2026

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND BUSINESS SUPPORT GUIDE



INSIDE:
Local business wins King's Award for Enterprise in Innovation

Supporting employment, business and innovation

Funding, support and advice

Braintree District Council



Services to support your business

- **Commercial waste collection**
  Reduce, reuse and recycle your waste in a package tailored to your business
- **Pest control**
  Keep your business premises free of pests
- **Advertising opportunities**
  Roundabouts, vehicle billboards, printed publications, car park posters and internal screensavers
- **Building control**
  Local knowledge and advice and dangerous structure inspections and more
- **Grounds maintenance**
  Specialist services including grass/hedge cutting, painting and gritting

Contact us

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01376 552525

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Welcome

This booklet outlines the progress we've made in supporting the local economy this year and the opportunities we are creating for residents, businesses and future talent.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our support for local businesses, encouraged employment and skills growth and equipped young people with digital skills. The job fairs in Witham and Braintree connected more than 900 job seekers with over 100 employers, opening doors to careers across a wide range of sectors. Through our business briefings, we offered expert insights on subjects such as sales, leadership, AI, cybersecurity and social media, alongside valuable networking opportunities. Inspiring the next generation remained a priority too. Our digital skills showcase gave thousands of students hands-on experience with cutting-edge technologies, boosting confidence and opening clear pathways into further education, apprenticeships and digital careers.

We are also proud to celebrate the success of local innovators. This booklet highlights two outstanding examples: ACONDA Industrial Carriers, recognised with the King's Award for Enterprise for its innovation in engineering, and RTH Staircases, a rural manufacturer investing in cleaner, more efficient production through government-backed funding. Their achievements reflect the strength, creativity and resilience of our business community.

As we look ahead to 2026, our commitment to economic growth is stronger than ever. Businesses can expect expanded networking opportunities, tailored support for rural enterprises, further aspirational events for young people and guidance to help organisations begin or accelerate their journey towards greener, more sustainable operations. Our partnerships - including those with the North Essex Economic Board - will continue to deliver fully funded training, mentoring and innovation programmes to help businesses adapt and grow.

Whether you are a start-up, a growing business or an established employer, we are here to support your ambitions. I hope this booklet provides a helpful overview of the resources and funding opportunities available and the success stories shaping our local economy.

Cllr Frankie Ricci,
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure

Supporting Employment, Business & Innovation

We're driving economic growth by creating opportunities for people and businesses across our district. Through targeted initiatives, we've supported job seekers, strengthened local businesses and equipped young people with essential skills.

Driving employment and skills growth

Four successful job fairs in Witham and Braintree connected 900 job seekers with over 100 exhibitors offering careers, apprenticeships and training opportunities across sectors such as health, engineering, construction, education, hospitality and finance. The events welcomed attendees from diverse backgrounds, including midlife career changers and neurodiverse individuals.



Supporting local businesses

Our business briefings equipped more than 100 local businesses with expert insights on sales, leadership, AI, cybersecurity, legal essentials and social media trends. The events also provided valuable networking opportunities.



Equipping young people with digital skills

Over 1000 students attended our digital skills showcase - an event designed to inspire and equip young people with digital skills. The event gave students hands on experience with cutting-edge technologies, boosting confidence, employability and opening clear pathways into further education, apprenticeships and digital careers.

Growth delivered in 2025

84 **businesses strengthened** with dedicated business support

20 **businesses supported** with free coworking space

90 **students inspired** at local STEM Day

1065 **students empowered** at digital skills showcase

13 **businesses supported** to create and safeguard jobs

£167K **in grants** allocated to rural businesses and community groups from Rural England Prosperity Fund

968 **people** connected with employers at 4 job fairs

108 **businesses** more knowledgeable after business briefings

1 **apprenticeship fair** for all secondary schools in Braintree

100+ **exhibitors** offered careers advice to job seekers

CONTACT US

If you have questions or need support:
Email **ecodev@braintree.gov.uk**
Call **01376 552525** and ask for Economic Development

What to expect IN 2026

As we look ahead to 2026, our focus is on creating opportunities that help businesses thrive, attract talent, and prepare for the future. Here's what to expect this financial year:

Networking opportunities

We know that strong connections lead to growth. This year, we'll host more networking events, giving local businesses the chance to share ideas, collaborate and access expert advice.

Support for rural businesses

Our rural economy is vital to the district. A detailed review of the needs of rural businesses will help shape future initiatives, ensuring they have the tools needed for succeed.



Events which inspire young talent

We're committed to building a pipeline of talent for local employers. In 2026, expect more apprenticeship and aspirational events for students, alongside careers fairs and STEM days which connect young people with businesses.



Support for greener growth

Sustainability will sit firmly on the agenda too, with guidance and resources offered to help businesses begin their journey towards greener operations and net zero.

Support for the Local Government Review

We are actively supporting the Local Government Review, which is exploring how services across Essex can work better for residents and businesses. To learn more about the review and what it could mean for the future of local services, visit: **www.essexlgrhub.org/stronger-greater-essex**

If you have questions or need support, email: ecodev@braintree.gov.uk

Fully funded support for your business in Braintree

Supporting local businesses to grow plays a key role in creating a stronger North Essex for all - that's why the North Essex Economic Board has a number of free support programmes and initiatives to help your business succeed.

North Essex Economic Board



Finance & Debt support

Support with Carbon Reduction

Young Entrepreneurs Programme

Finding further support



Dedicated Business Support

1:1 Advice with a Business Mentor

Digital Skills and learning

Workshops and networking events



NEEB is a partnership of Braintree, Tendring, Uttlesford, Maldon and Epping Forest District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Council and Essex County Council.

What does your business need to grow?

Get in touch today

SCAN ME!

To find out more about fully funded support programmes from NEEB, visit www.NEEB.org.uk

FUNDING, SUPPORT AND ADVICE

A ROUND UP OF THE FREE SUPPORT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES

NORTH ESSEX ECONOMIC BOARD

A range of fully funded support, including mentoring, skills training, tools and practical tips.

Whether you're starting a new business or looking to expand an existing one, the service can help you maximise your potential as well as provide you with the tools needed to help address challenges along the way.

www.neeb.org.uk/help-for-your-business



AMBITIOUS ESSEX GROWTH HUB

Free and impartial signposting to funding and finance opportunities, one-to-one business advice as well as training opportunities for scaleups, pre-startup and startup businesses.

www.ambitiousessex.co.uk

FUNDING PORTAL

A funding finder tool designed to support businesses in finding grants, funding, awards and other opportunities.

Easily filter results by sector, size, location and funding type, and set up email alerts to stay updated on the latest opportunities.

funding.idoxopen4business.co.uk/essexcc

GREEN OPPORTUNITIES AND SKILLS

A one-stop shop for residents, learners, employers and partner organisations with an interest in sustainability skills, careers, jobs and resources.

www.essexgreenskills.co.uk



INNOVATION FUND

The University of Essex's innovation fund is designed to help businesses develop new ideas, solve challenges and drive innovation.

Offering grants of up to £15,000 and tailored support from project scoping to delivery, the fund connects businesses with world-class academic expertise and emerging talent.

www.essex.ac.uk/business expertise/funding-opportunities innovation-fund



ESSEX OPPORTUNITIES

An employers' hub designed to promote vacancies and help businesses attract early talent.

The hub offers a range of services which support employers, such as the ability to share job vacancies on its portal as well as help with recruiting apprentices.

www.essexopportunities.co.uk

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Essex Working Well provides workplaces with free workplace health and wellbeing support.

Actively embed health awareness practices into your organisation through mental health awareness programmes and first aid training.

www.essexworkingwell.co.uk/mental-health-aware

CONTACT US

If you have questions or need support:
Email **ecodev@braintree.gov.uk**
Call **01376 552525** and ask for Economic Development
www.facebook.com/groups/braintreedistrictbusinesses

SIGN UP to our free business e-newsletter

Receive updates on local, regional and national funding opportunities, training courses, apprenticeship schemes and other business opportunities.
www.braintree.gov.uk/tellmemore

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Local business wins King's Award

for Enterprise in Innovation



ACONDA Industrial Carriers, based in Witham, has received the prestigious King's Award for Enterprise in Innovation, recognising its pioneering work in moving heavy loads safely in confined, hazardous and challenging environments.

The company designs and manufactures battery-powered, remote-controlled tracked carriers that can transport up to 4,000kg across terrain where wheels fail - mud, gravel, stairs and inclines up to 45 degrees. With the ability to navigate narrow spaces too, these machines deliver efficient load handling in areas where traditional equipment cannot reach.

ACONDA's innovation focuses on user-centric design, combining modular construction, advanced traction control and intuitive remote operation. Its technology is transforming industries from construction and landscaping to emergency services and heritage conservation.

From railway maintenance teams to conservation experts working inside ancient ruins, ACONDA's carriers are reducing injury risk, cutting transport times and minimising environmental disruption.

"We're incredibly proud to be one of just 197 organisations to receive the King's Award, said Tom Cannon, Founder and Managing Director. This honour reflects our team's hard work, our commitment to British manufacturing and the game-changing impact of our products."



Funded by UK Government

Leading staircase manufacturer invests in growth with rural grant

Witham-based business RTH Staircases has strengthened its manufacturing capabilities with the purchase of a new sanding machine, thanks to a £20,000 grant from the **UK Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund.**

Specialising in the design, manufacture and installation of bespoke timber staircases, RTH serves major housebuilders, small developers, self-build projects and homeowners looking to enhance their living spaces.

The new sanding equipment enhances the quality of the finish while reducing downtime, boosting productivity and supporting sustainable growth. Its energy-efficient design is also improving environmental performance, aligning with the company's commitment to sustainability.

Cllr Frankie Ricci, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure, said:

Supporting small rural businesses like RTH Staircases is vital for our local economy. This investment not only improves productivity and sustainability but also supports local employment and strengthens skills in the joinery and manufacturing sector.



Subscribe to our newsletter for the latest grant opportunities: **www.braintree.gov.uk/tellmemore**

While the grant made this upgrade possible, RTH invested an additional £25,000, demonstrating confidence in its future growth and innovation.

Locate
Braintree District



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www.locatebraintreedistrict.co.uk

Please recycle this when you have finished with it.

Information correct at time of print, February 2026

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