

Our Plan to 2028





Foreword

This plan sets out our priorities for the next two years and clearly defines how we will strengthen local services while preparing the organisation and our communities for transformational changes to local government.

Supporting our communities is at the centre of everything we do. As cost-of-living pressures continue to impact our residents, supporting people to access food, essential goods and health and wellbeing activities remains a key priority for us. Focusing on supporting the most vulnerable in our communities and working with local providers to expand supporting housing options will also help more people feel safe and supported, leading to better longer-term outcomes. With Witham's new Community Centre opening in the coming months, and councillor grants helping local groups make a difference, we remain committed to building stronger, healthier and more connected communities.

As we continue to support our communities, we also want to make the most of opportunities that encourage sustainable and inclusive growth. By bringing forward a revised Local Plan, alongside our neighbourhood plans, we can help ensure that new development is well planned, well connected and shaped by local communities. We will support the local economy through a clear sector-based approach, focusing investment on areas with the greatest potential and working with partners to attract new businesses and high-quality jobs. Rural businesses will receive targeted support, and district-wide job fairs and school-based careers events will help residents find training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities.

We remain committed to caring for and improving our environment, particularly as national policy changes bring new requirements and opportunities. A range of schemes and government-backed programmes will continue to help households and businesses cut energy use and reduce bills, while modernising our waste service in-line with national reforms will make it easier for people to recycle, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill.

Delivering these ambitions depends on having an organisation that can adapt and continue to improve over time. Our transformation programme is improving the way we work, while delivery of our digital strategy will make it easier for residents to access services and for staff to do their jobs well. Service reviews will continue to strengthen performance and our focus on employee engagement means that our workforce will be kept informed, involved and supported as we move forward.

As we continue to strengthen the organisation from within, we are also looking ahead to the wider changes taking place across the region. Over the duration of this plan, we must prepare, together with our partners in Colchester, Tendring and Essex County Council, for the transition to a new North-East Essex unitary authority, which will come into effect as this plan concludes. Our aim is to ensure this transition is managed smoothly, maintaining essential services while laying the foundations for a strong and resilient future council.

We know there is much work ahead. Balancing everyday services while progressing major projects and preparing for future change will bring challenges but we face this period with focus, determination and a shared sense of purpose. Challenges can often open doors to new opportunities and a chance to strengthen, reshape and improve our organisation ready to meet the needs of our communities in the future.



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	Outcome	End date
Support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through various initiatives	Targeted support to access food and essential goods. Additional support for the most vulnerable to help address the underlying challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. Support for people to access physical and emotional health and wellbeing support.	Mar 2028
Deliver activities to support the priorities of the LiveWell Strategy	Reducing health inequalities, improving mental well-being, promoting active lifestyles, empowering residents, supporting the vulnerable and enhancing community capacity.	Mar 2028
Deliver the housing and homelessness strategies to respond to the national plan to end homelessness	Homelessness strategy updated to embed prevention as the core principle. Strengthened duty to collaborate implemented across services and partners. Alternative accommodation pathways identified reducing the reliance on B&B's.	Mar 2028
Improvements to Halstead Leisure Centre	Overlay of the two flat roofs at Halstead Leisure Centre to improve the leisure facilities and reduce operational costs.	Dec 2026



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

Title	Outcome	End date
Work with partners to develop an approach to a Supported Housing Strategy	Strategy developed alongside an action plan to enhance supported housing options and provide tailored support that meets residents' needs.	Mar 2028
Respond to the requirements of the Renters Rights Act	All policies, procedures and documentation align with statutory requirements. Landlord database effectively managed. The Council fulfils its new statutory obligations and duties.	Mar 2028
Review and deliver temporary accommodation that is fit for purpose for the district	Provision of temporary accommodation Reducing the reliance on nightly lets.	Mar 2028

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

Title	Outcome	End date
Continue to work with partners to deliver activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation	Providing opportunities for individuals to connect with each other and build positive social networks and connections. Implementation of targeted interventions to address loneliness and social isolation.	Mar 2028
Complete the build of Witham Community Centre and handover to Witham Town Council	Provision of a modern Community Centre bringing people of all ages together for various activities and events.	Sept 2026
Improvements to Silver End Village Hall	Investment in community assets through the installation of a new heating system, roof replacement, solar panels and fire improvements at Silver End Village Hall reducing operational costs.	Oct 2026
Improvements to Marks Farm Community Centre	Investment in community assets through the installation of a new hot water and heating system at Marks Farm Community Centre reducing operational costs.	Sept 2026

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

Title	Outcome	End date
Deliver a Councillor Community Grant Scheme for Councillors to support local projects and groups in their ward	Distribution of funds across the district to non-profit organisations for community projects and initiatives.	Sept 2025
Work with partners to deliver the Community Action Safety Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime	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.	Mar 2027

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	Outcome	End date
Submit a revised local plan for examination by the planning inspectorate in line with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework	To set a refreshed framework for sustainable development across the district.	Dec 2026
Support the development and adoption of Neighbourhood Plans including, Wethersfield and Finchingfield and Bures/Bures St Mary's, Great Bardfield, Stisted, Shalford and any others received	Enabling communities to play a role in shaping their areas. Neighbourhood Plans used in the determination of planning applications.	Mar 2028

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

Title	Outcome	End date
Develop an evidence-based Sector Development Strategy and Action Plan	Strategy published providing clear identification of the current key economic sectors in the district and those with future growth potential. Prioritisation of funding and resources towards initiatives that drive sector resilience and competitiveness. Action plan developed.	Mar 2027
Agree and action final approach to land use for the Witham enterprise site	Ensuring a financially viable option is progressed for the Witham Enterprise site.	Dec 2026
Work with the Essex Growth Agency to support inward investment activity	Encourage businesses to locate and grow in the district.	Mar 2028
Enhance and maintain the inward investment website by creating compelling case studies and actively promote to showcase the district as an attractive destination for business investment	Increased engagement and interest from businesses considering relocation or expansion. Increased inward investment leading to job creation and local prosperity.	Mar 2028

Priority 3 Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate.

Title	Outcome	End date
Work with North Essex Economic Board to deliver a rural business support programme	Rural businesses gain access to tools and guidance. Supports rural businesses to innovate and adapt to changing markets.	Mar 2027
Deliver a series of business briefings on a range of subjects	Businesses stay informed about key developments, funding and support programmes.	Mar 2028

Priority 4 Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic wellbeing.

Title	Outcome	End date
Organise and deliver jobs fairs across the district.	Job fairs delivered in Braintree, Halstead and Witham each year. People are connected to prospective employers to explore new career opportunities.	Mar 2028
Support delivery of the Braintree secondary schools apprenticeship fairs and careers fairs	Students gain exposure to a wide range of career paths, apprenticeships and training opportunities helping them make informed decisions about post-16 education, vocational routes, and employment. Provides opportunities for students to interact with local employers.	Mar 2028

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	Outcome	End date
Deliver improvements to identified play areas across the district	Play areas that have been identified for refurbishment will incorporate inclusive play equipment that improves play value for individuals of all ages.	Mar 2028
Develop and submit a Tree Strategy for Council approval	Strategic framework for tree protection, planting, and management, aligning with national policy and local priorities.	Dec 2026
Consider the implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order to address dog fouling in open spaces across the district	Reduction in dog fouling. Increased public confidence in the cleanliness and safety of the district's open spaces. Clear and consistent enforcement framework established.	Mar 2028

Priority 2 Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Title	Outcome	End date
Continue to deliver initiatives and actions outlined in the Councils Climate Change Action Plan	Tangible progress towards achieving as far as practically possible carbon neutral by 2030.	Mar 2028
Collaborate and engage with Local Authorities to review and improve energy efficiency across all council-owned estates.	Stronger inter-council partnerships for joint projects and funding opportunities. Lower energy costs through shared solutions.	Mar 2028
Support community groups and Parish Councils to plant trees across the district through the Community Tree Planting Scheme	Parish Councils and Community Organisations have access to trees for planting.	Mar 2027

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

Title	Outcome	End date
Develop new allotment sites at Great Notley Country Park	Residents have access to communal spaces for home-grown produce reducing the carbon impact of imported goods. Handover of allotment site to Great Notley Parish Council.	Mar 2027
Continue providing support to residents through energy efficiency initiatives delivered via the Green Doctor Service, Handyman scheme and other government-backed schemes.	Residents are supported to reduce energy consumption and lower household bills. Vulnerable households benefit from available schemes and local support.	Mar 2028

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

Title	Outcome	End date
Implement new household waste collection arrangements	Compliance with the Governments waste reforms (Simpler Recycling). Divert as much waste as possible from landfill and increase recycling	Jun 2026
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	Influence and change attitudes and behaviours to reduce waste, reuse and recycle.	Mar 2028

Fit for the Future

Transformation Objectives:

- **Better ways of working** – Embed more effective collaborative and efficient working practices.
- **Be ready for transition** – Ensure teams and systems are prepared for upcoming organisational or structural changes
- **Digital strategy** – Implement key elements of the digital strategy to improve services and internal capabilities
- **Service reviews** – Improve services, meet new obligations, and enhance financial resilience.

Transformation delivery workstreams:

People and Processes

- Review resources and capacity to ensure that key organisational priorities can be delivered.
- Support and develop people across the organisation to ensure that our culture has the resilience to respond to change and drive continuous improvement.
- Review and improve corporate processes to ensure operational efficiency by removing duplication and aligning processes across the organisation.

- Deliver our skills programme focusing leadership skills, digital skills and the skills required to deliver services now and in the future, building confidence and capabilities in the workforce.

Service Reviews

- Carry out service reviews to ensure services remain efficient, aligned with strategic priorities and financially sustainable by identifying improvements, enhancing customer experience and driving continuous improvement.

Digital

- Create digital customer approaches to self-service and improve user experience.
- Identify further system automation and integration opportunities through service reviews and feedback.
- Make the best use of technology to improve productivity and customer service.
- Explore and implement better use of AI and data to drive efficiency, inform decision-making and innovation in service delivery.
- Ensure cyber security policies and training meet current and future needs.

Local Government Reorganisation

Over the next two years, the Council will need to focus its efforts on preparing for and supporting the transition to the new North-East Essex unitary authority through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Alongside Colchester City Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council, we will play an essential role in ensuring that the transfer of people, services, assets and contracts is delivered smoothly, safely and without disruption to residents or businesses. To achieve this, we must concentrate on several core areas of activity as follows:

- Provide the necessary resources to support LGR workstreams and assess capacity and reprioritisation of work to ensure that the Council provides expertise to the Essex-wide programme whilst ensuring minimal disruption to core business
- Develop Council specific transition plans to ensure the Council is fully prepared for a safe and complete transfer into the new authority whilst ensuring there is no loss of service continuity for our residents and businesses
- Establish Governance and oversight arrangements to ensure clear accountability and alignment with those responsible for the establishment of new Councils
- Integrate transition work into our Fit for the Future workstream to ensure our employees are informed, supported and ready for transition

The anticipated timelines are as follows:

- Spring to Summer 2026 - planning for transition and implementation team stood up
- Autumn to Winter 2026 – Structural Changes Order abolishing current councils and establishing new councils approved by Parliament
- Spring 2027 – Joint Committees in place to oversee the transition and implementation ahead of Shadow Authority elections
- May 2027 – Shadow Unitary Authorities come into being and approve finalised implementation plans May 2027 to March 2028 – transitional arrangements enacted
- April 2028 – new councils established and all current activities migrated

Devolution

The devolution of responsibilities, powers and funding from central government to a Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA) will offer positive opportunities to strengthen localised decision making and the allocation of resources and funding across Essex.

However, the deferral of the Mayor of Essex election until May 2028, alongside other factors, means that the formal establishment of GECCA is now expected to be pushed well into the 2026/27 financial year. As a Council we will be:

- Contributing all it can to the programme that continues to work on the development of GECCA, currently led by Essex County, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Councils.
- Supporting the development of initial policy and decision making on the areas of GECCA's responsibility that link in with and impact on the Councils services, including economic development, regeneration and skills, transport and infrastructure, strategic planning, environment and climate change, health and wellbeing, public service reform and public safety



Measuring success

KPI	Target
Number of affordable homes delivered	250 each year
Participation levels across our sport centres	Data only **
Number of homelessness cases prevented	Data only
Percentage of major planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of minor planning applications decided on time	70%
Percentage of other planning applications decided on time	85%
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	55%
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	385 kgs
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	95%
Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescale	80%
Average call answer time in the Customer Service Centre	45 seconds
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	97.5%

** This Performance Indicator will be 'Data Only' for one year to allow the new leisure provider to baseline activity. Targets will be introduced in 27/28

Local Outcomes Framework

The Council will also use the Local Outcomes Framework in our wider performance monitoring over the life of this Plan. The Framework provides a set of metrics that reflects sixteen priority areas that matter most to local communities and will demonstrate the impact of working with partners across several areas.

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





Braintree
District Council

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