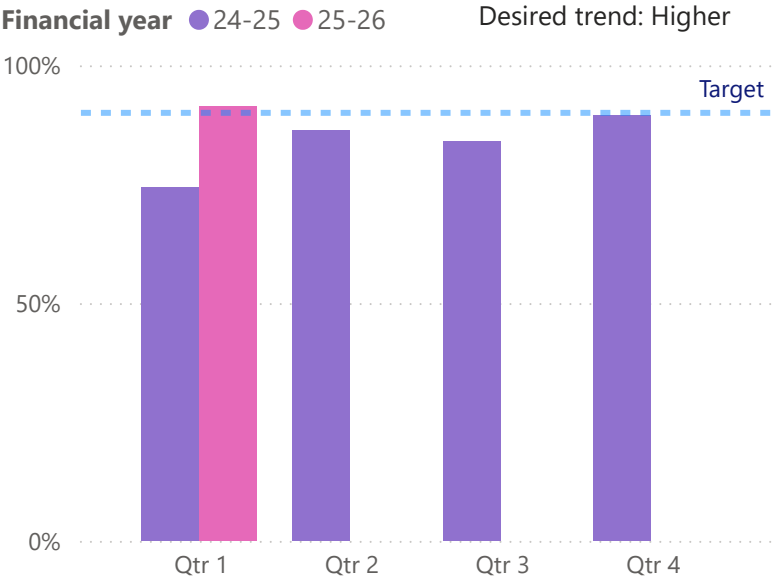
Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	3.67	3
24-25	Qtr 2	4.38	3
24-25	Qtr 3	4.33	3
24-25	Qtr 4	4.16	3
25-26	Qtr 1	5.45	5

Year to date position:

5.45 days

Comments: The local council tax support scheme has resulted in a positive fall in overall caseload; however this means that the remaining claim changes are more complex, which causes an increase in average processing time. The majority of claims are being processed within target, however outliers which are often due to delayed information, distorts the average. Caseload is also being managed with reduced staffing as the service prepares for migration of Housing Benefit cases to Universal Credit.

Percentage of stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale



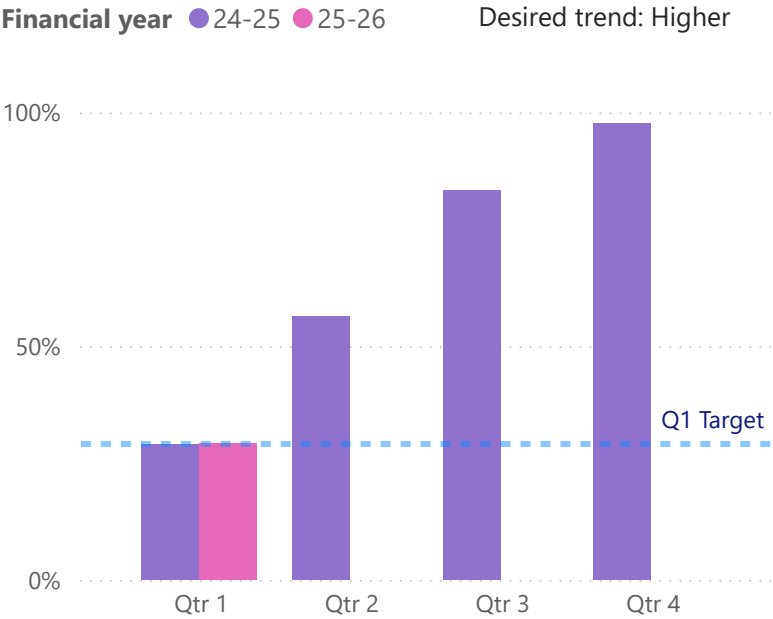
Status:

Year to date position: 91.35%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	74.33%	90%
24-25	Qtr 2	86.27%	90%
24-25	Qtr 3	84.09%	90%
24-25	Qtr 4	89.47%	90%
25-26	Qtr 1	91.35%	90%

Comments: Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescale achieve target in the first quarter. This follows a challenging year in 24/25 and is the result of new processes in the operations team, which receives the highest volume of complaints.

Collection rate for Council Tax



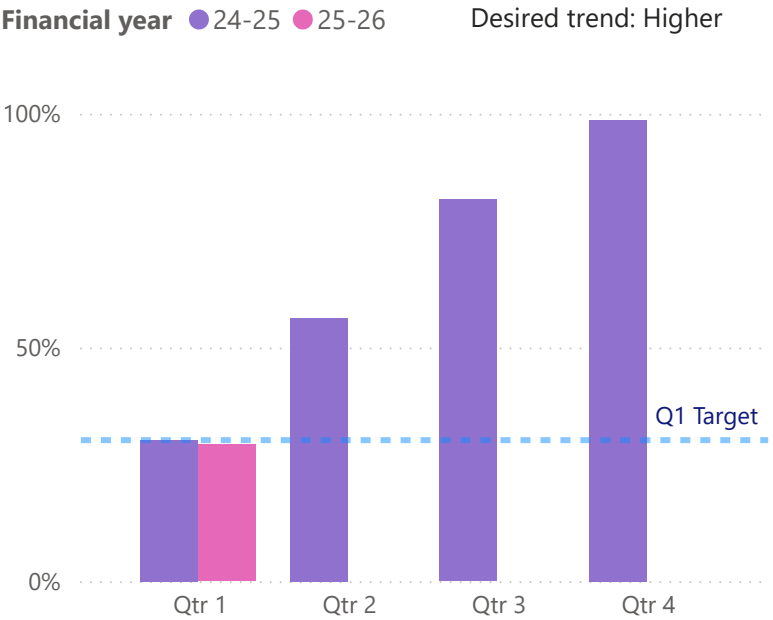
Status:

Year to date position: 29.18%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	29.06%	30.45%
25-26	Qtr 1	29.18%	29.06%
24-25	Qtr 2	56.41%	57.42%
24-25	Qtr 3	83.38%	83.81%
24-25	Qtr 4	97.55%	97.59%

Comments: Council tax collection rate returned an increased percentage when compared to the previous year. As a result, the first quarter outturn has achieved target.

Collection rate for Business Rates



Status:

Year to date position: 29.27%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
24-25	Qtr 1	30.17%	30.12%
24-25	Qtr 2	56.27%	56.40%
24-25	Qtr 3	81.70%	82.90%
24-25	Qtr 4	98.68%	98.13%
25-26	Qtr 1	29.27%	30.17%

Comments: Business rates collection missed target by 0.9% for the first quarter. Minor deviations are anticipated year to year, and this is expected to recover by the end of the year.

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis is detailed below. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Justified	115	102	56	74	83
Not Justified	62	33	25	26	16
Partially Justified	14	23	11	12	2
Not known	5	1	2	2	4
Total	196	159	94	114	105

Comments:

The first quarter returned a total of 105 complaints across all three stages of the complaints process, a reduction on the previous quarter and a significant reduction compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

The key driver in the reduction of complaints year on year was a decrease in stage 1 complaints received by operations (95 vs 178). This is a result of a large volume of complaints in 24/25 relating to the implementation of the chargeable garden waste service through the initial rollout of new routes in the first quarter. Now that the service is established significantly less complaints were received in 25/26.

There was also an observable reduction in escalated complaints, where only one stage 3 complaint was received in the first quarter, and no stage 2 complaints were received. This indicates improved resolutions at stage 1. Further, the number of 'partially justified' complaints reduced in the first quarter, indicating greater accountability for issues.

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

April 2025

One final decision notice was issued following initial enquires of the Council. The complaint was initially made in January and was in respect of how the Planning Service determined a planning application next to the complainant's home. The Ombudsman declined to investigate as there was not enough evidence of fault in the Council's actions and they also did not consider the complainant had suffered a significant personal injustice.

No new complaints were received in April.

May 2025

One final decision was issued without enquiries of the Council. The complaint was made against the Council's Planning Enforcement Team due to failure to take action against a neighbouring property for an alleged breach of planning control. The LGO declined to investigate the complaint as they considered that

it was unlikely they could achieve any worthwhile outcome for the complainant, and they had not seen any evidence of fault in the way the Council reached its decision.

No new complaints were received in May.

June 2025

One final decision was issued after investigation. This complaint was made to the LGO in October 2024. The complainant had gone direct to the LGO without engaging the Council's complaints process and the Council considered it appropriate to request the LGO to exercise its discretion and accept jurisdiction of the complaint without asking the complainant to complete the Council's complaint process. In March 2025, the Council received the informal complaint enquires which were responded to with an acceptance of service failure and an offer of remedies to put right the injustice to the complainant (£500 symbolic payment and an apology). On 30 June 2025, the LGO issued its final decision notice in which they found fault in the Council's handling of the complainant's housing application which had caused the complainant added avoidable distress when the complainant and his children found themselves living in accommodation not suited to their needs. The Council agreed to apologise to the complainant and make a symbolic payment of £500 in recognition of the injustice caused by its fault.

The Council has complied with the remedies as recommended by the LGO and within the specified timescales.

No new complaints were received in June.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	499	509	505	506	503	- 3	-
Headcount – Permanent employees	463	467	464	467	467	-	
Headcount – Fixed term contract	36	42	41	39	36	- 3	
Total staff FTE	458.52	467.96	465.91	467.21	466.63	- 0.58	-
Level of employee turnover	2.4%	3.1%	1.98%	2.17%	3.18%	+ 1.01%	-
Number of leavers	12	16	10	11	16	+ 5	-
Number of starters	10	26	6	12	13	+ 1	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee (rolling)	6.22	5.65	6.01 days	6.85	7.27 days	+ 0.42 days	8.0
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	80.8%	67.4%	51.5%	45.3%	79.92%	Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	688	842	1068	895	1235	+ 340	-
Number of delegates	345	314	363	377	289	- 88	-
Number of apprentices *	21	20	23	23	20	- 3	-

Year on Year Headcount	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	492	499	492	486	501	506

* BDC's apprenticeship programme runs throughout the year. The figures reflect various apprenticeships ranging from level 3 through to a level 7.

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.

Health & Safety: Indicators of Performance	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	5	16	16	10	9
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	5	14	14	10	9
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0	0	1	0	0
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	0	2	1	0	0
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	25	0	10	0	0
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	3	2	2	4	1
Number of near miss incidents	0	1	0	1	0
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	0	0	0	1	2
Number of claims settled	0	2	0	0	1

Comments:

Nine incidents or accidents occurred during the first quarter, all of which involved employees. Five of these incidents occurred whilst handling or lifting a load. Two occurred due a slip, trip or fall. One occurred as a result of hitting a stationary object, and one exposure to a hazardous substance.

One instance of a verbal/physical incident to an employee was reported whereby the employee received threatening emails.

Two incidents resulted in insurance claims, and one claim was settled.

Financial Summary

The review of the financial performance and projection for the year at this first quarter shows an overall positive variance of £1.1 million.

Treasury management income, which is projected to outperform budget due to higher than anticipated cash balances driven largely by the spend and financing requirements of the capital programme, the 2024/25 outturn, level of reserves, government grants, and other funds held for future distribution to preceptors.

Sustainable Development is projecting a positive variance, mainly due to staffing but also from overachievement of income. The budget reset the baseline income target; however, this was before government had confirmed significant increases in household application fees. Income from this source can be volatile and subject to market conditions where the position can change significantly, particularly in respect of major applications.

Asset Management and Environment are both projecting adverse positions greater than 5% of their budget. Along with a projected shortfall in income in both service areas, there are additional staffing costs anticipated in Environment due to interim arrangements in Building Control. Strategic Investment and People and Performance show adverse positions, which are both less than £50k, and therefore currently rated as amber.

Following confirmation of the pay award, a central provision has been made for the estimated additional cost that will be incurred. Service budgets will be adjusted to reflect the award in the second quarter report.

Finance will work with services to review the forecast position to identify any ongoing risks and opportunities for budget planning for 2026/27 and the updating of the MTFS.

Capital expenditure to the end of the first quarter was £1.1 million, with the main areas of spend being on a new 3G artificial pitch in Witham, planned maintenance on Council owned assets, and Town Centre improvements. There is currently a projected underspend on the Causeway House refresh as the scope of the project has been reduced.

Background

Full Council agreed a net budget of £21.2m. Budgets may be updated during the year in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure, and monitoring is then against the updated budgets.

The financial review is a collaborative process between the Finance Team and Service Managers, and which considers the position at the end of quarter in order to create a projection of the outturn position for the year. The assessment uses information that is available at the time with forecasts made based on previous experience and assumptions over the remainder of the year. The projection set out below is therefore subject to changing circumstances, recognising that many aspects of financial performance are affected by external factors and service demands. Forecasts are updated on a quarterly basis.

General Fund Revenue Spending

The tables below show the projected outturn for the year by service as forecast at the end of Q1.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Forecast Spend for the Year £'000	Current Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,996)	(2,791)	205	R
Community & Leisure	1,088	1,051	(37)	G
Corporate Management Plan	1,727	1,725	(2)	G
Economic Development	203	203	0	G
Environment	1,012	1,226	214	R
Finance	546	(406)	(952)	G
Governance	1,671	1,649	(22)	G
Housing Services	1,069	1,069	0	G
ICT & Facilities	2,208	2,101	(107)	G
Marketing & Communications	759	723	(36)	G
People & Performance	1,240	1,257	17	A
Operations	7,468	7,180	(288)	G
Strategic Investment	338	384	46	A
Sustainable Development	2,169	1,727	(442)	G
Service Plan Total	18,502	17,098	(1,404)	G
Corporate Financing	3,015	2,964	(51)	G
Est. Impact of Pay Award	0	60	60	
Vacancy Allowance	(300)	0	300	
Net Total	21,217	20,122	(1,095)	G

	Staffing Expenditure			Other Expenditure			Gross Income		
Business Plan Service	Updated Budget	F//Cast	Variance	Updated Budget	F/Cast	Variance	Updated Budget	F/Cast	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	551	537	(14)	1,410	1,472	62	(4,958)	(4,801)	157
Community & Leisure	1,008	944	(64)	831	829	(2)	(751)	(722)	29
Corporate Management Plan	2,222	2,211	(11)	(116)	(107)	9	(379)	(379)	0
Economic Development	206	206	0	65	65	0	(67)	(67)	0
Environment	1,961	2,127	166	166	178	12	(1,115)	(1,079)	36
Finance	2,912	2,839	(73)	26,060	26,111	51	(28,426)	(29,356)	(930)
Governance	1,013	943	(70)	907	920	13	(249)	(214)	35
Housing Services	1,718	1,718	0	331	331	0	(979)	(979)	0
ICT & Facilities	1,180	1,150	(30)	1,028	952	(76)	0	(1)	(1)
Marketing & Communications	597	554	(43)	306	300	(6)	(145)	(132)	13
People & Performance	1,155	1,169	14	85	88	3	0	0	0
Operations	8,357	8,365	8	7,492	7,543	51	(8,381)	(8,728)	(347)
Strategic Investment	393	408	15	6	6	0	(61)	(30)	31
Sustainable Development	3,116	2,832	(284)	610	621	11	(1,557)	(1,726)	(169)
Service Plan Total	26,389	26,003	(386)	39,181	39,309	128	(47,068)	(48,214)	(1,146)
Corporate Financing	742	691	(51)	5,574	5,592	18	(3,301)	(3,319)	(18)
Est. Impact of Pay Award	0	60	60	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vacancy Allowance	(300)	0	300	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total	26,831	26,754	(77)	44,755	44,901	146	(50,369)	(51,533)	(1,164)

General comments:

- Staffing projections are based on vacancies and other known changes at the end of Q1 and reflect service expectations for the remainder of the year. Changes are likely to occur across the year which will impact future quarterly reviews
- A pay award provision of £60k has been made for additional cost. The agreed offer represents an increase of 0.2% above the original assumption of 3% reflected in service budgets
- A vacancy allowance of £300k is included in the base budget anticipating that staffing costs may be lower than budgeted due to staff turnover and other changes

Specific comments on the main service variances (+adverse/ -positive)

Asset Management

- Reduced income at the Plaza from the Makerspace and casual lettings (+£119k)
- Lower income at Victoria Square due to vacant units (+£45k)
- Net other variances, mainly related to properties, and a reduction in staffing cost recharged to capital (Net +£41k)

Community and Leisure

- Net saving on staffing costs due to vacancies (-£64k)
- Community transport income down due to lack of volunteer drivers (+£31k).
- Other minor variances (-£4k)

Environment

- Staffing variance due to the extremely difficult labour market. Interim staff have been appointed to the Building Control service to fill vacant permanent posts resulting in net additional costs (£184k).
- Forecast shortfall in the income on the fee earning account (+£97k)
- Revenue cost reduced due to higher recharge of staffing costs to capital in relation to delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (-£49k)
- Other minor variances (net -£18k)

Finance

- Additional treasury management income due to higher than anticipated cash balances and better performance of Pooled Funds (-£944k).
- Net underspend on staffing due to vacancies, and reductions in contracted hours or staff appointed at lower scale points than assumed (-£73k)
- Projected additional income from Local Tax and Housing Benefit cost recoveries assuming similar position to recent years' outturns (-£33k).
- Housing Benefits net additional cost of benefits paid (+£65k) –Expenditure is demand led and subject to subsidy limitations on certain types of benefit payments.
- Increased system related costs for the Revenues and Benefits system (+£22k)
- Increase in numbers of property annexes resulting in an increase of Council Tax discount in excess of grant received from government (+£29k)
- Other variances including additional DWP grant income (-£18k).

Governance.

- Member allowances are projected to be higher reflecting the increase in the Basic Allowance approved by Full Council on the 21st July 2025, and other related costs e.g. National Insurance (Net +£36k).
- Recruitment and retention difficulties have meant that staffing posts have continued to remain vacant (-£98k).
- Shortfall in net income from residential searches and sealing charges partially offset by increased income from Commercial searches (+£18k).
- Overspend on Electoral Registration service e.g. postage costs (+£21k)
- Other minor variances (£1k)

ICT & Facilities

- Net saving on staffing costs due to vacancies and reduction in hours (-£30k)
- Corporate ICT systems maintenance (-£57k)
- Net other underspend (-£20k) mainly on Causeway House operating costs.

Operations

- Car parking income has been overachieved mainly on pay & display, partially offset by increased collection costs (-£42k)
- The subscription-based garden waste collection service is projected to generate additional net income (-£85k)
- Income from the sale of recyclate material, composting credits and tipping away payments are projected to be higher for the range of materials collected due to changes in market prices and tonnages (-£94k). Forecast increased cost are associated with transportation of recyclate (+£50k)
- Income from the sale of glass forecast to be higher due to market price (-£43k)
- Demand for commercial waste and bulky waste services continues to increase resulting in a forecast of net additional income (-£41k).
- Net other underspend including staffing and vehicle related costs (-£33k).

Strategic Investment

- Increase in staffing costs due to changes in gradings and a reduction in staffing costs recharged to capital as the capital programme reduces in size. (+£46k).

Sustainable Development

- Net staffing variance due to vacancies in Development Management and Landscape Services, partially offset by agency cover (-£284k).
- Projected overachievement in Planning Application income (-£80k), Pre-application income (-£20k), Planning Performance Agreements (-£40k). Income can be highly variable and subject to economic conditions.
- Additional income from street naming (-£29k)
- Other variances (+£11k).

Corporate Financing

- The income gainshare from the Council Tax Sharing Arrangement with preceptors is projected to be higher based on performance at the first quarter (-£30k). The amount is provisional and assumes a 6% gain share, but subject to the outturn performance achieved across all Essex authorities there is potential for this to increase up to 9% or £193k against budget.
- Staffing costs recharged to capital are estimated to be lower than assumed in the budget, based on current project officers' timesheet data (+£20k).
- Other staffing related underspends including, employee leave purchase scheme, central staff retention provision and lower added years pension costs (-£51k).
- Other variances including leased cars central provision, apprentice levy, business rates transitional adjustments, and other grant funding (-£28k)
- Legal settlement costs arising from the Wethersfield legal challenges (+£38k)
- A central provision has been made for the estimated additional cost of the pay award (+£60k)

Capital Programme

Current capital programme totals £17.2m (excluding prior year spend) of which £3.7m is profiled into 2026/27

	Budget Profiled 25/26 £000	Actual Spend 25/26 £000	In-year Variance 25/26 £000	Slippage (-or deduction from future budget) £000	Forecast Project Variance 25/26 £000	Expected Remaining Spend 25/26 £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	137	7	130	0	0	130
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	75	31	44	0	0	44
Waste Review	3,378	0	3,378	0	0	3,378
Witham Community Centre	2,752	2	2,750	0	0	2,750
Town Centre improvements	663	107	556	0	0	556
Property planned maintenance (incl.Causeway Hse)	2,129	156	1,972	0	-819	1,153
Information technology systems & equipment	367	64	303	0	0	303
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	721	19	702	0	0	702
Cemetery improvements	29	3	26	0	0	26
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	68	3	65	0	0	65
Operational equipment	486	0	486	0	0	486
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	1,076	600	476	0	0	476
Climate change initiatives	119	0	119	0	0	119
Shared / Rural Prosperity Fund	239	0	239	0	0	239
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	954	40	915	0	0	915
Capital salaries	278	63	215	0	-26	190
Total	13,472	1,096	12,376	0	-845	11,531

Programme Summary

- Actual spend in the first quarter was £1.1m. Anticipated spend in the subsequent quarters is currently £2.3m (Q2), £2.8m (Q3) and £6.4m (Q4).
- The programme is projected to be £845k under spent in 2025/26, mainly due to a reduced scope of works for the Causeway House refresh project.

Capital resources generated

- Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – number of completed sales 10 with £1.1m due to the Council. A further 23 applications are in progress (For comparison in 2024/25 only 4 sales were completed generating £533k); and VAT shelter £94k. Two further sales which are subject to clawback arrangement generating £200k.
- Other minor receipts totalling £28k.

Treasury Management

At the start of the year £73.1m was invested. During the first quarter the average amount under management was £89.2m with a peak of £92.8m. New investments of £49m were made, and £34.1m matured, resulting in £88.0m being held at the end of the quarter.

Monies held in long-term pooled funds was kept at £19m with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets. The remainder of managed funds were held in short-term investments comprising money market funds; Debt Management Office Account (UK Government); other local authorities; bank deposits; and liquid cash held with Lloyds Bank.

Dividend income earned to the end of the quarter was £193k and interest on short-term investments was £755k, a total of £948k, or an annualised return of 4.3%.

The market value of shares and units in long-term pooled funds at the end of the quarter was £23.1m, representing an unrealised gain of £4.1m.

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are currently estimated to be £11.3m by the end of the year, a net decrease of £0.1m.

The level of reserves is currently being reviewed as part of preparations for the 2026/27 budget.