

CABINET AGENDA

Monday, 13th March 2023 at 6.30pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.

To access the meeting please use the link below:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Members of the Cabinet are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Overall Strategy Innovative Environment

Finance and Corporate Transformation

Climate Change and The Environment

Operations and Commercialisation

Councillor G Butland (Leader of the Council)

Councillor J McKee

Councillor Mrs W Schmitt

Councillor R van Dulken

Connecting People, Places and Prosperity

Economic Growth

Housing, Assets and Skills

Planning and Infrastructure

Councillor T Cunningham (Deputy Leader)

Councillor K Bowers

Councillor Mrs G Spray

Supporting Our Communities

Health and Wellbeing

Communities

Councillor P Tattersley

Councillor F Ricci

Invitees: Councillors J Abbott, Mrs J Pell and D Mann are invited to attend as Group Leaders, also invited as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee's are Councillors Mrs D Garrod, Mrs M Cunningham and M Radley.

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBER – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Pecuniary Interests (OPI) or Non-Pecuniary Interests (NPI).

Any Member with a DPI, OPI or NPI must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or OPI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking:

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make statement to the Committee on matters listed on the agenda for this meeting.

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be heard within the 3 minutes allotted to each speaker.

Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement are requested to register their interest by completing the Public Question Time registration [online form](#) by **midday on the second working day** before the day of the Committee meeting.

For example, if the Committee Meeting is on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a Bank Holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday). The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time.

When registering for Public Question Time please indicate whether you wish to attend the Committee meeting 'in person' or to participate remotely. People who choose to join the meeting remotely will be provided with the relevant link and joining instructions for the meeting.

Please note that completion of the on-line form does not guarantee you a place to speak during Public Question Time. You will receive email notification from the Governance Service confirming whether your request is successful.

The Chairman of the Committee has discretion to extend the time allocated to registered speakers and the order in which they may speak.

In the event that a registered speaker is unable to connect to the meeting, or if there are any technical issues, their question/statement may be read by a Council Officer.

Further information on public question time is available on the [Council's website](#).

Health and Safety

Anyone attending meetings is asked to make themselves aware of the nearest available fire exit. In the event of an alarm you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by staff. You will be directed to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building.

Documents: Agendas, Reports and Minutes can be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

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https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access_to_information/376/privacy_policy

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Webcast and Audio Recording:

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Comments and Suggestions:

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended, you can send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION	Page
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interest	
To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.	
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on Monday 6th February 2023 (copy previously circulated).	
4 Public Question Time	
(See paragraph above)	
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Report Title: Annual Plan 2023/24	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/69
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager tracey.headford@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Annual Plan sets out our actions and performance targets for 2023/24. These actions and targets support the delivery of the Councils Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2024. The actions and performance measures are aligned to each of our corporate strategy themes:
- Connecting People and Places
 - Enhancing our Environment
 - Supporting our Communities
 - Promoting Prosperity
 - Delivering and Innovating
- 1.2 The Plan also provides the performance framework for managing the delivery of the actions and priorities by regularly reviewing the activity and achievements against it and reporting on the progress on a quarterly basis to Cabinet

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the Annual Plan 2023/24.
- 2.2 To agree the proposed Councils key actions and performance measures for 2023/24.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Plan sets out the delivery ambitions of the Council. The public will be able to see how the Council intends to deliver services and can be held to account for its performance against the priorities of the Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024.
- 3.2 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- Connecting People and Places

- Enhancing our Environment
- Supporting our Communities
- Promoting Prosperity
- Delivering and Innovating

4. Options

- 4.1 There are no options to consider as a result of this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Projects to deliver the actions in the Annual Plan have been considered as part of the annual budget setting process. Budgets were approved in February 2023.
- 5.2 Each project (where applicable) will have its own budget and will be monitored as part of the project management process by the project manager and sponsor. Budget issues will also be reviewed as part of the quarterly reporting process.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no identified legal implications arising from the approval of the Annual Plan. As part of the project management process for each project, there will be an assessment of any legal implications.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 Any other implications to the Council, residents and businesses will be detailed as part of the business case as it is developed or the project management process for each project.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual

orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

- 8.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

9. List of Appendices

- 9.1 Annual Plan 2023/24.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 *Corporate Strategy 2020-2024*



ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24



This year's Annual Plan outlines the key projects and targets to deliver our shared priorities in our Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 and turn our ambitions into a reality.

The past year we've been able to proactively respond to challenges our communities have faced, working together with our partners, to provide support to residents through the cost-of-living crisis and doing all we can to ensure our Ukrainian guests and sponsors have all the support they need – and we'll continue to do this for as long as needed.

The cost of living is still at the forefront of all our minds, which is why we're investing £1million this year to strengthen the safety net for those who need it most.

We'll continue our drive towards becoming a carbon neutral district – helping our communities and businesses adapt to climate change, working with our partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings and protecting and improving our natural environment. Prioritising sustainable travel and transport will be harnessed by introducing more walking and cycling networks across the district.

There is a continued demand to support positive and sustainable economic growth which we'll deliver through working with our partners to deliver business support programmes and training and the ambitions in our new Economic Growth Strategy.

There are some exciting projects set for completion in our district this year too - a new medical centre in Sible Hedingham and a new multi-purpose community centre and enterprise centre in Witham which will support our district's economic growth and improve its infrastructure.

We know we must look into opportunities to deliver more for our residents and businesses as we face future budget pressures and increasing demand for services. We'll continue to work closely with North Essex authorities to explore ways we can create greater resilience to benefit our district and help us reach its full potential, whilst building on opportunities to level up our rural communities.

The future for the Braintree district looks very exciting as we reach the final year of our Corporate Strategy, continuing our journey in achieving our vision for our people and communities to make the Braintree district the best that it can be.



Councillor Graham Butland
Leader of
Braintree District Council



Dan Gascoyne
Chief Executive

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

Priorities:

- Grow the district in a sustainable way supported by the required services such as health, leisure and community facilities
- Develop our infrastructure leading to improved journeys in and across the district
- Deliver good quality affordable homes for local people
- Create thriving Town Centres for everyone to enjoy
- Improve the districts digital connectivity and harness innovation in technology to meet future digital needs



We will:

- Complete the physical improvements to Witham and Halstead town centres to improve public realm
- Enable the delivery of 250 affordable homes across the district
- Improve the district's housing stock by addressing energy efficiencies and exploring best practice to tackle empty homes
- Develop a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2028
- Improve our health and leisure facilities by replacing the studio and sports hall floors at Braintree Leisure Centre and refurbishing the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre

Working with others we will:

- Engage in the pre-application and examination processes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in and around the district
- Develop our plans to introduce walking and cycling networks across the district
- Enable the delivery of a new build, multi-purpose community centre in Witham bringing people together to socialise, learn and access key services
- Continue to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham
- Work with the Integrated Commissioning Board to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing services at the Victoria Square development





ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Priorities:

- Ensure our district is clean and well maintained with high quality parks and green spaces
- Encourage others to change their behaviour to protect and enhance the environment
- Minimise pollution by promoting sustainable energy sources, construction and transport
- Ensure Braintree District Council reduces its own environmental impact and be carbon neutral where practical by 2030
- Support residents and businesses to reduce, re-use and recycle



We will:

- Enhance biodiversity by refurbishing the wildlife garden in Halstead Public Gardens
- Improve the facilities in our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham
- Deliver improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road, Halstead
- Respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 in relation to air quality, biodiversity, water and waste reduction
- Protect our communities by implementing the requirements of Martyn's Law
- Deliver campaigns and work with our communities to
 - Report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles
 - Minimise food waste to help households save money and avoid unnecessary waste
 - Improve awareness and understanding of climate change

Working with others we will:

- Deliver projects in our Climate Change Action Plan to contribute to our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district such as working with communities and businesses to build climate resilience, developing baseline data for a tree strategy, piloting the ECC green accreditation scheme (before rolling out to businesses) whilst continuing to reduce our resilience on fossil fuels
- Develop opportunities for increasing the renewable energy and fuel security within the district
- Increase biodiversity and the attractiveness of the district by re-wilding open spaces and wild seed highway verges
- As part of a two-year safer streets programme, tackle enviro crime in the focused area of Witham





SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Braintree
District Council

Essex County Council

Priorities:

- Build on the strengths of our communities and what they can do to support themselves and help each other
- Help people to make positive lifestyle choices, increasing their physical and emotional wellbeing
- Focus on prevention and early intervention so residents can lead independent and active lives
- Provide support and protection to our most vulnerable residents, their families and carers
- Support and inspire young people to raise their aspirations and reach their full potential



We will:

- Over a two-year period, use £1m of New Homes Bonus to support residents of the district through the continued cost of living crisis by:
 - Providing food security and access to essential goods across the district
 - Helping community groups and organisations provide additional support to our most vulnerable residents
 - Enabling physical and emotional health and wellbeing support with a focus on young people who find it difficult to access these services
- Support local projects and initiatives through the Councillor Community Grants scheme
- Support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on their pathway to independent living through supported housing and move-on accommodation



Working with others we will:

- Build more resilient communities to response to emerging issues
- Equip young people with the skills required to face challenging situations by delivering crucial crew workshops to schools across the district in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership
- Review our Livewell Strategy to support the changing needs of our residents and wider health and care priorities
- Address the health inequalities of the district through the Mid-Essex Alliance partnership by designing integrated health services in local communities and neighbourhoods
- Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night-time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham
- Deliver two changing places toilets in Witham and Halstead allowing people with complex needs to have greater access to public places to take part in everyday activities

PROMOTING PROSPERITY

Priorities:

- Make use of the competitive advantage of our location to attract new business
- Support the growth of key employment sectors
- Enable businesses to thrive with access to business support and key networks
- Ensure skills and training provision is aligned to meet the needs of the local economy now and in the future
- Develop our culture and heritage offer in shaping opportunities for tourism and investment



We will:

- Build on the current success of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park by selling the remaining site plots and promoting the development of the phase 2 land
- Continue to develop the Witham Enterprise Units to bring forward new business premises for SME's
- Develop and deliver a business support programme based at the Plaza to help District businesses start, grow and increase productivity, especially in key sectors

Working with others we will:

- In partnership with NEEB, deliver a shared prosperity funded programme of support focusing on
 - Financial and debt management support and advice alongside signposting to other areas of financial support to create and safeguard jobs across north Essex
 - Digital skills support to businesses across the district enabling them to grow digitally
- Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/workshops to introduce students to new industries and sector course pathways
- Support productivity and prosperity in our rural areas through the allocation of grant funding from the Rural England Prosperity Funding





DELIVERING AND INNOVATING

Priorities:

- Listening to our residents and businesses more and using this information to improve our services
- Involving communities in the design, development and delivery of services
- Building strong, effective partnerships across the public, private, voluntary and community sector taking a place based approach to achieve more for the district
- Modernising the way we work to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services
- Considering new ways to generate income achieving financial self-sufficiency



We will:

- Develop plans to sustainably close our budget gap by capitalising on commercial opportunities to increase our income stream and identifying a deliverable efficiencies programme
- Develop an Asset Management Strategy to implement a more coherent approach to all property interests across the district.
- Consider an operating model for residents and business to potentially subscribe to the garden waste collection service
- Continue to develop our online and digital services to support changes in customer demand and expectations
- Understand the impacts of the reforms to national planning policy and mainstreaming biodiversity net gain in the planning system
- Provide fit for purpose car parking machines across our car parks

Working with others we will:

- Inform and influence negotiations with Government around a Greater Essex Devolution deal to ensure the benefits are felt locally for residents and businesses.
- Deliver on the plan for North Essex Authorities to work more closely together on shared priorities and improving resilience
- Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including the rural pilot with Essex County Council
- Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex





MEASURING SUCCESS

In addition to the projects and actions described in this annual plan we also measure these indicators which focus on some of our broader priorities

CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES

- Number of affordable homes delivered
- Number of homes granted planning permission

ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting
- Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household
- The percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported
- Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures (annually reported)

Climate change KPI's will be reported through the performance of the Climate Change Action Plan yearly to Cabinet.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

- Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant for critical grants and substantial grants.
- Participation levels across all our sports centres
- Percentage of adults being active for 150 minutes per week
- Number of customers using our Handyman scheme
- Number of homelessness cases prevented
- Achieve at least a 1% increase in adults being active for 150 minutes per week (annually reported)

PROMOTING PROSPERITY

- Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 -64)
- Number of new business startups across the district
- Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support

DELIVERING AND INNOVATING

- Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre
- Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt
- Number of people transacting with us online
- Time taken to process housing benefit/ council tax benefit new claims
- Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes
- Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days
- Collection rate for Council Tax
- Collection rate for Business Rates
- Customer satisfaction with the Council (reported at the end of consultation period)



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**

Report Title: Third Quarter Performance Report 2022/23	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: To Note
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/16
Report Presented by: Councillor John McKee, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation	
Enquiries to: Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager. tracey.headford@braintree.gov.uk ext. 2442	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to summarise the performance of Braintree District Council (the Council) at the end of the third quarter (October 2022 to December 2022).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet to note the performance of the Council for the third quarter (October 2022 to December 2022).

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council keeps a record of its performance which is reported to cabinet every quarter for consideration and noting.
- 3.2 At the end of the third quarter, a further four projects are now complete bringing the total completed to 21. A further 42 projects are on track and progressing well. Two projects have an amber status as they have experienced delays and one has been cancelled in the third quarter due to the project no longer being financially viable bringing the total number of cancelled projects during the period of the Bouncing Back Together plan to two.
- 3.3 Targets are not set for all performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the need to revisit baseline targets which will be taking place prior to April 2023 in readiness for the next Annual Plan for 2023/24. For the targets that remain, nine performance indicators have met or exceed target, two performance indicators have missed target by less than 5% and two performance indicators have missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to recycling rates (>5%), the average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%), response time for stage one complaints (<5%) and the percentage of Council Tax collected (<5%).

- 3.4 The Council continues to respond to the cost-of-living crisis, working hard to address demand on service provision whilst supporting residents, communities and businesses and we will continue to monitor any impact this may have on our performance as we enter the last quarter of the year.
- 3.5 The Finance section of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the quarter. It examines the latest forecast for spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget. Also included is a summary of treasury management activities; projected movements on the General Fund balance; and a summary of spending to date on capital projects.
- 3.6 The forecast outturn for the year at the end of the third quarter is a positive variance of £65k. This compares to the positive variance projected at the end of the second quarter of £126k.
- 3.7 The projected change in General Fund unallocated balance is currently a net addition of £428k giving an estimated balance on 31st March 2023 of £6.5m.
- 3.8 Actual spend on the capital programme was £6.9m, of which, £3.5m was on the Plaza and £1.3m on the Manor Street regeneration project.

4. Options

- 4.1 There are no options to consider as a result of this report.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The performance report will go to performance management scrutiny committee for consideration on the 22nd March 2023.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The report provides an update as to the projected year-end financial position as determined at the end of the December 2022 covering the revenue account and details of actual spend for this period on capital.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 A summary of complaints received each quarter, analysed by outcome (justified, partially justified, or not justified) is provided.
- 8.2 The Enhancing our Environment priority has a number of actions that are designed to have a positive impact on the environment and climate change. An update on the progress of the actions in the Climate Change Action Plan is included classified under the themes of the Strategy.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 Equalities and diversity issues are considered fully in the Council's key projects. Where appropriate, an equality impact assessment is prepared and considered for any key projects identified.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Third Quarter Performance Management Report 2022/23

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Previous performance reports are published on our website once noted by cabinet. They are published at <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/directory/30/our-performance/category/577>

Third Quarter Performance Management Report

1st October 2022 to 30th December
2022



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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 third quarter of 2022/23 in relation to the publication of 'Bouncing Back Together', our plan for the district up to March 2023. This sets out the key activities being implemented to deliver our corporate priorities and summarises the measures in place by aligning key performance indicators to our priorities within the Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and 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 third quarter

The following table provides updates for the end of the third quarter in relation to our key activities.




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	4	6	1	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	8	5	0	0	1
Supporting our Communities	3	13	0	0	1
Promoting Prosperity	2	8	1	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	4	10	0	0	0
TOTAL	21	42	2	0	2

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 third quarter

The following table shows the performance for the end of the third quarter in relation to key performance indicators

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	2	0	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	3	0	1	0
Supporting our Communities	0	0	0	3
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	1	3
Delivering and Innovating	4	2	0	2
TOTAL	9	2	2	8

KEY:

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

Summary Position

At the end of the third quarter, a further four projects are now complete bringing the total completed to 21. A further 42 projects are on track and progressing well. Two projects have an amber status as they have experienced delays and one has been cancelled in the third quarter due to the project no longer being financially viable bringing the total number of cancelled projects during the period of the Bouncing Back Together plan to two.

Targets are not set for all performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the need to revisit baseline targets which will be taking place prior to April 2023 in readiness for the next Annual Plan for 2023/24. For the targets that remain, nine performance indicators have met or exceed target, two performance indicators have missed target by less than 5% and two performance indicators have missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to recycling rates (>5%), the average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%), response time for complaints (<5%) and the percentage of Council Tax collected (<5%).




The Council continues to respond to the cost-of-living crisis, working hard to address demand on service provision whilst supporting residents, communities and businesses and we will continue to monitor any impact this may have on our performance as we enter the last quarter of the year.

Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy








Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Adopt the Braintree District Local Plan providing a vision for the future growth of the district		
The Council formally adopted Section 2 of the Local Plan at a meeting of Full Council in July 2022. Section 2 contains local policies and allocations to guide development of homes, employment, infrastructure and community facilities in the Braintree district between now and 2033. Section 1 of the Plan, which was adopted in February 2021 and is shared by Tendring District and Colchester Borough Councils, sets the key vision, objectives, and overall strategic direction for growth. Now that Section 2 of the Local Plan has been adopted, it has full weight in determining planning applications.	August 2022	✓
Rejuvenate Braintree town centre by completing the Victoria Square development providing a Livewell health hub, 35 apartments, a hotel, bus interchange and public open space		
The Victoria Square development is now complete. The £30 million town centre regeneration included a 70-bed Travelodge, 35 new homes, a livewell hub, pharmacy, restaurant, new bus interchange, public toilets, a car park and garden area to complement Braintree's historic Town Hall. A ceremony has been held with partners to mark and celebrate the completion of the build.	August 2022	✓
Continue to support the safe return to our town centres and help build back together from the pandemic using the Welcome Back fund and other available funding		
Braintree District Council were allocated £268,835 of Welcome Back funding and the completed spend amounted to £268,811.50. One of the main projects delivered is in respect of the High Street Improvement Fund. This has been a hugely successful intervention, with positive engagement and feedback from businesses. 37 businesses successfully achieved improvements consisting of labour to improve the aesthetics of the retail/hospitality premises to create a safe and welcoming environment.	March 2022	✓
Deliver events in Braintree town centre to increase footfall and support local retailers taking advantage of the newly pedestrianised town centre		

The Braintree Street markets take place on the last Saturday of each month and continue to attract visitors. The Braintree Community Christmas event took place on 19th November 2022 across the Town Centre. As well as hosting over 80 market stalls selling a variety of crafts, foods and drinks, the all-day event had live festive entertainment, circus performers and a number of activities for all to enjoy. Further Christmas markets took place on the 3 rd and 17 th December and a free snowman trail took place during November and December for families to explore the town centre and find snowmen in shops to boost footfall to local businesses.	March 2023	
Deliver physical improvements to the town centres of Witham and Halstead		
Tender packages for civils and landscaping work for both Witham and Halstead Town Centres have been issued and responses will be considered in January 2023. Once the tenders have been awarded, the Council will be able to release the detailed build phase for both towns.	March 2023	
Develop a new Housing Strategy setting out how the Council will support the availability of good quality homes which best meet the needs of the current and future residents		
<p>The new Healthy Housing Strategy for the Braintree district went out to public consultation in December 2022 for 9 weeks. The draft strategy sets out three main commitments from the Council which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating a consistent programme of high quality, affordable homes which best meet the needs of the current and future residents • Supporting communities and enabling housing across the district to meet the needs of all our residents, especially those who are vulnerable • Improving access to and the quality of the Private Rented Sector and make best use of assets and existing properties <p>All feedback received will be considered before the strategy is finalised in March 2023.</p>	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue to work with our partners on the planning decisions of strategic infrastructure schemes		
<p>The Development Consent Order application for the widening of the A12 was submitted to the Planning Inspector in August and accepted for examination in September. There is now a pre-examination period where the public can provide their views on the proposals. A further six-month examination stage will start in January 2023 during which the Planning Inspector will examine the planning documents submitted. The latest round of ground investigation surveys was completed in November and the survey team are evaluating the results. Drainage condition surveys were completed in December and Ecological surveys are ongoing.</p> <p>The A120 Braintree to A12 was identified as a pipeline project and was being progressed by National Highways. The Council is still awaiting official confirmation of the scheme status.</p> <p>In December, National Grid announced that they have taken the decision to remove Hintlesham Woods Option 2 from their proposals for the Bramford to Twinstead Reinforcement of overhead powerlines. They will be submitting the Development Consent Order in Spring 2023.</p> <p>The draft Development Consent Order for Longfields Solar Farm was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in early 2022. Preliminary meetings, hearings and site visits have been taking place in the second and third quarter for feedback on the proposals. The examination closes in January 2023.</p>	March 2023	
Work with partners including Essex Highways on the delivery of our Cycling Strategy and implementation plan which includes developing integrated, high quality cycle routes that are safe to use and connected across our district		





In October, Cabinet approved the response to the recommendations within the scrutiny report into cycling and walking in the Braintree District. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Braintree town has now started and the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Witham is due to start in January. During the winter months, the Council continued to highlight safe cycling and the new highway code. Discussions are taking place with Essex County Council to implement the Active Travel Fund cycle scheme in Braintree Town. Staged implementation has started with 20mph zones and school streets.	March 2023	
Introduce the new Digital Demand Responsive Transport service, linking Horizon 120, with a fleet of electric mini-buses, to surrounding areas and central Braintree		
The new digital demand responsive transport Service has been launched and the first live outing was on the 1st April 2022. The service is called DigiGo and is a fully electric shared public transport service which offers on-demand or pre-bookable travel in parts of Essex including linking Horizon 120 to surrounding areas and central Braintree. There are no fixed routes or timetable and is booked through the 'Travel Essex' journey planning app and operates 7 days a week from 7am until 10pm.	March 2022	
Continue to support and monitor Superfast Essex in the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the district		
The Braintree district is currently at 95% of premises able to access superfast broadband and is forecast to reach 99% coverage within 3 years. The district wide take up of superfast broadband is currently at 30%. Further updates on the take up figures will be available in early 2023. Superfast Essex and Gigaclear have been running campaigns to increase uptake and Superfast Essex have launched their Gigabit project and are promoting low broadband deals for those on low incomes.	March 2023	
Facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham		
Planning permission has been granted. The land transfer continues to be delayed and the end date has been pushed back to April 2023. This continues to be monitored and officers are engaging regularly with One Medical Group and the NHS in order to reach the final approval stage for the project.	April 2023	

ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT







Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Carry out air quality reviews in known air pollution hot spots across the district to improve the knowledge of local air quality and the proposed actions to take		
The results of the air quality monitoring in Halstead have shown that no measures need to be put in place. The information from the monitoring in Halstead will be included in the overall air quality review of the district being carried out by external consultants.	May 2022	✓
The review of air quality in the district has been completed by the Consultants and reviewed by Management Board. The Council is still waiting for the secondary legislation from the Environment Act to confirm new targets. This will help the Council to understand what it needs to measure and will feed into new actions.	December 2022	✓
Provide replacement litter bins along the A120 and A12 to keep laybys litter free and our district clean and tidy		
The Council has installed a total of 57 new brightly coloured litter bins along the strategic network within its district, at various lay-bys located on the A12, A120 and A131. The new bins have been match funded by WRAP, allowing the council to invest a total of £30k to give the locations a brand new look. The Council is also trialling seven customised bins that have a large single opening allowing people to dispose of litter without having to leave their vehicle.	March 2022	✓
Continue to deliver campaigns and work with our communities to		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce litter, keeping our district clean and tidy • Reduce waste and increase recycling • Improve awareness and understanding of climate change 		
The Love Essex campaign 'It's for driving on, not littering on' highlighting the fixed penalty fines for anyone caught throwing litter from their vehicle came to an end in October. Further littering campaigns will be launched in 2023/24.	March 2023	✓
Recycle week took place in October (17 th to the 23 rd) with promotion on our social media channels to challenge perceptions and myths around recycling and target contamination to improve recycling behaviours. A video of our recycling facility showing people what happens to their recycling was also launched. The messaging at Christmas focussed on food waste, recycling in the right way, Christmas tree recycling and glass recycling.	March 2023	▶
During the third quarter, the Council promoted discounted water butts and kits resulting in 69 sales. Energy saving measures were promoted through social media	March 2023	▶

and in our contact magazine. A video of Oliver's Plants Nursery showcased how they are developing a sustainable business and addressing climate change.		
Carry out drainage works at Braintree cemetery to eliminate flooding and increase burial capacity		
This project has been closed following a decision by Cabinet at the Strategy Workshop in October due to the unviable costs of the scheme.	March 2023	
Carry out refurbishments to eight play areas across the district providing improved facilities for young people to enjoy		
Refurbishments to the play areas at Church Street in Bocking, Acorn Avenue in Braintree, Shaw Road in Witham and De Vere Road in Earls Colne are now complete providing improved facilities.	May 2022	
Consult with local residents and users of our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham around replacement of facilities		
Public consultation with local residents and users of the skate parks was completed in November 2022. An executive summary report will be considered in the fourth quarter and the results will help to shape the design of the refurbishments of the skate parks.	December 2022	
Create a garden of remembrance at Bocking cemetery providing a peaceful environment for families to visit		
Section 106 funds have been approved and the contract has been awarded. A site visit took place in December to discuss the works required which are now out of season. Works will now start in early spring with a view to completing by the end of June 2023. A change control to amend the end date of the project has been processed.	June 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Deliver actions set out in our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan to achieve our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district		
The Council is still waiting for updated government guidance in several areas following the Environmental Bill receiving Royal Assent in November 2021. Following Council approval in July regarding monitoring of the Climate Change Action Plan, quarterly updates are now included in this report on the progress against the themes of the Strategy. A full report will be published on our website at the end of the year.	March 2023	
Involve residents and communities in tree and bulb planting across the district		
A high number of applications were received for planting packages. In total, 41,600 bulbs and 4,850 tree whips were handed out to Parish and Town Councils, Schools, Colleges, Charities and local community and voluntary groups. Success stories of planting across the district can be seen on our climate change pages of our website at https://www.braintree.gov.uk/advice-environment/climate-change/6 as well as encouraging everyone who has planted trees to plot their location on the Queens Green Canopy Map.	December 2021	
Complete our trial of anti-litter signage and continue to deter people from littering along highway verges		
The trial of the anti-litter signage closed in November 2021 after a year of strategically placing signs along the highway network. During the trial, there was a reduction in the litter discarded along the highway verges and the merits of the signs were clear. The results will be discussed with Essex Highways and discussions will take place to see if the signs are to become a permanent arrangement across the district.	November 2021	
Consider Opportunities to re-wild open spaces and verges in the district		
The Council's own Maintenance and Landscapes teams have identified potential; areas of land for re-wilding and these are being work up as options. The Council	March 2023	

has attended Parish Council meetings to assist with communicating the project aims to local residents and Essex Wildlife Trust have offered to work with Parish Councils to provide expert guidance.		
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CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

In the third quarter, further progress has been made to embed Climate Change across the organisation and the district. A staff awareness programme has been developed and two members of staff attended a two-day Carbon Literacy Project training session. The Staff Eco Group was re-established and has met twice.

The Climate Change Delivery Board has continued to meet to review the progress of projects within the Climate Action Plan, which has helped to strengthen collaborative working across departments. The Climate Change Working Group has considered biodiversity over this quarter, with particular focus on biodiversity net gain and Essex County Council's led Climate Focus Area which covers a large percentage of the district

The actions in the Climate Action Plan are classified under seven themes and progress on these themes is outlined below:

Resources

The Council has commissioned a review of its commercial vehicle fleet including options for replacements vehicles based on market availability, consideration of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles, affordability and operational suitability. A report will be presented to Management Board in March 2023. The Council is working in partnership with Essex County Council to promote Compost Bins and with their Flood Team to provide subsidised water butts to residents. The uptake this quarter was 69 water butts and 22 compost bins. A Staff Eco Group was re-established (temporarily halted during Covid 19) and the group are sharing ideas and suggestions to raise awareness and promote climate change and to consider what we can do to be more sustainable and help reduce our emissions.

Energy Conservation

Work has been agreed and is scheduled for the replacement of halogen lights with LED lighting at Braintree Swim & Fitness, part of the wider programme to switch the estate to LED lighting. All town and parish councils have been made aware of a scheme run by Essex County Council to collect free of charge, second-hand working LED lanterns to install themselves in their parish. The council, with partners, has submitted a bid for Homes Upgrade Grant (HUG2) funding to install energy efficiency measures in 2023 in off-gas areas which impacts on one third of the district. The Winter Warmth booklet has been created which signposts residents on energy saving measures.

Built Environment

Essex County Council has completed its guidance on how to install renewable technologies on listed properties which is published as part of the Essex Design Guide and a viability study to confirm the costs of net zero for new homes has been finalised and published. A major site in the district is developing no gas homes on its affordable and build for rent elements. When these properties begin to complete over the next year it will provide a useful case study on energy efficiency housing. A consultation was launched on a revised National Planning Policy

Framework to potentially remove the need for the Council to identify areas suitable for renewable energy within a separate development plan. The Council are working in close partnership with Essex County Council through the Local Nature Partnership to support the creation of an environmental assets map. Eastlight have submitted a bid for improvements to 150 homes to the second round of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Transport

The Council are in discussion with installers over fully funded rapid charger infrastructure hubs within our car parks which will form part of a funding bid process for further off-street EV infrastructure in the district. The Councils Taxi Policy is being reviewed and a baseline exercise is underway to understand the current status and potential opportunities for reduced emission taxis across the district. A Healthy School Street zone has been established along Lancaster Way and Gilcrest Road in Braintree where the pavement has been resurfaced to make active travel easier.

Business and the Green Economy

A North Essex Farming Cluster has been established and initial meetings booked to understand how the Council can work with this group and support local farming. The Council are promoting Low Carbon Across the Southeast (LoCASE) funding via businesses who have already benefited from the funded program. A regular "Green Business" feature has been launched in the fortnightly business email newsletter focusing on energy saving measures to support businesses in dealing with rising energy prices. Applications opened in October 2022 for funding of up to £20,000 to help support voluntary and community organisations in tackling climate change and our social media channels continue to showcase how local businesses are tackling climate change.

Natural Environment

A local nature partnership has been set up with stakeholders from across Essex. Several rewilding and sustainable planting projects have been progressed and the Council have engaged with the Essex Wildlife Trust who want to include a project as part of their 'Wilder Towns, Wilder Villages' initiative. Members of the project team have attended Parish Council meetings to discuss the communication of the project to residents. The use of Glyphosate weed killer has now finished for all identified rewilding areas. A bid has been submitted to DEFRA to fund a targeted campaign around vehicle idling and the Council will be advised in February whether this has been successful. The Council now has 500 Green Heart Champions registered who help keep our district clean and tidy by reducing litter across the district through voluntary litter picks.

Adapting to Climate Change







The Essex Resilience Forum and Partners are working through a programme of planned reviews to respond to emergencies. The Council is currently reviewing policy, legislation changes, latest guidance and best practice to inform the review of the Council's Emergency Plan. A supporting severe weather plan is being updated which is due for completion by March 2023. The Council is engaging with Parish Councils on the annual update of their parish emergency plans. Commitment has been given by ECC Highways to fund works in Halstead Town at the bottom of the High Street to alleviate surface flooding with initial works taking place in November to improve surface water run-off. Winter resilience advice has been provided to residents, communities and businesses through our various communication channels.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES











Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue to develop support for residents and businesses through the cost of living crisis		
Multiple partners forming the Braintree District Cost of Living Partnership Group meet on a regular basis to support residents in a number of areas such as fuel and energy poverty, general financial advice, food and essentials, housing, health and wellbeing and winter resilience. In October, the Council has compiled a list of 70 warm spaces being offered across the district which is published on our website the aim of which is to ensure people can enjoy a warm environment and drink and feel welcomed. 600 Winter packs which include a scarf, blanket and gloves amongst other items were provided for Community 360 and First Stop to distribute those in need. The Council is now a collection point for the Braintree Area Foodbanks to support efforts to increase supply to meet the increasing demand on this service.	March 2023	▶
Continue to work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans		
The Feering Neighbourhood Plan will be taken to Full Council in January 2023. This will be the seventh neighbourhood plan to be adopted in the Braintree district. This follows a planning referendum held in October 2022 where 94.68% of votes were in favour of the neighbourhood plan to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. Nine more plans are currently in progress.	March 2023	▶
Support and develop volunteering in the district		
The Council's community transport service currently has 23 volunteer drivers shared between the social car scheme and minibs hire scheme and in the third quarter, they provided 7,205 journeys. Promotional activity to recruit more drivers takes place regularly with promotion at events through the community engagement officer. The Council has also been supporting and growing the number of volunteers at Bocking Windmill and in the Halstead Dementia Friendly Choir. The volunteers assisting with the Ukrainian coffee mornings provided support at the Christmas and Independence Day events. An additional benefit from the work of our Community Support and Employment Officer is that a number of people on their journey back into work have become volunteers such as Age UK befrienders, volunteer firefighter and volunteering in charity shops.	March 2023	▶
Replace the artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club		

The artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club has now been replaced and is back in use.	October 2022	
Carry out physical improvements to Braintree Sports and Health club and Halstead Leisure Centre		
The improvements to the sports hall and studio floor at Braintree sports and health club have been postponed for future budget consideration. This project has been closed and will be considered as part of the budget preparations for a future year.	March 2023	
The replacement of the boilers and building plant management systems at Braintree sports and health club were completed in February 2022.	March 2022	
A Changing Places bid towards the cost of the hoist system as part of the refurbishments to the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre has been successful. Detailed designs are now being drawn up and the Council are meeting with Fusion in January to discuss.	March 2023	
Set up a young people's panel to encourage more young people to have their say on things that matter to them		
The Council have actively been involved in engaging with young people regarding the skate park consultations to ensure the revamp of the parks are what young people want to see. Further engagement has also taken place with young people who are home educated and meet weekly to study and socialise. They are keen to be part of the youth engagement work moving forward due to not attending school and finding it difficult to have their points of view heard.	March 2023	
Continue to deliver our LiveWell programme, focussing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting children and their families to have the best start in life • Supporting older people to age well • Supporting children and adults to have good mental health • Tackling obesity in adults and children • Reducing hip fractures in over 65's 		
The health and wellbeing panel are reviewing the priorities of the health and wellbeing board. A number of activities continue to be delivered under the Livewell programme including fitness classes for people with health conditions and the over 60's, seated exercise classes, dance lessons and weight management sessions. Despite the weather conditions, a high number of walkers continue to enjoy the organised walking sessions and Terling held their first walk in October and they will continue on the third Saturday of every month. The BIG WALK in November at Markshall Estate attracted 123 walkers. The Man 'v' Fat programme has seen over 40 people join Season 3 with a total of 13 people completing the season. Of the completers, 42% lost weight totalling 45kgs. A dementia friendly tea took place at the Town Hall in December and work to approve the location of the Community Garden to support good mental health is in progress.	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Provide support to children and families who need it during school holiday periods through the provision of activity sessions		
During the October half term, six clubs provided organised activities with 215 children attending. We are currently awaiting the data from the Christmas holiday programme where 12 clubs provided a total of 1750 spaces for children to attend.	March 2023	
Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district		
The Braintree Social isolation and loneliness forum met in October to discuss the various projects run by the partners, levelling up, cost of living and winter warmth. Whilst there are no new actions on loneliness and social isolation, the warm spaces project providing 70 venues across the district to anyone in need of a warm space	March 2023	



is also addressing loneliness with different offers such as hot drinks, soup and games.		
Continue to work with Essex County Council on the Governments 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme' on initiatives to prevent rough sleepers returning to the streets		
The Next Steps accommodation programme to provide stable accommodation and tailored support to prevent people returning to rough sleeping and begin to rebuild their lives is now up and running with all six units of accommodation now occupied. Regular meetings with NACRO take place to monitor progress.	March 2023	
Lead on the co-ordination of the Community Safety Partnership work focusing on protecting the vulnerable, promoting healthy relationships, keeping safe online, building community resilience and promoting safety in our communities		
The Community Safety Partnership hosted a workshop 'Partnership Working to Prevent & Tackle ASB' focused on improving partnership working to prevent and tackle ASB and protect victims and communities from harm. Around 50 representatives from local Housing Providers, Support agencies, Essex Police, and Braintree District Council attended. Attendees discussed ASB powers, out of court disposals, restorative justice and the support available for both perpetrators and victims. Plans to agree a standardised multi-agency process when tackling ASB in the district was also proposed and will now be progressed.	March 2023	
Work with the integrated care system and Health and Wellbeing panel to understand local health inequalities and develop the role of Primary Care Networks to support and improve the health of our communities		
The Council has been working with local authority health colleagues, local community groups and the voluntary sector across mid Essex to develop bids to the Mid & South Essex ICS Health Inequalities Fund. The fund provides grants from £500 to £1500 to support projects or initiatives which address health inequalities and the wider determinants of health within the local area. The bids submitted focus on men's mental health, obesity, and data/research. Applications for the bids opened on the 31st October 2022 and will be offered on a rolling basis until March 2023 or until all funds are spent.	March 2023	
Work with our leisure providers to get people back into activity improving their physical and mental health		
There are numerous activities across the district with growing participation as people get back into activity including sports for confidence sessions, rebound sessions, active rewards and cardiac rehab. Work is ongoing around a 'Let's Move Essex' project due to commence in February and will be hosted at Braintree Sport and Health Club, Braintree Swimming and Fitness Centre and Witham Leisure Centre. As part of the warm space's initiative, Halstead and Witham Leisure Centre launched Wellness Wednesday café's in November creating a comfortable and safe space for people to visit and socialise with others including a swim or gym session for 50p. Members of Fusions Sport and Community Development team were also on hand to offer advice and support around physical and mental health and well-being.	March 2023	
Engage with school age children and young adults through careers, jobs and apprenticeship fairs to inspire young people to raise their aspirations		
The Council continues to plan for the Jobs Fair in March 2023. Invites to businesses have been sent out to become exhibitors across a range of several key sectors. Marketing for the event will start on 1st February 2023.	March 2023	
Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham		
Braintree District Council in partnership with Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner was successful in a bid to the Home Office for Safer Streets Round 4 funding which has a focus on anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood crime and violence against women and girls in a designated area of Witham. Interventions will include working with Witham Town Council to expand the CCTV network and employ street wardens and working with Fusion Lifestyle to deliver an outreach sports programme, providing training and awareness to local businesses around women's safety and to provide physical activity for young people.	March 2024	

PROMOTING PROSPERITY







Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

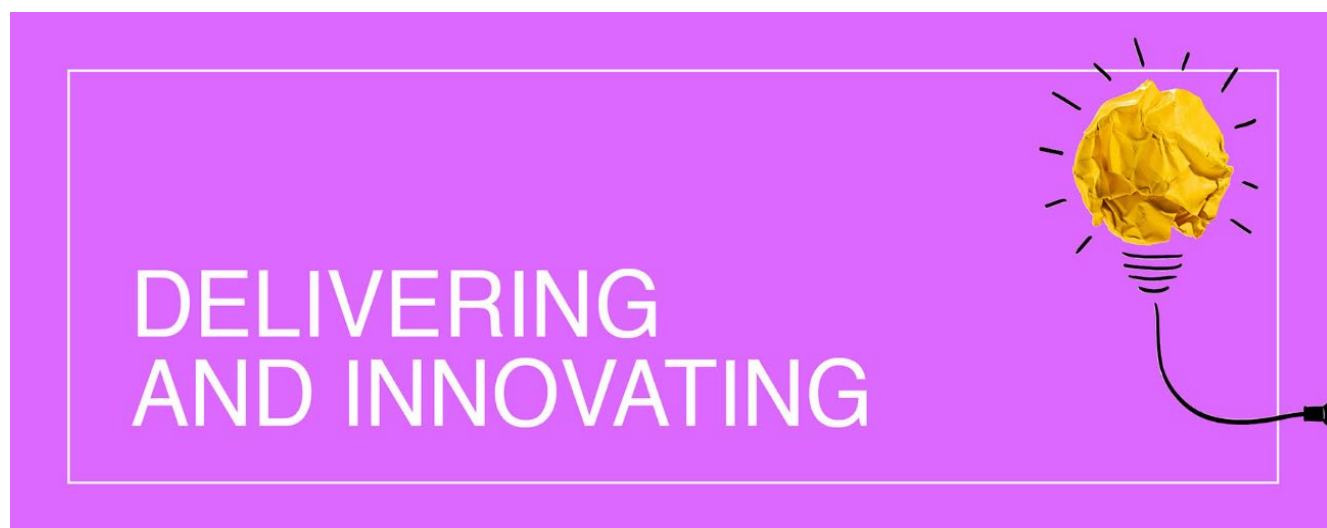
Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Continue with the development of Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park creating up to 2,000 high quality jobs		
The Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park continues to be developed with a number of buildings currently under construction.	March 2023	
Complete the Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre (The Plaza) providing space for conferences and events as well as serviced offices, café and public plaza for start-up companies and SMEs		
The Plaza opened in July 2022 providing private offices, a co-working space with desks for individuals as well as businesses, shared meeting rooms, seminar rooms, conference and event spaces and a café area.	July 2022	
Develop the Witham Enterprise Centre providing small industrial units for start-up companies and SMEs		
The Planning pre-app has identified a number of planning constraints and a revised scheme has been prepared. Market research is required on the demand and values of the scheme. Due to the current issues with the planning design, it is anticipated that completion will be delayed and the due date has been amended to October 2024	October 2024	
Complete the I-construct innovation centre supporting the development of SMEs in the construction sector		
I-Construct, a £2.3 million centre of excellence for construction innovation, has opened for business. Building work finished in December, 15 months after it began. The two-storey building consist of a technology suite, exhibition space, conference facilities and informal meeting areas. It is home to a team offering one-to-one mentoring, grant schemes and advice to small and medium sized firms connected to the construction industry. The business support programme at the hub will be run by the Haven Gateway Partnership and will serve businesses across Essex, Kent and East Sussex. The programme will support over 350 businesses and create up to 130 jobs. I-Construct was officially opened by Chairman Councillor Sue Wilson in a ribbon cutting ceremony in February 2022.	December 2021	
Refresh our Plan for Growth to identify future priorities and deliver the outcomes of the associated Action Plan		
A strategy has now been prepared following the completion of the evidence base work from consultants, discussions with businesses at an event at the Plaza and with members. Public consultation on the strategy and the key priorities for the next five years commenced in December to obtain views before presenting the final	March 2023	

proposals to Cabinet.		
Deliver campaigns to promote Braintree District as a place to invest in, live in and visit		
The Council continues to promote the district issuing social media posts on the Essex Playing Field awards where 48 awards were won (13 gold, 21 silver and 14 merit), the completion of the Braintree Victoria Square regeneration project which also received coverage in the national press, the opening of the new Livewell Hub and James Cleverley's visit to the Plaza. Promotional activity has taken place around the energy bill relieve scheme for businesses, free digital courses for residents and businesses and workshops at the Plaza for businesses. Over 400 businesses in the District responded to the Council's latest business survey to enable the Council to gain intelligence as to the issues facing our local business community and how the Council might help to address them. The majority of businesses are focussed on increasing sales and reducing the costs, but the ability to recruit staff is also being highlighted as an issue. 91.9% of businesses surveyed said they felt proud to trade in Braintree District.	March 2023	
Support individuals back into employment by addressing barriers and providing tailored support and access to training		
Since being in post, the Community Support and Employment Officer has engaged with 261 people resulting in 225 people accessing training and support. The Council are working closely with Essex County Council occupational therapists and social workers to identify those individuals that require support in getting back to employment.	March 2023	




Actions carried out in partnership with others








Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Rise to the economic challenges by working in partnership with members of the North Essex Economic board to provide support to businesses and create opportunities to boost growth		
The programme continues to be delivered with monthly update meetings with all suppliers being held and KPIs reported against and managed by the Board. Funding for a new strategy has been agreed and a consultant has been appointed to complete a new strategy and associated action plan.	March 2023	
Continue to develop the business support offer for the construction sector as part of the I-construct innovation centre		
The Council has continued to promote the I-Construct membership to gain access to the grants programme for match funding towards project activity by the end of this year. The first grant application from a Business in the Braintree District has been received in December and is currently being considered by the Haven Gateway Partnership panel. I-Construct has put together a series of in-person roadshows to support businesses and strengthen the supply chain throughout Kent, Essex and East Sussex. Businesses can hear directly from major projects, tier 1 contractors, public procurement experts, network with other businesses, and learn how our new supply chain collaboration platform can help businesses find new growth opportunities.	March 2023	
Continue to provide signposting to business support, advice and suitable grants		
The Economic Development Team continue to signpost businesses to support, advice and information on grants which now includes a dedicated webpage on The Plaza website. Following the award of the Rural England Prosperity Funding, a paper was presented to Cabinet in November proposing part of the money is used to directly grant fund rural businesses setting out the schemes available. This has been submitted to Government and if accepted, the project will begin in April 2023.	March 2023	
Ensure residents have access to the skills programmes and education they need to access employment opportunities including in new and expanding sectors		

An options analysis is currently being undertaken to determine the direction and form the Braintree Education Skills Board will take. This will inform the type of business engagement and the key sectors the Council focus on. Detailed research to determine the skills gaps and current provision has begun to investigate what courses and skills are required to impact on the local businesses and help with their recruitment issues.	March 2023	
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Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Through our Investment and Development Programme, continue to develop and implement a pipeline of projects focussed on reducing costs, improving efficiency, generating income and becoming more commercially focussed to deliver against the £1.6m financial gap over the next four years.		
The Investment and Development Programme has been reviewed with a new structure consisting of a single Investment and Capital Programme Officer group serving two boards: The Capital Board and the Investment and Development Board. In the last quarter, Commercial Gov has undertaken a review of commercial activity across the Council with a significant number of opportunities identified. These have been reviewed by officers and members through the above groups and a prioritised shortlist is being finalised. The Plaza is now fully operational with good office lettings and events and hatchery space usage is growing. Spend analysis data has been requested from councils across Essex to identify future procurement opportunities.	March 2023	
Refresh our Digital Strategy and action plan to address future demand and improve the way we use technology to deliver services		
Cabinet agreed the Digital Strategy 2022-2026 at their meeting in December 2022. The Strategy sets out how future challenges will be met and how technology will be used to deliver better outcomes across the strategy's themes of Council, Customer and Place.	December 2022	
Encourage residents to transact with us online by developing our website to allow customers to make bookings, track requests and sign up to receive council tax bills electronically		
A number of online forms for waste processes were reviewed and updated in line with the launch of the new waste management system in October to ensure the information feeds straight into the system. Further online processes have been	March 2023	

identified to improve the customer transaction process around our street scene services and are currently in development to go live in the new year.		
Residents are now able to sign up to receive their council tax bills electronically and promotion of this will be ongoing.	March 2022	
Develop a plan of community engagement to better understand the needs of our local communities		
In the last six months (June to December) 24 events have been attended within the community and feedback has been received from 760 people. Events attended range from specific community catch ups to Ukrainian coffee mornings, Little Legs festivals, slipper exchanges, roadshows and the Santa Bus. The events provide an opportunity to update people on the cost of living, wellbeing and how the Council can support them as well as to gather feedback on consultations. Community Engagement events are currently being planned for 2023.	March 2023	
Use customer information and feedback to improve services whilst working towards retaining the accreditation for customer service excellence		
The Customer Service Excellence Assessment took place in September and the Council has been successful in retaining the accreditation for the seventh year in a row.	September 2022	
Review the criteria for the discretionary business rates scheme for charitable and non-profit organisations		
The criteria for the discretionary business rates scheme has been reviewed and no changes to the criteria are being made. The relief scheme has been published and all current recipients of this relief have been contacted and asked to reapply so that entitlement can be reassessed against policy.	March 2023	
Monitor changes to various legislation to understand the impact on services including but not limited to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Environmental Bill 2020 and Planning reforms		
The Specialist Domestic Abuse Officer continues to provide support to colleagues within the Housing Service. Additional training was undertaken in October to provide the Housing Service with the skills required in making enquiries into homelessness where there are issues relating to domestic abuse.	March 2023	
The Council is still waiting for the Government to formally announce the policy changes within the Environment Act. This will enable the Council to understand the impact of the Act in relation to its waste collection service.	March 2023	
The Council continues to work on implementing biodiversity net gain whilst waiting to hear an update from the Government in regard to the Environment Act to enable to council to consider and develop actions from any amendments to national policy.	March 2023	




Actions carried out in partnership with others





Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Work with Fusion to recover and develop leisure services following the pandemic ensuring the district has the right type and level of leisure provision to meet resident's needs		
Works to upgrade the gym facilities at all four leisure centres across the district commenced in October 2022. The gyms at each centre are being completely transformed with new, energy efficient equipment, a new layout, new lighting, décor and flooring.	March 2023	
Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex and enhance the value of joint working through the waste management partnership		
The consultants working with the Essex Waste Partnership members, completed modelling work for 6 collection options, which they presented to the Essex Waste Partnership Board back in November 2022. The Chairman of the Board emphasised that whilst a particular option had emerged as the 'best overall'	March 2023	

collection methodology, the decision on whether to adopt it was a matter for each Waste Collection Authority to determine locally. The next steps for developing the Waste Strategy for Essex is for officers to discuss the emerging principles and to present these to the Partnership Board in January 2023, with a view to completing the first draft of the strategy by end of March 2023.		
Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund and rural prosperity fund projects		
Government has approved the investment plan submitted by the Council for our £1.36million share of the Governments Shared Prosperity Fund to support communities and businesses over the next three years. The Council has signed a grant agreement and the first-year funding is expected to be received in the new year. A list of projects to utilise the funding has been developed and one of the projects to provide a business support programme will be hosted at the Plaza in January and February.	March 2025	
Deliver the Levelling Up rural pilot with Essex County Council		
The Council is working with Essex County Council on its own levelling up agenda which includes 20 commitments divided into 4 key areas: economy, environment, health and family. Essex has identified rural Braintree as a pilot area to consider the particular issues which are faced by more rural communities. In the third quarter, Essex County Council have commissioned consultants to undertake research in the community and the Council has been involved with stakeholders in the design of the consultation programme.	March 2025	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2022/23						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES							
Number of affordable homes delivered	90	70	75		37		
Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district	95%	95%	95%		n/a	n/a	
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	148	569	888		810		<i>The breakdown between full and outline permissions are as follows: Full – 202 Outline - 686</i>
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT							
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.04%	49.34%	44.67%		60%		<i>Figures are awaiting validation by Essex County Council. The reduction in recycling for the third quarter is mainly due to the garden waste suspension which commenced at the end of November and will not be re-introduced until late February. A number of recycling campaigns were introduced during recycling week in October together with launching a video showing people what happens to their recycling at</i>

Performance Indicator	2022/23						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
							our recycling facility. Christmas messaging focussed on food waste, recycling in the right way, Christmas tree recycling and glass recycling.
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	107kgs	107kgs	110kgs		117kgs		
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a	7%	5%		6%		Recorded three times a year – July, November and March.
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (168)	100% (197)	100% (189)		100%		
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES							
Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (calculated in days from point of referral to approval)	153 days	151 days	129 days		90 days		In the third quarter, the service received 65 new grant referrals (5 of which were critical) and approved 38 cases (5 of which were critical). Critical cases approved in the quarter were dealt with on average in 101 days, with the quickest of those completed in 23 days. The remaining caseload at the end of the second quarter is 109. Although this remains over the target, there has been significant progress made in the third quarter towards reducing the period of time between referral being received and grant approved. With the grant approval numbers increasing, grant funding amounts allocated and grant funding actually paid out in Q3 the highest in the year so far the team are aiming for reducing this further in the last quarter. The Team are continuing to receive a high number of complex cases some with planning permission required and it remains the case that builder's quotes are taking longer to turn around due to the ongoing difficulties the industry is experiencing with supply of materials.
Participation levels across all our sports centres	167,599	179,405	134,465		n/a	n/a	
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						
Number of customers using out Handyman scheme	49	50	58		n/a	n/a	
Number of homelessness cases prevented	60	62	60		n/a	n/a	

Performance Indicator	2022/23						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
PROMOTING PROSPERITY							
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.5%	2.6%	2.6%		n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups across the district	239	234	224		n/a	n/a	
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	116	67	297		n/a	n/a	There has been an increased number of businesses contact the Council following the issue of a business needs survey and Christmas events.
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING							
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre	73%	73%	66%		n/a	n/a	
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	97.83%	97.7%	98%		97%	✅	
Number of people transacting with us online	41,016	30,730	26,109		n/a	n/a	
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	18.3 days	15.23 days	15.83 days		20 days	✅	
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	10.93 days	4.45 days	2.81 days		6 days	✅	
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	95.83%	88.20%	86.73%		90%	⚠️	Represents 85 out of 98 stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescales. Complainants have been kept informed of progress.
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.01%	57.4%	84.23%		84.63%	⚠️	Marginally off target. Whilst performance continues to benchmark favourably against other Essex Authorities, the reduction compared to target could be an early indicator of the impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on households
Collection rate for Business Rates	31.26%	56.9%	82.26%		81.99%	✅	

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the third quarter of 2022/23 is detailed below. This is compared with 2021/22 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23	Q3 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	TOTAL
Justified	40 (51)	87 (67)	45 (39)	(49)	(206)
Not Justified	61 (82)	65 (68)	32 (49)	(60)	(259)
Partially Justified	27 (26)	15 (46)	28 (7)	(18)	(97)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	(1)	(1)
Total	128 (159)	167 (185)	108 (91)	(128)	(563)

Comments

There has been a reduction in the number of complaints received in the third quarter of the year compared to the second quarter with reductions mainly in the Operations service area.

Although complaints have lowered in the Operations service, complaints in this area still make up 75% of the total number of complaints received with the main reasons being missed waste collections. The snow and icy weather conditions in December impacted on the crew's ability to complete collections. Messages on social media and our website advised residents to leave their collections out and crews went out every day and worked additional time to ensure the district was cleared relatively quickly with residents praising crews for their efforts in such extreme conditions.

In the third quarter of 2022/23, of the 108 complaints received:

- 98 are stage one complaints
- 5 are stage two complaints
- 5 are stage three complaints

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the third quarter of 2022/23, the LGO received three new complaints in respect of planning and initial enquiries have been made to the Council

The ombudsman also issued a draft decision notice for one of the complaints received this quarter and has invited the Council to make comment on the draft decision. The Investigator has found fault against the Council in respect of the Councils record keeping for a planning enforcement case.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	487	487	494		+ 7	-
Total staff FTE	440.71	439.23	441.74		+ 2.51	-
Level of employee turnover	2.87%	2.67%	2.02%		- 0.65	-
Number of leavers	14	13	10		- 3	-
Number of starters	9	13	17		+ 4	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.61 days	1.37 days	2.61 days		+ 1.24 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	79.01%	68.38%	53.85%		Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	2400	1,041	1288		+ 247	-
Number of delegates	106	539	605		+ 66	-
Number of apprentices **	18	20	20		-	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	464	466	481	492	499	492

** BDC's apprenticeship programme runs throughout the year. The figures reflect various apprenticeships ranging from level 3 through to a degree level 6

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	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	(2021/22 figure in brackets)				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13 (8)	5 (7)	15 (9)	(15)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (6)	5 (6)	15 (8)	(11)	<i>Main areas are slips, trips and falls (responsible for 7 of the accidents).</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (1)	(0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	(4)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	37 (0)	35 (10)	16 (22)	(26)	<i>One person broke their wrist</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	3 (2)	2 (1)	1 (1)	(1)	
Number of near miss incidents	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)	(2)	<i>Laptop cable began to burn and an animal became violent during waste pickup</i>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	1 (1)	0 (3)	(3)	
Number of claims settled	4 (1)	0 (0)	1 (3)	(2)	

Financial Performance

This part of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the year. It examines the latest forecast for spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget for the year. Also included is a summary of treasury management activities; projected movements on the General Fund balance; and a summary of spending to date on capital projects

Executive Summary

The forecast outturn for the year at Q3 is a positive variance of £65k. This compares to the positive variance projected at Q2 of £126k.

The projected change in General Fund unallocated balance is currently a net addition of £428k giving an estimated balance at 31 March 2023 of £6.5m.

Actual spend on the capital programme was £6.9m, of which £3.5m was on the Plaza and £1.3m on the Manor Street regeneration project.

Background

Full Council agreed a budget of £13.5m, net of a £2.7m drawdown from the business rate retention reserve to offset a Collection Fund deficit. An adjusted budget figure of £16.2m is therefore used for the purposes of in-year financial monitoring.

During the year budgets may be updated in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure.

General Fund Revenue Spending

The table below shows the projected outturn by service as forecast at the end of Q3.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Quarter 3 forecast Spend £'000	Quarter 3 forecast Variance £'000	Previous Quarters Forecast £'000	Forecast RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,571)	(1,929)	642	520	R
Community & Leisure	682	668	(14)	9	G
Corporate Management Plan	1,635	1,599	(36)	(25)	G
Economic Development	223	223	0	0	G
Environment	802	833	31	25	A
Finance	1,302	528	(774)	(495)	G
Governance	1,262	1,159	(103)	(59)	G
Housing Services	812	742	(70)	(21)	G
Human Resources	855	810	(45)	(35)	G
ICT & Facilities	1,850	1,851	1	(14)	A
Marketing & Communications	605	632	27	33	A
Operations	6,491	6,423	(68)	(22)	G
Strategic Investment	20	193	173	0	R
Sustainable Development	1,277	1,345	68	(135)	R
Service Total	15,245	15,077	(168)	(219)	G
Corporate Financing	1,282	1,099	(183)	(207)	G
Efficiency	(285)	0	285	300	
Net Total	16,242	16,176	(66)	(126)	G

RAG Status: G = favourable or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = > 5%

The table below breakdowns the forecast variance:

Business Plan Service	Forecast £'000	Staffing £'000	Other Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000
Asset Management	642	96	195	351
Community & Leisure	(14)	(32)	(22)	40
Corporate Management Plan	(36)	(63)	17	10
Economic Development	0	0	0	0
Environment	31	225	1	(195)
Finance	(774)	(97)	82	(759)
Governance	(103)	(38)	(46)	(19)
Housing Services	(70)	(4)	61	(127)
Human Resources	(45)	(39)	(6)	0
ICT & Facilities	1	37	(36)	0
Marketing & Communications	27	9	25	(7)
Operations	(68)	106	447	(621)
Strategic Investment	173	173	0	0
Sustainable Development	68	(194)	68	194
Service Total	(168)	179	786	(1,133)
Corporate Financing	(183)	0	2	(185)
Efficiency	285	300	(15)	0
Net Total	(66)	479	773	(1,318)

Commentary on Main Service Variances reported at Q3

Staffing Variances

Staffing costs are projected to higher following the pay award implemented from April 2022, which has added an extra £724k to payroll costs than was budgeted. A positive variance of £245k (net of the efficiency target) is projected because of other changes, e.g., vacancies, appointments at lower scale points, changes to contracted hours.

Asset Management

- Net overspends on staffing include interim arrangements and provision made for extra resources to deal with high workload. The increased resources will allow progress to be made on outstanding rent reviews and marketing of properties helping longer-term income.
- Loss of rent (£134k) and service charges (£157k) due to areas of Causeway House being vacant, partially offset by savings on operating cost and short-term business rate relief (£28k). It is assumed that the lettable office space will remain vacant for the remainder of the year, although the area continues to be marketed and discussions continue with prospective tenants. Part of the space will be occupied in the new financial year through relocation of staff from Unit 4 Lakes Road.
- New Facilities (I-Construct, The Plaza, Victoria Square, and H120 Business Park) – It is still early days for the operation of the new facilities completed under the strategic investment programme. Projections reflect higher operating costs across facilities totalling £200k, a significant part of which relates to energy costs where facilities have been added to existing contracts but at current wholesale prices. There are also unrecovered service charge costs where development is in progress or land plots remain unsold on H120. As occupation increases these costs should reduce in future. Rent and other income across

the sites is slightly above budget (£33k). The projections are subject to a high degree of uncertainty as operational requirements are becoming clearer, including levels of staffing.

- Shortfall on income achieved from other commercial and property rent reviews compared to the target assumed in the budget and rent voids (£51k). As referred to above, the extra resources being introduced into the team will help recover this position.

Environment

- Building Control additional agency staff are engaged covering vacant posts where there have been difficulties in recruitment, and this has been combined with high service demand. The additional costs in the service (£231k) are partially offset by increased income (£141k).
- Licensing – there is increased demand from tax operators resulting in additional net income; however, as a regulated activity this income is ringfenced for service investment and is excluded from the projections.

Finance

- Staffing related savings from a combination of service efficiencies, vacancies, and appointments at lower scale points and cost recovery through New Burdens funding provided for administering energy rebate schemes and Covid related reliefs.
- Housing Benefits net additional cost of benefits paid (£60k) – Note this is additional to £100k of extra costs which are being funded from reserve. Expenditure is demand led and subject to subsidy limitations on certain types of benefit payments.
- Treasury Management – short-term investment income due to higher interest rates/balances (£831k)
- Local tax and housing benefit cost recoveries are projected to be lower than budget (£124k).

Operations

- Net staffing overspends due to pay award netted off against staff vacancies.
- Increased vehicle operating costs due to the higher diesel costs (£149k); and spot hire and maintenance of an aging fleet (£169k).
- Provision of wheelie bins and kitchen caddies for new properties and lifecycle replacements (£30k).
- Increase in income from mixed dry recycling material net of higher processing and haulage costs (£622k). This is due to a higher average basket price for material assumed for the year at £106 per tonne against a budget of £43. The price per tonne set for the period Jan-Mar fell sharply from the peak price for the previous quarter.
- Recycling and other sacks contract – increased costs following procurement (£45k)
- Saving on the contract for In-Cab Technology (£36k)
- Higher glass recycling income (£79k) (price/ tonnage), Bulky Waste collections (£50k) and Trade Waste income (£31k)
- Shortfall in car parking income from pay and display which has still not recovered to levels pre-pandemic. It also still too early to assess the impact of the new Victoria Square car park and general town centre improvements on usage levels (£185k)
- Waste Management payment from ECC is expected to exceed the budget to reflect higher inflation (£45k)
- Increase in grave digging cost and general maintenance (£29k)

Sustainable Development

- Majority of the staffing underspend due to vacancies within the service including new enforcement roles/ landscape services. Several posts are being held vacant as part of the in-year Recovery Plan to offset the higher service cost of the April 2022 pay award.

- Overall planning income is projected to be underachieved (£195k). Planning application income is forecast to be lower than budget by £400k due primarily to a sharp reduction in the number of major applications. Pre-application income is also anticipated to be lower (£50k) although this is in part considered to be due to a move towards Planning Performance Agreements, the income from which is projected to exceed budget by £245k for the year. Income budgets will need to be reviewed and realigned ahead of 2023/24 to reflect the changing pattern of service demand.

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax Sharing Agreement – share-back from preceptors based on local tax collection performance at the end of Q3 is higher than budget (£175k).

Strategic Investment Team (SIT)

- Forecast total cost £570k of which £281k has been estimated will be charged to capital works, leaving a revenue cost of £289k partly funded: £20k base budget; £96k residual balance of SIT reserve. This leaves an estimated shortfall of £173k.

Excluded from the Forecast Variance:

Economic Development

- The Economic Development team and activities are funded from a combination of base budget, external funding, and an earmarked reserve. Where there are projected variances to the budget these are reflected in movements on the reserve (+/-) creating a neutral financial position.

Capital Programme

Current capital programme totals £19.5m of which £9.4m is profiled into 2022/23:

	Profiled Spend 2022/23 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 3 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 3 % of Profile
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	466	327	70%
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	3,838	3,455	90%
Manor Street regeneration	1,497	1,286	86%
I-Construct Innovation Centre	140	26	19%
Maltings Lane Community Facility	120	24	20%
Town Centre improvements	136	18	13%
Industrial estate improvements	2	2	100%
Property planned maintenance	288	22	8%
Information technology systems & equipment	662	159	24%
Play areas, parks and open spaces	322	167	52%
Cemetery improvements	1	1	100%
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	6	5	83%
Operational equipment	80	21	26%
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	315	289	92%
Climate change initiatives	47	-	0%
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,012	713	70%
Capital salaries	497	356	72%
Total	9,429	6,871	73%

Changes to programme since last report

- The overall programme has increased by £1.5m since the previous quarter reflecting decisions made on releasing capital provisions for the Manor Street regeneration project and for a Halstead Community Grants Fund. Project expenditure has also increased due to additional s106 funded works.
- The status of projects has been reviewed with project officers and where appropriate budgeted expenditure reprofiled into later years.

Programme risks

- I-Construct – awaiting final cost which is required to confirm the final claim for European Funding.
- Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre ('The Plaza') – final account to be confirmed.
- Horizon 120 shortfall on serviced land sales leading to a potential requirement to allocate additional capital resources and provide Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

Capital resources generated in the year

- Sale of serviced land plots at Horizon 120 (£3.8m)
- Interim payments from Eastlight in respect of the residential units at Victoria Square (£363k).
- Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – number of completed sales 9, generating c£1.5m. A further 14 applications are in progress although not all would be expected to complete in this financial year. With recent increases in interest rates, together with wider economic uncertainty, a slowdown in RTB sales is anticipated (Number of sales completed in 2021/22 was 19 generating £2.7m); and VAT shelter receipts of £389k.
- Better Care Funding received £1.056m which is used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Changing Places Fund £120k which will be used to construct new disabled changing places toilets within Halstead Leisure Centre and Witham Town Council.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

The Council's treasury management activity to the end of the December is summarised in the table below:

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity to the end December		Amount Invested at end of the quarter
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£56.8m	£131.9m	£125.5m	£63.2m
Average amount invested for the period			£66.3m
Highest amount invested			£72.1m

Investments totalling £19m were maintained across a range of long-term pooled funds with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets. The remaining balance of investments have been held in short-term investments comprising money market funds; Debt Management Office Account (UK Government); bank deposits; and liquid cash held in a current account with Lloyds Bank.

Investment income and valuations

The table below sets out the amount of interest and dividends earned to the end of the quarter and the annualised rate of return:

Investments	Average Amount Invested	Interest & Dividends Earned	Annualised Return %
Long-Term Pooled Funds	£19.0m	£613k	4.29%
Short-Term	£41.0m	£573k	1.61%
Total	£60.0m	£1,186k	2.37%

The projected investment income for the year is £1.6m, which is £831k better than budget. The MTFS assumes an improvement in income in 23/24 but based on a lower level of cash being available for investment.

The market value of shares and units in pooled funds at the end of the quarter was £20.5m, representing an unrealised gain of £1.5m over the amount originally invested.

Investment portfolio

At the end of the quarter the Council's investment portfolio comprised the following:

- Long-term pooled fund investments £19m (allocated: £3m property fund; £13m across four equity funds; and £3m in two diversified asset funds)
- Low volatility Money Market Funds (MMFs) (4 x £5m) £20m
- Variable net asset value MMF £4m
- Debt Management Office Account Facility £12m
- Short Term Fixed Deposits (2x£3m) £6m
- Lloyds current account £2.2m

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

- As a contingency against unforeseen events
- To meet short-term or non-recurrent one-off costs that are not provided in the base budget and/ or are incurred to achieve future savings and efficiencies.

Based on the projected outturn set out above, the estimated movements on the General Fund balances are:

	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2022	6,056
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(89)
Funding for one-off investment	(371)
Pension Fund triennial payment – repayment	823
Projected outturn variance at Q3	65
Estimated Balance at 31 March 2023	6,484

Movements shown on the General Fund balance are in respect of:

- The approved budget included an anticipated reduction in balances of £460k. One-off investment included £310k drawdown in respect of the initial operating costs of the Plaza at H120 and £61k for the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.
- A one-off payment was made in 2020/21 to the Essex Pension Fund covering the period April 2020 to March 2023, which was part funded from General Fund balances. A repayment back into balances is being made in 2022/23.
- The projected outturn variance for the year at Q3 is an overall positive variance of £65k.

Agenda Item: 6b

Report Title: To Award a Hybrid Mail Contract	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/71
Report Presented by: Councillor John McKee, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation	
Enquiries to: Tania Roberge, Marketing and Communications Manager tania.roberge@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for Braintree District Council (the Council) to award the Hybrid mail call off contract under Lot 7 of the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6017 Postal Goods, Service and Solutions.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To award the one-year initial term for the hybrid mail, at a contract value of £257,600 to CFH Docmail Ltd.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Support Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to extend the above contract up to 41 months, at the expiry of the initial 12-month contract, as allowed within the contract, subject to the successful delivery of the initial one-year term as identified in paragraph 3.10

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 This contract is for the implementation and provision of hybrid mail services to undertake printing, fulfillment and mailing services for the Revenues, Benefits, and Electoral Registration services.
- 3.2 The service will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following key areas:
- Daily print and mail of personalised Council Tax, Business Rates and Bids bills and correspondence
 - Daily print, match and mail of personalised Local Council Tax Support notifications with the ability to exclude printing for specified personal letters.
 - Annual bill printing processes, including print, match and insertion of information leaflets, booklets as required, and mail of:

- o Council Tax Bills,
 - o Business Rates Bills,
 - o Local Council Tax Support notification letters
 - Daily print and mail of personalised electoral forms, letters and canvas communications and insertion of information leaflets as required
 - Bulk print and mail of personalised electoral registration forms during peak periods and insertion of information leaflets as required
 - The facility to offer e-delivery capability/options as required
 - Ability to print bulk mailing reviews as required by central government
- 3.3 The supplier will be expected to provide print solutions for additional items during the contract period as stipulated by the Council. This may be due to fluctuations in the demand stated within this specification or by the onboarding of a new team and set of requirements following the initial contract period.
- 3.4 Currently the work is delivered in house and the Finance Team account for most items posted, circa 181,000 items at a cost of £90,000 (franked post only). The Electoral Registration services estimate circa 55,000 to 60,000 items per year.
- 3.5 In addition to the Annual Billing, it is expected that initially 288,600 of ad hoc/daily items per annum will be routed through this contract, but this may vary throughout the duration. It is anticipated that other services will come into scope over the course of the contract after the initial 12 months.
- 3.6 This will predominantly impact on the Revenues and Benefits and Governance sections and demonstrations of the system have considered the time taken to print direct and any additional pressures this may cause. The view is that this is acceptable There will be a reduction in demands on the print room.
- 3.7 A mini competition was undertaken through Lot 7 of the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6017 Postal Goods, Service and Solutions. Three bids were received, of which two did not meet the minimum quality threshold.
- 3.8 Outcomes the Council are intending from this contract are:
- Savings from postage and printing costs
 - Improved security of data with full traceability
 - Assurance on data matching
 - Systems that fully support off-site/remote working
 - Use of sustainable printing solutions throughout the contract period
 - Guidance and advice regarding document design to improve customer understanding and response
 - Provision of all electoral documents that meet legislative and security requirements
 - Provision of all materials on time and without delay
 - Ability to provide a same-day dispatch to a pre-agreed time
 - An agreed Data Retention Schedule, in-line with GDPR requirements

3.9 The Provisional award date is scheduled for 20th February subject to governance approval. The contract is anticipated to commence on 1st May 2023 with roll out of electoral registrations mid May following elections.

3.10 The success of the one-year trial will be dependent on whether the anticipated savings have been delivered in year 1 and the delivery of the performance indicators set out below:

Key Performance Indicators	Measurement	Monthly Target (*may increase year on year)
Mobilisation	Mobilisation is delivered in accordance with the plan provided in Call-Off Schedule 13 (Implementation Plan & Testing) and milestones are hit	100%
Issues raised are dealt with in a timely manner	Busy periods such as Elections and Annual Billing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues are responded and resolved immediately Business as Usual: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues are responded to and resolved within 24 hours 	100%
Management reporting	Delivery of reports on time	95%
Solution up time	Availability to receive print requests 24/7 excl. Public Holidays other than planned maintenance previously notified	100%
Order acceptance	Received by return, contains order details, estimated completion/delivery date & cost	100%
Deadlines	Same day printing, enveloping and despatch or as otherwise agreed	100%
Accuracy of data matching	Matching of all data as requested	100%

3.11 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver its corporate objective of

- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

3.12 Savings will be delivered through the contract from the efficiencies delivered by hybrid mail from lower print and postage costs which the winning bidder is able to access.

4. Consultation

4.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's Revenues and Benefits, Governance, IT and print room teams to design the requirements of this procurement and in evaluating the responses.

- 4.2 Updates will be provided to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director, Head of Governance, and Head of Finance.

5. Options

- 5.1 ***Option 1 – Award the outcome of the mini competition exercise*** – Award contract for a trial period of one year under Lot 7 of the Crown Commercial Services Framework RM6017 Postal Goods, Service and Solutions. By undertaking a mini competition under this framework, the Council has confidence that the winning bidder has the competence to deliver the postage and print service to meet the demands of the service whilst delivering the saving set out below.

The disadvantages to this option is the reliance on a third party, this would be mitigated by retaining equipment and expertise in the print room should issues arise during the trial period and should services need to return inhouse if the trial is unsuccessful. The contract will be monitored through the trial to maximise the period to embed alternative solutions should the trial not be performing as required. The annual billing is currently performed by CFH, therefore the Council would seek to resume existing arrangements with a variation to allow this to happen.

- 5.2 **Option 2 – As is** – Retain much of the service inhouse. The advantages to this approach would be to retain control of print, however this option has an increased price attached to it as detailed below.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 On approval this contract will be formally awarded with a staged mobilisation.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The assessment of the contract is based on the assumed volume of print and postage work as set out in the report. A set price for Council Tax annual billing was obtained.
- 7.2 Current estimated costs for delivery of print and postage work are circa £267,600 per year, with a four-year total cost of circa £1,070,400.
- 7.3 The winning bidder will deliver the print and postage work for circa £257,600 for the one year trial with a four-year cost of circa £1,030,400, delivering a saving of circa £10,000 per annum (c£40,000 over 4-years).
- 7.4 Subject to review, further savings of up to circa £25,000 per annum could be achieved following the trial year through a reduction in staffing costs, taking the total estimated annual savings to around £35,000. The budget includes provision for savings through hybrid mail of £33,000.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The requirements for dealing with sensitive data, transparency requirement and security of information has been considered within the framework and the call off undertaken by the Council.
- 8.2 The Council has carried out the procurement in line within its own procurement procedure rule sand in line with all relevant legislation. The contract to be awarded, will make provision for an extension provided the KPI's, as set out in this report, are met. If an extension is required, a further decision will be taken in accordance with the delegation set out at recommendation 2.2.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 No known other implications

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 None

Agenda Item: 7a

Report Title: Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 and Action Plan	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/61
Report Presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth	
Enquiries to: Danielle Estlea, Economic Development Officer danielle.estlea@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the final Economic Growth Strategy 2023 – 2028 and consider the accompanying Action Plan to deliver

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Approve the Braintree District Economic Growth Strategy 2023 - 2028
- 2.2 Approve the Braintree District Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 Action Plan.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 was approved for consultation at Cabinet on 6th December 2022.
- 3.2 The Strategy was out for public consultation during December 2022 through to February 2023 for residents and district businesses. Despite the extensive consultation and direct discussions only two pieces of feedback were received which related to wastewater capacity in the district and further comments specifically relating to a development site and an infrastructure project. Therefore no changes have been made to the Economic Strategy.
- 3.3 In 2022, SQW was commissioned by Braintree District Council to research the current position in the district and to explore the steps that BDC can take to support economic growth. Consequently, a refreshed evidence base was established, drawing on existing material and intelligence derived from stakeholder consultation via a series of workshops. In addition, 500 responses from a business needs survey were also obtained to inform this strategy, and combined, has resulted in a nationally aligned set of core priorities, underpinned by locally led needs.
- 3.4 The Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 depicts the links to local, regional and national strategies, the district's economic profile following the newly

obtained evidence base, the core vision and key priorities, as well as how the strategy will be funded, delivered, and monitored. It has taken into account the recent Essex Sector Development Strategy and has been developed alongside the NEEB strategy, both of which are in broad alignment with this strategy.

- 3.5 Following extensive consultation exercises, the Economic Development Team has informed the Year 1 Action Plan, focusing on the core priorities and sub objectives as agreed within the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028. Details of the consultation exercises are provided within section 4.1.
- 3.6 The action plan has highlighted the core actions required to deliver the key priorities of the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028, broken down by subsequent objectives. Each action provides the outcomes of delivery, details of funding assigned to deliver it, and the expected duration to achieve it. There may also be further opportunities for projects linked to the key themes under a future devolution deal and from the levelling up rural pilot which we are working with Essex County Council on. The Council will work with these partners to lobby for this, and new actions would be included in future years action plans as appropriate.
- 3.7 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities;
- 3.8 The Year 1 Action Plan of the Economic Growth Strategy will deliver the above Corporate Objective, focusing on core economic growth needs for the district and will be reviewed annually for up to 5 years, to the completion of the strategy.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The strategy was out for public consultation from 7 December 2022 through to 7 January 2023. Members of the public were invited to feedback on the strategy, through the following activities:
- Media coverage - no online coverage, but some coverage in print for the Braintree & Witham (15 December) & Essex Chronicle (15 December) from the [press release](#) issued on 7 December.
 - 20 posts on social media channels; Facebook, Facebook Business Group, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Next Door resulting in 66 clicks.
 - 2 x articles within Business e-Newsletter with circa 5,000 subscribers resulting in 17 unique clicks.
 - Over 300 direct invitations to core business contacts, including commercial tenants of BDC owned premises, the Witham Industrial Watch Business Improvement District, Witham Chamber of Commerce, and the Braintree Town Partnership, resulting in 0 responses/enquiries

- Placement of a display stand was positioned in the foyer of The Plaza, to invite visitors to feedback.
- An introduction was presented to businesses in-person and 25 hard copies of the strategy and feedback forms were handed to attendees of the business support workshops delivered at The Plaza delivered January through to February.
- An introduction was presented to 8 businesses at the Springwood Industrial Estate Business Support Networking Event in January with hard copies of the strategy/action plan available.

5. Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is to approve the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 and the Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to this report, which will result in an aligned focus to mitigate the economic challenges within the district and to support sustainable economic growth with tangible outcomes.
- 5.2 Option 2 is to do nothing, which will place the district economy at risk of further negative impacts because of the macro-economic challenges the economy is facing.
- 5.3 Option 1 is the preferred option, to continue to invest and support sustainable economic growth, resulting in a prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 A launch event on the new Economic Strategy will be held in April with businesses and the strategy will be added to the website and printed copies will be made available.
- 6.2 If the Action Plan is agreed at Cabinet, delivery will commence imminently and will be publicised via our social media channels, website and via our business email newsletter.
- 6.3 The Action Plan will be monitored and kept under review to ensure it achieves the aims. The Action Plan will be formally reviewed and updated each year.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The source of funding to deliver the annual Action Plans of the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2027 will be derived from existing Economic Development team budgets, partnership opportunities and allocated budgets from central government such as the Levelling Up Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund/Rural England Prosperity Fund.
- 7.2 The approved budget for 2023/24 included transferring £427k of New Homes Bonus receivable in 2023/24 to reserve to support delivery of the Economic Growth and Healthy Housing Strategies. Allocation of this funding to specific actions within strategies is still to be finalised.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 As the Action Plans of the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2027 will be delivering the government grant funding as stipulated in section 7.2, there are legal obligations to provide statutory returns on the expenditure of the funding.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 None.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. List of Appendices

- 11.1 The Economic Growth Strategy 2023 – 2027
- 11.2 Year 1 Action Plan – 2023-2024

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Equality Impact Assessment



Braintree District Council

Economic Growth Strategy

2023
-2028

www.braintree.gov.uk





Earls Colne Business Park

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Foreword



Welcome to our new Economic Growth Strategy – a strategy which summarises the changes happening within the macro-economic environment and sets out the opportunities open to the district over the next five years.

The way in which our district is developing is changing. We are seeing evidence of economic growth, but we're seeing it within the context of an ever-changing external environment. Already conscious of these changes, we are investing more than ever in projects and programmes which mitigate outside influences in a bid to support the growth and prospects of small and start-up businesses. Due to increases in competitive pressures, businesses need more of our support and the support of our partners in breaking down barriers and overcoming challenges which may have limited them in the past.

We are seeing new trends and changes within our business landscape - with sectors such as health and finance showing strong growth in place of traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction. Interwoven with this shift is a growing awareness of the green economy and the need to work with residents, businesses and partners in opening up opportunities for greener skills, greener jobs and greener ways of delivering services.

We are a forward-thinking authority investing not only in the businesses of today, but also in the businesses of tomorrow. We are already building the foundations to a resilient economy by investing in the infrastructure needed in attracting new businesses, inward investment and future growth. This strategy builds on these ambitions – it outlines our core priorities and sets out ways in which we can deliver impactful programmes of support to achieve our overall vision of *“To lead in sustainability, inclusivity and competitiveness for a resilient local economy”*.

An ambitious and pragmatic approach is needed to support the foundations of a strong, sustainable and growing economy. Over the next five years, our focus will be two-fold - firstly, on generating higher skilled job opportunities and secondly, on increasing levels of attainment in education to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

As suggested above, it will take a powerhouse of passionate and empowered authorities, businesses and residents to achieve this overarching vision, but I have no doubt that the outcome of this strategy will be something in which we can all be proud.

**Cllr Tom Cunningham,
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Economic Growth**

Executive Summary

The global economy is consistently transforming with a demand to support positive and sustainable economic growth. Due to the macro-economic challenges that the district has faced at the time of writing this strategy, namely the exit from the European Union, COVID-19, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a cost-of-living crisis is now at the forefront of how previous economic priorities have been determined, moving forward to more proactive yet resilient socio-economic priorities.

This Economic Growth Strategy supersedes the Plan for Growth 2017-2022 and will deliver in alignment to revised local, regional and national policy with a refined set of core priorities based on new refreshed baseline of data and trend analysis. It is also important to reflect on partnership and funding opportunities that will strengthen the potential of the district and as such, this strategy will also work with residents, businesses, and visitors to shape the services and service delivery to meet the changing needs of all communities.

To ascertain what the core needs and focus are required for the district's changing economy, a refreshed evidence baseline was required. In 2022, SQW was commissioned by Braintree District Council (BDC) to research the current economic position in the district and to explore the steps that BDC can take to support economic growth.

Consequently, a refreshed evidence base was established, drawing on existing material and intelligence derived from stakeholder consultation via a series of workshops. In addition, over 400 responses from a business needs survey were also obtained to inform this strategy, and combined, has resulted in a nationally aligned set of core priorities, underpinned by locally led needs.

The evidence baseline highlighted a number of opportunities and challenges currently facing Braintree's economy, all of which require investment and focus in response to them. Braintree is currently home to 155,200 people, although population growth has been weak over the past decade relative to comparative geographies, and the district has an increasingly ageing population living within the district, which will require support in the future. The district also faces a productivity challenge, with a tight labour market (unemployment is currently low) coupled with low levels of higher skilled roles. The Council needs to do more to attract those of working age into the district to ensure our businesses can remain competitive and fulfil our ambitions to increase productivity.

Braintree plays an important role in the North Essex sub-region, producing £3.26 billion per annum and account for 28% of all economic production in North Essex and 9% of economic production across Essex. Braintree District Council

will build on this to continue to maintain and increase the new business survival rates, which are higher than the national average, to grow the economy. Trends are now showing evidence of growth in new sectors. These are not large employment sectors currently, but the trajectory is important. For example, the digital and creative sector appears to have grown more quickly in the district than across Essex as a whole. It is a sector that can gravitate to towns and can also play a key role in wider place-shaping.

The district's economy is – arguably – being transformed because of its evolving infrastructure and connectivity. The prospect of improving connectivity may itself be something of a game-changer in relation to key investment decisions. The district offers a relatively high quality of life and in an era in which 'anywhere jobs' are likely to be more important, it has some important advantages relative to elsewhere. There are challenges too – and ongoing limitations in relation to rail connectivity (other than perhaps from Witham) are one. The quality of digital connectivity will also be a key factor going forward.

With new strategic focus from Central Government as per the Levelling Up Agenda, deprivation is nonetheless, reported as being fairly low within the district, and the Council have secured £1.036 million of grant funding through

the Shared Prosperity Fund and a further £589,191 has been allocated to Braintree District Council through the Rural England Prosperity Fund, as an appendage to the Shared Prosperity Fund to tackle rural deprivation. However, there are pockets of deprivation within the district which require support. Housing needs within the district has shown a greater demand for affordable housing due to the national negative economic trajectory, due to unemployment, family breakdowns, food poverty, mortgage rate affordability, for example. Tackling deprivation to achieve an inclusive economy will require support for the district residents and workers, from all quality-of-life indicators.

The challenges that the district face are notably top-level including skills, succession and retention, low average salaries, declaration of a climate emergency, and national/global economic shocks, all detrimental to the priorities and services Braintree District Council offer residents and businesses within the district. Nonetheless, there is a major opportunity arising from three 'new' innovation assets in the district – I-Construct, Horizon 120 & Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult. All the building blocks are in place, and the Council need to ensure the potential of these sites are maximised and work with partners to develop clusters of activity around them.

This revised economic intelligence has highlighted the core themes that are evident in terms of aspirational delivery to be:

- Sustainability – Supporting growth that can continue to transition in line with the current and proposed future needs of the business community
- Inclusivity – Building a level playing field for entrepreneurship, new business start-ups and growth opportunities
- Competitiveness – Enabling local prosperity to establish the district as the place for businesses to start up, innovate and grow.



Aegon, Witham

The vision and core priorities are therefore:

To lead in sustainability, inclusivity, and competitiveness for a resilient local economy

1. Infrastructure and Connectivity	2. Resilient Business Support	3. Inclusive People and Skills	4. Sustainable Green Economy
The Council will partner with key stakeholders to provide future proofed integration and connectivity to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Braintree district and wider North Essex. Through allocating employment land, encouraging inward investment and partnerships will result in a district and neighbouring areas that are market ready, desirable and fit to do business in.	The Council will facilitate a supported business community, regardless of size or sector that meets the needs and requirements to encourage strong and sustainable economic growth with high value measurable outcomes within the district. The Council will also deliver a bespoke programme of support to the key high-growth sectors to respond to the niche and technical requirements of these businesses to achieve specialist developments, supporting Essex County Council's Sector Development Strategy.	The Council will support residents where appropriate to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis and to meet their full potential, supporting progression in or into work and education to improve their health, living conditions, and quality of life. The Council will also develop skills provisions around the needs of the Braintree District economy and support creation of higher paid/skilled jobs in emerging sectors.	The Council will enable businesses and residents to grow green prosperity that will support present and future wellbeing, reducing the impact on the world's natural resources, with a focus on fair and sustainable consumption and production.

To deliver the priorities and goals of this Economic Growth Strategy, annual action plans will be developed, to provide an update on the progress made, with measurable outcomes at timely intervals, mitigating risks and adapting to the changes of needs and demands of the district economy.

Progress will be reported to the elected Members quarterly with performance indicators, to manage risk for successful project delivery with tangible outcomes.

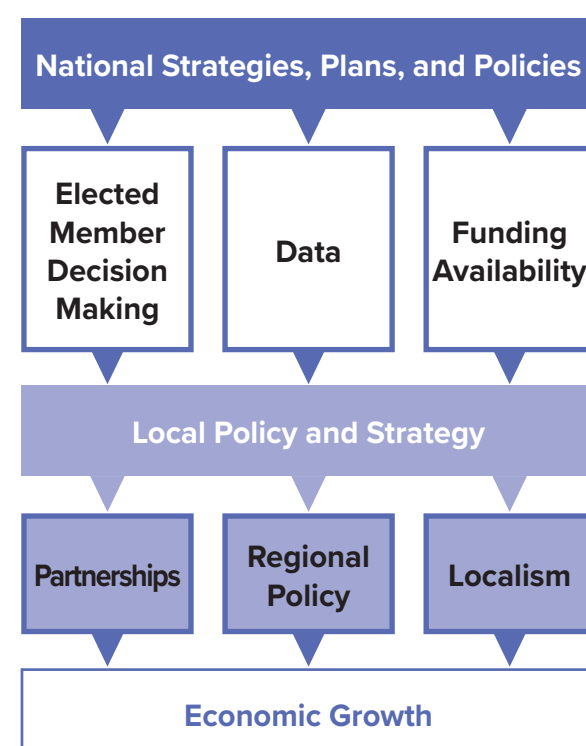
The evidence base used to inform this strategy can be found at www.braintree.gov.uk/homepage/282/economic-plan-research-project



The Plaza, Braintree

Links to Local, Regional and National Strategies

There has been a substantial change in the policy landscape around economic development at all levels of government since the Plan for Growth was published in 2017, moving increasingly towards a ‘joined up government’, where greater integration is sought between government departments and agencies outside of government.



National Strategies, Plans, and Policies

Central government policy has shifted nationally, precipitated by the UK’s departure from the EU – but also by the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic – towards greater investment in infrastructure, skills, and innovation. From the previous focus on the Industrial Strategy (to boost productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure), through to the evolution of the Levelling Up White Paper (spreading opportunity more equally across the UK), the economic support demands from Central Government require local authorities to be resilient to fast change.

The Growth Plan 2022

The Growth Plan 2022 makes growth the government’s central economic mission, setting a target of reaching a 2.5% trend rate. Sustainable growth will lead to higher wages, greater opportunities and provide sustainable funding for public services.

Levelling Up White Paper

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how the government will spread opportunity more equally across the UK.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

A Bill to make provision for the setting of levelling-up missions and reporting on progress in delivering them; about local democracy; about town and country planning; about Community Infrastructure Levy; about the imposition of Infrastructure Levy; about environmental outcome reports for certain consents and plans; about regeneration; about the compulsory purchase of land; about information and records relating to land, the environment or heritage; for the provision for pavement licences to be permanent; about governance of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; about vagrancy and begging; and for connected purposes.

Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener

This strategy sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the Net Zero target by 2050.

Regional Strategies, Plans and Policies

At a regional and sub-regional level, South Essex Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Essex County Council (ECC) and the North Essex Economic Board’s (NEEB) ambitions for innovation, cohesive communities and a better skilled workforce come through many policy documents.

The North Essex Economic Board is a partnership of local authorities in the area working together to drive economic growth. The partners are Braintree, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford district councils, Colchester Borough Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council. Each has committed funding specifically to support recovery from Covid-19, and projects include programmes to boost apprenticeships and job fairs. Longer-term, the North Essex Economic Board is committed to promoting wider economic growth and investment across the geographical region.

The North Essex Economic Board is proud to have been highly commended at the Government Opportunities (GO) UK National Excellence in Public Procurement Awards 2022, having been shortlisted in the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Award (Local Government) category for its work in procuring business and skills support programmes to help recovery from the pandemic.

North Essex Economic Strategy

This Strategy sets out shared ambitions for long-term, sustainable and inclusive prosperity – and outlines where partners must act in the next five years to help realise them.

ECC Sector Development Strategy

The Essex sector development strategy will support public sector partners, skills and learning providers and businesses to effectively plan together for the future economy of the county.

SELEP Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy

Outlines the clear opportunities and needs of the SELEP area and the actions that will be taken to drive the south east into new economic growth as the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and establishes new ways of working internationally following the EU Transition.

SELEP Smarter Faster Together Strategy

Building on extensive consultation during 2018, SMARTER, FASTER, TOGETHER sets out an assessment of the opportunities and challenges that are faced, the ambitions for future of the economy and the priorities on which partners will focus to achieve them.

ECC Levelling up Essex White Paper

In focusing on levelling up, the interest is to spread opportunity, not to constrain it. No one benefits from putting a ceiling on ambition and all benefit when people have the chance to fulfil their potential. The County has identified rural Braintree district as one of the pilot areas of the Plan, and the District and County are working together to understand the challenges that particularly rural communities face and how they can be overcome.

Local Strategies, Plans and Policies

At a local level there has also been much change since the previous Plan for Growth, with the publication of the Braintree District Local Plan and Braintree District Council's Corporate Strategy which sets out the area's ambitions for the next four years. The declaration of a Climate Change Emergency within the district in 2019 provides ambitious net-zero targets for the Council.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan looks to a future where the Council will help connect people and places, enhance and protect the environment, support the communities to reach their potential, promote prosperity and, importantly, continue to deliver and innovate.

Climate Change Strategy

Braintree District Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019 and announced a target to be carbon neutral as a Council and as a District as far as practical by 2030. The Council is working through an action plan of projects to help business and communities achieve these goals.

Local Plan

The Local Plan 2013-2033 is a 2-part document which sets out the strategy for development of the district up to 2033. It includes allocations for where new homes, employment and infrastructure will be built in the district, and policies that businesses applying for planning permission will need to follow.

Digital Strategy

As the Council is looking to adopt digital technology, the strategy considers how the district can be supported to have the digital connectivity that it needs.

Business Engagement and Support Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan aims to create a district that is competitive to do business in whilst ensuring accountability of public money in delivering Economic Growth. It measures outputs that will create strong and sustainable economic growth.

Cycle Strategy

The vision is to make the district a leader in cycling provision, making it safer and encouraging more people from a range of backgrounds to cycle more frequently.

Healthy Housing Strategy

Braintree District Councils Housing Strategy is being published at a time of change both in the housing sector, the economic sector and the health and wellbeing sector. It is evident that the Council will need to respond to these changes and those ahead.

There have been simultaneous and substantial detrimental economic events, which have all had a profound impact on the district's economic performance and are therefore important to consider. The ongoing impact and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to shape the district's economy in the future and the way in which it functions. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union has changed the way in which the UK trades with the EU and the world. Finally, and more recently, the cost-of-living crisis is having a substantial impact on residents and businesses across the district, with inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases and the cost of fuel and materials rising substantially.

Our Evidence Base

- The Economic Profile

Research Methodology

In 2022, SQW was commissioned by Braintree District Council to research the current economic position in the district and to explore the steps that the Council can take to support economic growth. Consequently, a refreshed evidence base was established, drawing on existing material and intelligence derived from stakeholder consultation via a series of workshops. In addition, over 400 responses from a business needs survey were also obtained to inform this strategy, and combined, has resulted in a nationally aligned set of core priorities, underpinned by locally-led needs.

Current Economic Position

At the time of writing this strategy, national figures show that the general UK economy has performed meekly over the past three years due to the macroeconomic challenges all areas have faced. Overall economic output, the number of businesses, and employment, have not seen growth in the district since 2017.

Nonetheless, there are promising signs within the district's economy, which provide a platform from which to build; business survival rates in the district are generally strong, unemployment is the lowest in Essex, and the evidence suggests that the district's economy has not been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic any more than across the comparator areas.



Resident Demographics and Growth

There are 155,200 people living in the district as of 2021, which is 6% higher since last reported in 2011, a slightly slower growth rate than Essex (8%).

Nonetheless, the district has an aging population, with 41% of the population aged over 50. The growth of the working-age population has slowed over the past decade, although this is a national trend, not a localised one. Since 2009, there has been no growth in the working-age population and in fact there has been a decline in the working age population in the district – in contrast

to strong growth across all other local areas. The decline in the working-age population is important in relation to the district's economy and the Council must, therefore, ensure that there is a sufficient number and skilled local population to meet the employment needs of local firms.

Currently, unemployment levels are low due to the number of job opportunities exceeding the number of those of working-age. This is a majority constraint for businesses in the district looking to grow and expand their operations, limiting business growth and economic output.

Age Group	Braintree District		East of England		England	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0-14	26,800	17%	1,114,800	18%	9,838,700	18%
15-64 (Working age Population)	96,800	62%	3,976,800	63%	36,249,800	64%
15-24	15,700	10%	685,300	11%	6,633,300	12%
25-49	48,800	31%	2,046,700	32%	18,646,400	33%
50-64	32,400	21%	1,244,800	20%	10,970,100	19%
65+	31,600	20%	1,243,000	19%	10,401,200	18%
ALL	155,200	100%	6,334,600	100%	56,489,700	100%

The district's main towns (Braintree, Witham and Halstead) are critical components of the district's overall economy, supporting 55% of employment across the district. Braintree and Witham are the two largest centres in the district (supporting 14,780 and 11,325 jobs respectively) and have a range of strengths in wholesale and retail, construction and manufacturing. The latest employment evidence suggests that both towns have experienced employment decline over the last five years, with much of this loss coming from the manufacturing sector, although anecdotal evidence suggests that both towns are performing well with strong business demand for commercial space. This indicates that although the number of unique businesses is declining, the size of existing businesses are growing.

Nonetheless, evidence is indicating that 45% of employment opportunities come from more rural areas within the district, showcasing that rural businesses play a significant part in the district economics and therefore, resources also need to be made available to support these employment opportunities. Halstead by contrast is a smaller town, supporting 4,125 jobs, but one which appears to have seen strong employment growth over the last five years – growing by 17%.

Looking forward the Local Plan anticipates significant housing growth up to 2033, with around 1000 being proposed to be built each year. This provides direct opportunities for the construction and infrastructure sectors but also links the service sectors to serve the new population. There are also significant major infrastructure and growth schemes inside and outside the district, which could lead to significant job opportunities for local residents. These include;

- Freeport East – At Felixstowe and Harwich, this new Freeport will deliver a secure customs zone for businesses importing and exporting. Plans to develop two green hubs that would create 13,500 jobs via £500m investment are expected within the next 10 years
- New overhead and underground powerline schemes and renewable energy generation
- New road building schemes such as the A12 in the district and the lower Thames crossing outside of the district

- Stansted Expansion – Investment of £600m to increase the airports capacity to 43 million passengers per year will be made, including a new arrivals terminal, check-in area and various upgrades including the development of its own business park on site
- Bradwell B and Sizewell C Nuclear Power Stations
- Significant housing growth outside of the district, including new Garden Communities at Harlow, Colchester borders, and Chelmsford

It is clear, therefore, from the demographic and growth data that growth will bring significant opportunities to the district businesses and residents. However, employment growth must also keep up with resident growth to ensure that the pattern of out commuting for roles, especially those in higher paid sectors, is not made worse.

The Council can do this by ensuring that there are the right allocations for new employment land, that high value jobs and businesses are attracted to the district and that the district's businesses can make the most of the opportunities offered by major infrastructure and building projects.

Output and Productivity

(Gross value added [GVA], is the value generated by any unit engaged in the production of goods and services.)

The district's economy produces £3.26 billion per annum (2020). Our economy is an important part of the North Essex and Essex economic story, with our economy accounting for 9% of economic production across Essex.

Data suggests that although the district's production (as measured by Gross Value Added [GVA]) has fluctuated in recent years, there was strong growth between 2015 and 2017 – above the growth rate experienced across the comparator areas. The overall pattern in the district has been similar to national figures and is ahead of productivity* against comparators across greater Essex.

*(*Productivity is a measure of economic or business performance that indicates how efficiently people, companies, industries and whole economies convert inputs, such as labour and capital, into outputs, such as goods or services.)*

Measures to improve productivity will be essential to the success of this strategy as with growth in productivity, an economy is able to produce—and consume—increasingly more goods and services for the same amount of work.

	2017	2020	Direction of Travel
Braintree District Output and Productivity			
Total GVA	£3.83bn	£3.26bn	▼ 14.9%
GVA per hour worked	£35	£38	▲ 8.6%
GVA per filled job	£55,987	£54,555	▼ 2.6%

Since a peak in 2017, GVA has declined over the past three years (for which data is available), whilst overall productivity has increased across Braintree's economy. This is because of a reduction in hours worked, possibly due to the COVID-19 restrictions enforced. Whilst the recent trajectory of productivity since 2017 (measured in terms of GVA per filled job) has been negative, Braintree's economy does not lag as far behind the national and regional productivity levels as it did

in 2010. Braintree's economic output has grown strongly over the past decade, with growth over 42% between 2011 and 2020, compared to only 33% nationally and GVA per filled job increased by 28% in Braintree compared to 20% nationally. In order to continue to grow ahead of average, the Council will need to consider the structure of the economy in the district and how to help businesses be more productive and attract and grow existing businesses to support growth.



Earls Colne Business Park

Employment and Businesses

Around 89% of all businesses in the district are micro in size (employing between 0 and 9 employees).

In comparison to the predominately micro business community, the data suggests there are currently ten large businesses (employing over 250 people) operating in Braintree (accounting for 0.1% of all businesses). This is a lower proportion than experienced across comparator areas.

Whilst there are also structural issues with an economy that relies too heavily on a small number of large firms there are advantages of large firms acting as anchoring institutions, helping to form clusters, using local supply chains and providing visible job opportunities. Increasing the number of larger firms would therefore be welcome, and priority will be given for planned investment for

infrastructure and connectivity to host businesses of this size to relocate or grow within the district, through exploring opportunities to invest in employment land that priority is given to core sectors that show high growth.

Reflecting the slower growth in business stock that has been experienced in the district, business start-up rates are lower than the Essex and national levels, with around 100 new businesses started for every 1,000 active enterprises in 2020, a rate around 20% lower than the national one. By comparison, the business death rate has remained relatively stable over the same period. The decline in the number of district businesses in 2020 may have been the result of interventions linked to the pandemic (furlough scheme and the various business loan schemes) which kept many businesses afloat. Equally, the pandemic may explain the decline in business births in 2020.

	2017	2020	Direction of Travel
Employment and Businesses			
Number of Jobs	57,000	57,000	▬ 0%
Number of Businesses	6,680	6,675	▼ 0.07%
New Businesses per 1,000 active enterprises	122.6	98.6	▼ 19.6%

Business survival rates in the district are strong, with 45% of newly-established businesses surviving their first five years in business. This is above average for Essex (43%) and nationally (39%), suggesting that access to localised business support plays an important factor in supporting the survival of local businesses. As well as continuing to support existing businesses, the Council should also support those wishing to set up their own new business with advice and support, as well as providing the physical space at places like the Plaza and Braintree Enterprise Centre with small and grow on spaces with flexible terms.

Braintree district’s employment growth has been variable over the last five years, with relatively strong employment growth. Over the five-year period, the district saw employment growth of 2%. Examining employment over a longer trajectory shows that the district was on a relatively strong employment growth trajectory since 2013, following the recovery from the 2009-10 recession. Over this time period, the district has performed well in terms of job numbers remaining the same, despite a decline in the number of business stock.

The district has experienced a fall in the number of job adverts since a peak in 2018, and although this decline matches a similar trend to one that has occurred nationally, it has occurred faster locally. Nonetheless, since the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of job adverts has grown substantially and is now greater than before.

The district has an increasingly ageing population, with a high proportion of people aged between 50 and 60 who are set to retire over the next decade. There has been no growth in the number of working-age people living in the district over the last decade, with most of the recent population growth coming from those aged over 65. This, however, is not unique to the district, and is reflected regionally and nationally.

The district has low levels of unemployment, with 87% of the working-age population in employment, ahead of Essex (81%) and nationally (79%). In terms of benefits, only 2.5% of working aged people are claiming unemployment related benefits. This shows that largely those who are able can find work, however the Council should consider how to support those who have been out of employment for some time and businesses to offer opportunities for their local populations

People and Skills

The district’s working-age population has relatively low qualifications relative to sub-regional, regional and national levels. This partly reflects the nature of the district’s existing sectoral strengths, which are typically lower-skilled roles (e.g., in manufacturing and construction) and the lack of higher education presence within the district. Encouragingly, the district’s young people tend to be qualified to degree-level more than across the rest of Essex, suggesting that the district’s lower qualification levels may be reversing. However, this is not yet borne out in the figures where there has been a 6% decline in the % of working age people qualified to NVQ level 4 and before between 2017 and 2022, a very worrying trend.

The local working-age population is very economically active, with relatively low levels of unemployment and economic inactivity. The district has rebounded well from the Covid-19 pandemic, with the number of people claiming unemployment benefits in the district below Essex and national levels, consistently across the last 4 years.

For full-time employees, incomes earned by those working in the district have stagnated, in a similar manner to productivity growth, with no growth in workplace-based earnings in locally since 2016. Workplace-based earnings are 16% above resident-based earnings, suggesting people are out-commuting from the district in search of higher salaries. This suggests that there are higher skilled/paid opportunities outside of the district, such as Chelmsford, Colchester, and London, for example.

	Median weekly gross pay in Braintree, 2021 Full-time employees	All employees (inc part time)
Workplace-based	£517.5	£442.7
Residence-based	£601.2	£517.9

In terms of qualifications, 25% of the working age-population is qualified to degree level (NVQ L4+), which is lower than the Essex average (35%). This may be due to those moving out of the district for employment opportunities, or that there are no universities within the district. Given the sectoral composition of the local economy, it could be expected

that a higher proportion of the workforce have practical-based qualifications, including apprenticeships (excluding higher level apprenticeships). Data from the Annual Population Survey shows that the district's population has a higher proportion people qualified with trade apprenticeships relative to the regional and national level.

	2017	2020	Direction of Travel
People and Skills			
Total Population	-	155,200	<div></div>
Working Age Popula- tion	-	96,900	<div></div>
Economic Activity Rate	87.8%	87.2%	<div></div> 0.6%
Employment Rate	85.1%	86.2%	<div></div> 1.1%
Claimant Count Rate	1.1%	2.6%	<div></div> 1.5%
Median weekly Gross Pay (Employee – Workplace Based)	£423	£443	<div></div> 4.7%
Median weekly Gross Pay (Employed – Resi- dence Based)	£510	£518	<div></div> 1.6%
% of Working Age Pop- ulation with NVQ4+ Qualifications	31%	25%	<div></div> 6%
% of Working Age Pop- ulation with No Qualifi- cations	7%	7%	<div></div> 0%

The level of qualifications in the district has been significantly below averages for a long time, and the significant fall between 2017 and 2022 is very worrying, indicating a further brain drain from the district's economy. The Council must work with Essex County Council, skills providers, schools, parents, and local employers to raise the aspirations of our school leavers and older working age population to ensure they reach their full potential. This could include a range of measures including:

- Working collaboratively with local employers to engage with schools and students to raise their job aspirations, including hosting or taking part in events or schemes such as employer assemblies, enterprise challenges or providing work experience.
- Working with local skills providers to influence courses and qualifications to aid in closing skills gaps.
- Working with schools and skills providers to provide raising aspirations materials and careers advice based on the growing job sectors within the district.

- Employer led CPD training for teachers and parents to understand how schools' subjects transfer into the differing roles across the district.
- Working with Essex County Council, skills providers, schools, and residents to raise awareness of initiatives such as Multiply, to up-skill residents in Maths.
- Information, advice, and guidance evenings aimed at student parents to understand a range of courses and qualifications both vocational and academic.
- Aiding and encouraging employers, residents, and local skills providers to upskill over a range of subjects, i.e., green skills, digital.

The low level of average income from District jobs may also indicate a structural issue in the economy which will be explored more in further sections of this report, but we must ensure that residents have the skills to take advantage of these new opportunities.

Deprivation

The English Indices of Deprivation were published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in 2019.

Deprivation is assessed through ranking indicators such as employment, income, health, education and skills, crime, housing and environment.

The new indices indicate that the Braintree district ranks 209th out of 317 local authority districts in England in terms of its average rank with 1 being the most deprived and 317 being the least. This shows that overall the district has below average levels of deprivation and there are no small neighbourhood areas in the 10% most deprived nationally and only two (2%) in the 20% most deprived. Nonetheless, pockets of deprivation remain in our towns and also in many of our rural areas, although because there are less absolute numbers these may be more hidden.

As a largely rural district there are also particular problems which provide challenges for residents, including in accessing the job market. These include distance to jobs and education opportunities, lack of public transport, digital connectivity, fuel poverty due to lack of mains gas and the number and types of jobs available locally.



Dickens House, Witham

Wider Determinants of Health

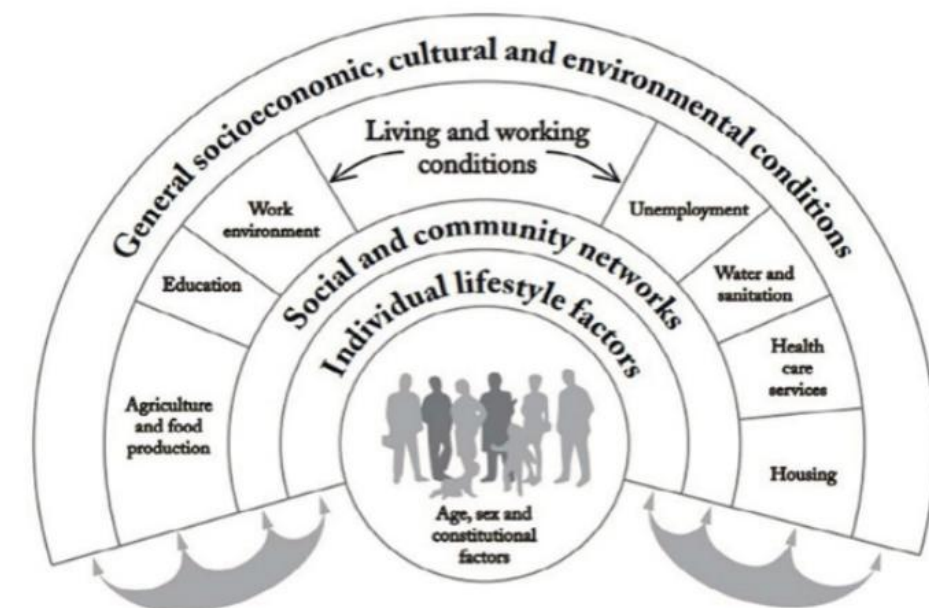
The Wider Determinants of Health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people's mental and physical health.

There have been multiple studies which evidence that housing conditions have a direct impact on health. More vulnerable groups often face greater barriers to accessing high quality care.

1.6 million people living in properties in poor conditions, living in cold, damp, low quality homes in the private rented sector. Nearly one in three household (32%) are living in homes with multiple problems relating to overcrowding, affordability, and non-decent conditions have rated their health as less than good.

Homelessness and poor living conditions can have a detrimental effect on the working-age population. For people who are homeless, out of work and have other support needs, perhaps related to their health and wellbeing, it is particularly difficult to access suitable employment, although many people in this position want to work. As of August 2022, there were 2,093 applications on the Housing Register for re-housing of which 27% were single households due to unsuitable living conditions.

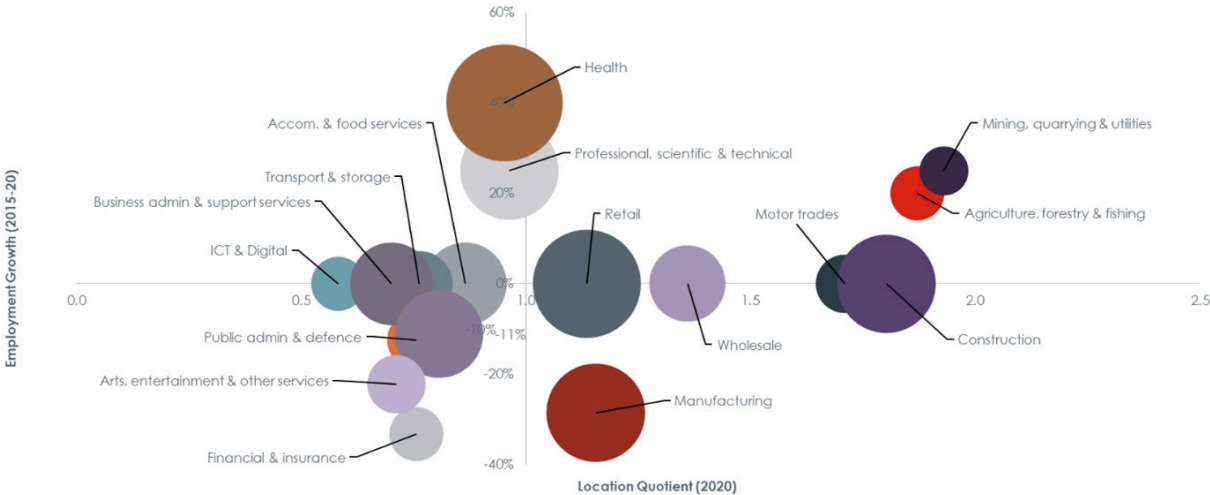
The Council will work with partners, including Essex County Council to address these issues.



Sectors

Braintree District Council is fortunate to have a mixed and diverse economy and as the local economy evolves, so do the core growth sectors. Previously strong within the manufacturing, construction and retail sectors, there has been a shift over the last 5 years in new emerging

core growth sectors, including the health and professional service sectors, mirroring national growth levels as seen in the diagram below. Emerging sectors that have not mirrored national growth levels are as per within the bottom left-hand quadrant, including Transport, Business Support, and ICT and Digital.



X-axis = employment location quotient (2020) relative to England
Y-axis = employment growth by sector (2015-20)
Size of bubble = employment (2020)

Historically, the district has had a significant industrial sector. Looking back over decades, major employers (e.g., Crittalls; a Braintree established business [1849]- global business whose name is synonymous with the best in steel windows, and Courtaulds; 18th century Braintree family who used their wealth from the textile industry to endow

the local infrastructure) played a major formative influence. Despite poor rail connections (other than from Witham in the southeast), the district has been well located in relation to the national road infrastructure. Together, these two factors have shaped elements of the district's underlying economic character.

The district's largest sectors are the health (7,000 jobs), retail (6,000), manufacturing, construction and professional, scientific and technical service (all 5,000) sectors, which in combination account for half of all employment in the district.

The district has a higher concentration of activity in the manufacturing, construction and wholesale/retail sectors relative to Essex. However, in all three sectors, the employment growth rate has either been stagnant (in the case of construction and wholesale/retail) or the level of employment has declined (in the case of manufacturing) over the past five years. However, this decline at only 7% is significantly less compared to the 19% average decline across Essex and shows that our manufacturing sector is still in a strong position and performing better than most of the rest of Essex.

Sectors which have grown strongly over the last five years include the professional services (25%), water supply and waste management (25%) and health sectors (40%), all of which have experienced growth above the Essex level.

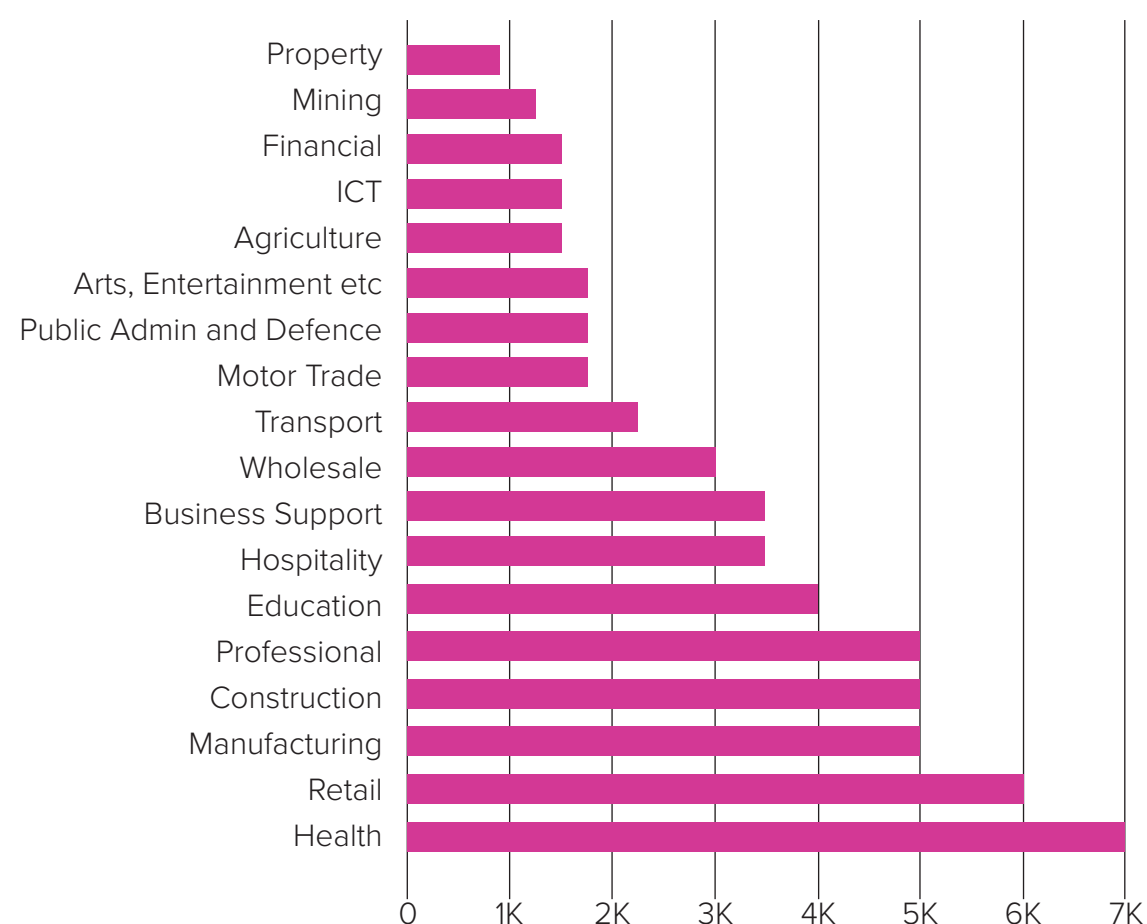
The local rural economy is an important component of the overall economy, with the agricultural sector having a relatively strong concentration of activity compared to the national level.

Water supply and waste management is a relatively small sector in absolute employment terms, but it has experienced strong growth over the past five years and has a relatively high concentration of activity compared to the national level.

People and Skills	Employment in Braintree District (2020)	Employment Growth in Braintree District (2015-20)	Employment Growth in Essex (2015-20)
Health & Social Care	6,780	+32%	+7%
Ports & Logistics	5,740	+4%	+11%
Construction	5,110	+3%	+15%
Cultural, Creative & Digital	2,325	+8%	-9%
Low Carbon (Primary)	2,040	+14%	+19%
Advanced Manufacturing	1,290	-7%	-18%
Life Services	125	-31%	-21%

The district's changing demography appears to be an important overarching factor in terms of how the local economy is evolving currently. The sectors which are growing in employment terms are typically those that are linked to an older population – so the district is seeing increasing employment in, for example, health and social care. However, growth is

also apparent where links to the district's transport arteries are especially important (and Braintree Village (formerly Freeport) continues to be an important employment hub). At the same time, some of the district's key sectors (in terms of GVA) have seen employment decline, such as manufacturing, albeit less than the Essex average.



Whilst some sectors such as ICT or financial might be relatively small in the district at the moment, there are some exciting firms working in these fields in the sector. The Council should work with these businesses to understand the advantages they feel they gain by being located in district and promote them as case studies to other similar firms.

In 2020 the Cell and Gene Therapy Advanced Manufacturing Catapult centre opened in district, bringing in £100M of national government investment to work in collaboration with the private sector to accelerate manufacturing innovation for therapy developers, technology companies and service providers bringing together technology, quality, operational, analytical and technology transfer expertise. This world leading facility will bring new companies to Braintree who we hope to locate locally and grow, forming a substantial life sciences cluster. The Council will work with the catapult centre and other partners to take advantage of this opportunity by ensuring that land and skills are available for those companies.

Horizon 120 – Horizon 120 is an exemplar business park for the region, capable of providing in excess of 750,000 sq. ft of hi-tech, industrial, office and logistics space, set in extensively landscaped grounds overlooking the countryside. Completion of Phase 1 in 2022 has secured leased premise space in office

units, light industrial sectors and R&D and Logistics enterprises. Occupations began in 2022 and the park has attracted a range of manufacturing and construction firms to the district. These could generate further clustering in these sectors and an increasing in jobs which is not yet reflected in the figures set out above. The opportunities for further development of high-class employment land should be continued to be taken forward by either the private or public sector and the Council will need to promote the benefits of living, locating and visiting the district to a wider audience.

The I-Construct Construction and Innovation Hub is a £2.3 million centre of excellence for construction innovation is based in Braintree, Essex. The hub's facilities are designed to be used to support individuals to start up a business in construction and construction-related sectors, nurture early-stage SMEs and facilitate the commercialisation of new ideas, technologies and research into construction markets. Whilst the formal ERDF support programme running from the building is concluded at the end of 2022, the Council will work with partners to deliver continued support for the construction sector in Braintree and beyond.

The Climate Emergency

In 2019, Braintree District Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' and set an ambitious target to make the Council's activities carbon-neutral where practical by 2030. The Council also committed to reducing district-wide energy consumption and emissions and to support the communities to adapt to climate change. Ultimately, the Council want a greener and environmentally sustainable community that is prepared for the future and that the Council can all be proud of, where people can enjoy cleaner air, cleaner streets and access to parks and green spaces. The built and natural environment significantly contributes towards people's quality of life and is key in making the district a more attractive place to live. The Council know the residents are proud to live here and together the Council have worked hard to keep the district clean and green. The Council want to keep up this momentum and encourage residents, businesses and other organisations to continue to work with us to further protect and enhance the district.

There are significant opportunities for district businesses to take advantage of the green economy, for example most homes will require retrofitting to enable Net Zero targets to be met.

There are also significant challenges for our district businesses in terms of skills. For example, those working in the motor trade or gas installation industry need to retrain to deal with electric cars and ground source heat pumps.

National/Global Economic Shocks

Economic shocks, otherwise known as macroeconomic events, have had a profound and continuous impact on the district economy, in particular, across the last 4 years and it is unknown how long the impacts will last for. At the time of writing this strategy, these include, although are not limited to;

COVID 19 pandemic

Lockdown restrictions imposed by government shut down many businesses and limited the way residents travelled to/from work and access services. Whilst government interventions were able to reduce some of these impacts, with Braintree District Council distributing over £55m of grant funding across over 20 different schemes, this has resulted in a reduction of income and disruptions to the hospitality/service, transportation, leisure, and travel industries. For example, whilst Stansted Airport is outside of the district, it is estimated that approximately 60% of the 1,600 jobs are delivered by district residents, increasing the number of residents on furlough, being made redundant and consequently, seeing their income fall.

Leaving the EU

With the introduction of additional statutory governance, checks and requirements, as with the UK, the district had seen a collapse in exportation, with export volumes falling approximately 20% in 2020. As of 2022, only 24 businesses in the district import/export, mainly within the food/drink, manufacturing, and construction sectors, indicating the district as a lesser trade intensive economy.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Braintree District Council stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and all Ukrainian people in the district and across the world. The district is supportive of The Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, also known as Homes for Ukraine, allowing citizens to volunteer to house refugees fleeing the invasion of Russia in Ukraine. Sponsors offer accommodation for at least six months, with those receiving sponsorship allowed to live, work and study in the UK for up to three years. Home Office data from August 2022 shows 168 visas have been granted to stay with hosts in the district. Housing, healthcare, education and skills, benefits, and social cohesion services are experiencing added pressure and funding will need to be made available to support this community.

'Cost of living' crisis

The 'cost of living' crisis is having a substantial impact on residents and businesses across the district, with inflation outstripping wage and benefit increases. This means that there is a decline in disposable income for residents. Recent data has seen an average of a 9% price increase in common consumer goods and services, adding additional pressures to residents mainly due to increase in worldwide gas prices and the disruption to the global supply chain. Businesses are also being impacted by increasing energy bills, and the rising costs of products and services and as such, over 1/3 of businesses expect to seek additional finances.

These issues are much larger than the district and require action at national and international level. However, the Council will continue to work with businesses to lobby government as appropriate and respond to particular problems facing businesses in the district.

Vision and Key Priorities

National Strategies, Plans, and Policies

Taking all the evidence into account and considering the type of district that we are seeking to create through the range of Council strategies the overall vision for the district is;

To lead in sustainability, inclusivity, and competitiveness for a resilient local economy.

These reflect the golden strands which run throughout this strategy;

- Creating a sustainable economy which reacts and responds positively to the challenges of climate change, helping the district as a whole reduce our impact on the environment
- Ensure that economic growth in the district provides growth and opportunities for everyone in the district
- Delivers a competitive economy which provides jobs, markets and opportunities for a range of business sectors and companies to develop and grow

In order to achieve this the Council will undertake a range of actions which can be separated into the 4 categories below.

1. Infrastructure and Connectivity

The Council will partner with key stakeholders to provide future proofed integration and connectivity to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the Braintree district and wider North Essex. Through allocating employment land, encouraging inward investment and partnerships will result in a district and neighbouring areas that are market ready, desirable and fit to do business in.

This will be achieved by:

- Working with partners to reduce the transport connectivity issues that face rural areas
- Supporting and develop businesses working within rural areas to support and enhance their local communities
- Working with key partners to secure funding to improve public transport, walking and cycling in the District to enhance connectivity and convenience, making the district a leader in sustainable business travel
- Ensuring that land is available to support new employment growth in the right places
- Raising the profile of the district and its business community and as a place to live, invest and visit

- Providing effective grow on premise space by expanding on local networks, nurturing a culture of enterprise, creating a wider economic ecosystem for growth

2. Resilient Business Support

The Council will facilitate a supported business community, regardless of size or sector that meets the needs and requirements to encourage strong and sustainable economic growth with high value measurable outcomes within the district. The Council will also deliver a bespoke programme of support to the key high-growth sectors to respond to the niche and technical requirements of these businesses to achieve specialist developments, supporting Essex County Council's Sector Development Strategy.

This will be achieved by:

- Working with key partners to allow our businesses to take advantage of growth projects taking place inside and outside of the district
- Listening and responding to the issues that are affecting businesses in our area, lobby government or other statutory bodies as necessary to achieve change
- Supporting businesses to become market leaders through launching new products and services and outperforming competitors and boosting productivity
- Creating a sustainable environment for new business start-ups through incubation, early-stage support and collaborations
- Delivering projects which support key sector development opportunities, nurture emerging sectors, notably within the digital and creative sectors
- Supporting the growth of the rural economy recognising its wider value and supporting Levelling Up ambitions
- Exploring the scope to nurture the Cell and Gene Therapy cluster
- Supporting businesses to adopt energy and resource efficient practices, nurture local supply chains and improve the natural environment in which they operate

3. Inclusive People and Skills

The Council will support residents where appropriate to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis and to meet their full potential, supporting progression in or into work and education to improve their health, living conditions, and quality of life. The Council will also develop skills provisions around the needs of the Braintree District economy and support creation of higher paid/skilled jobs in emerging sectors.

This will be achieved by:

- Working with partners and stakeholders to deliver a programme of skills development which supports those businesses already in the district and those clusters and industries we are seeking to create
- Encouraging people to take up degree level or higher qualifications
- Target and support residents, particularly those who have been away from the job market to access employment locally
- Working with businesses to offer higher skilled/valued job opportunities to increase resident earnings
- Developing developing local workforce to be ready for changing landscapes including through the development of green skills and enhanced digital skills

- Promoting job and career opportunities.
- Supporting the Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy centre to provide seeding of skills within the life sciences sector.
- Supporting the digital skills sector development.
- Use the I-Construct centre as a centre for innovation in the Construction sector, supporting jobs growth and green skills innovation.
- Working with social housing providers and house builders to mitigate the impacts of housing need within a negative economic trajectory.



Catapult, Braintree

4. Sustainable Green Economy

The Council will enable businesses and residents to support low and zero carbon initiatives that will support present and future wellbeing, reducing the impact on the world's natural resources, with a focus on fair and sustainable consumption and production.

This will be achieved by:

- Supporting the local carbon and environmental goods and services sector
- Promoting waste to energy activity in waste management sectors
- Encouraging sustainable practices across all businesses
- Promote local supply chains, adopting where possible, the principles of a circular economy
- Supporting the construction sector in modern methods of construction including retrofitting
- Supporting the land-based sectors in adhering to The Agriculture Act 2020 to deliver environmental land management schemes
- Supporting the delivery of retrofit schemes to meet low carbon guidance and compliant standards



I-Construct building

Funding, Delivery and Monitoring

Funding

The past decade has seen a seismic change in the role of local government and the way it is funded. Expectations are rising but budgets are shrinking. Over the last decade, the Council have had to address both a reduction in Central Government Grant of £6.7million and an increase in the cost of providing services. The budget has been balanced by bringing in income - largely through careful financial management and investments including the buying of commercial buildings to rent out, and by reducing costs without impacting on the services received by residents.

Since the previous strategy, over £80 million has been invested into the district to tackle some of the big challenges faced. In many ways, the district face the same issues as districts up and down the country and these challenges have been approached head-on. As a result, more interest has been unlocked, excitement and investment into the district towns and villages.

Growing the economy with investment, opportunities and support for new and existing businesses is vital for the local economy. The more innovation that is encouraged, the better for the local economy and the better the life chances for the district residents.

The delivery of this strategy will primarily be funded through the following schemes:

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

This fund provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund via a funding formula rather than a competition. It will help places right across the country deliver enhanced outcomes and recognises that even the most affluent parts of the UK contain pockets of deprivation and need support.

Levelling Up Fund

Allocation of funds to deliver the Levelling Up White Paper Agenda.

Rural England Prosperity Fund

An addition to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations to local authorities significantly rural.

Multiply

Funding available to improve adult numeracy skills

BDC Budget

A budget has been ringfenced for Economic Development activity and will be subsidised by partner resources, and future national/local funding opportunities.

Business-based investment

Businesses will be encouraged to take up match-funding schemes to support their business growth and development as well as research and development schemes (R&D).



Alec Hunter, Braintree

Delivery

This ambitious strategy is dependent on the support of key partners, access to funding, and the support of the district. As per the vision, in order to achieve sustainability and flexibility, the Council will be driven by the needs of the economy whilst reviewing annually, what data and trends are forecasting.

The Council are mindful of the local and national policies and therefore, the delivery of these objectives will be complimentary to the existing work that is being delivered to achieve the shared aims of the partners.

The Council will be proactive in exploring new opportunities in terms of investment and development.

The core partners are:

Business Support

- BEST Growth Hub
- COLBEA
- Let's do business group
- Haven Gateway Partnership
- FSB

Education

- ARU
- UoE
- Colchester Institute

Multi-Disciplinary

- NEEB
- Essex County Council
- Education and Skills Board
- Job Centre
- HMRC

Business Led Groups

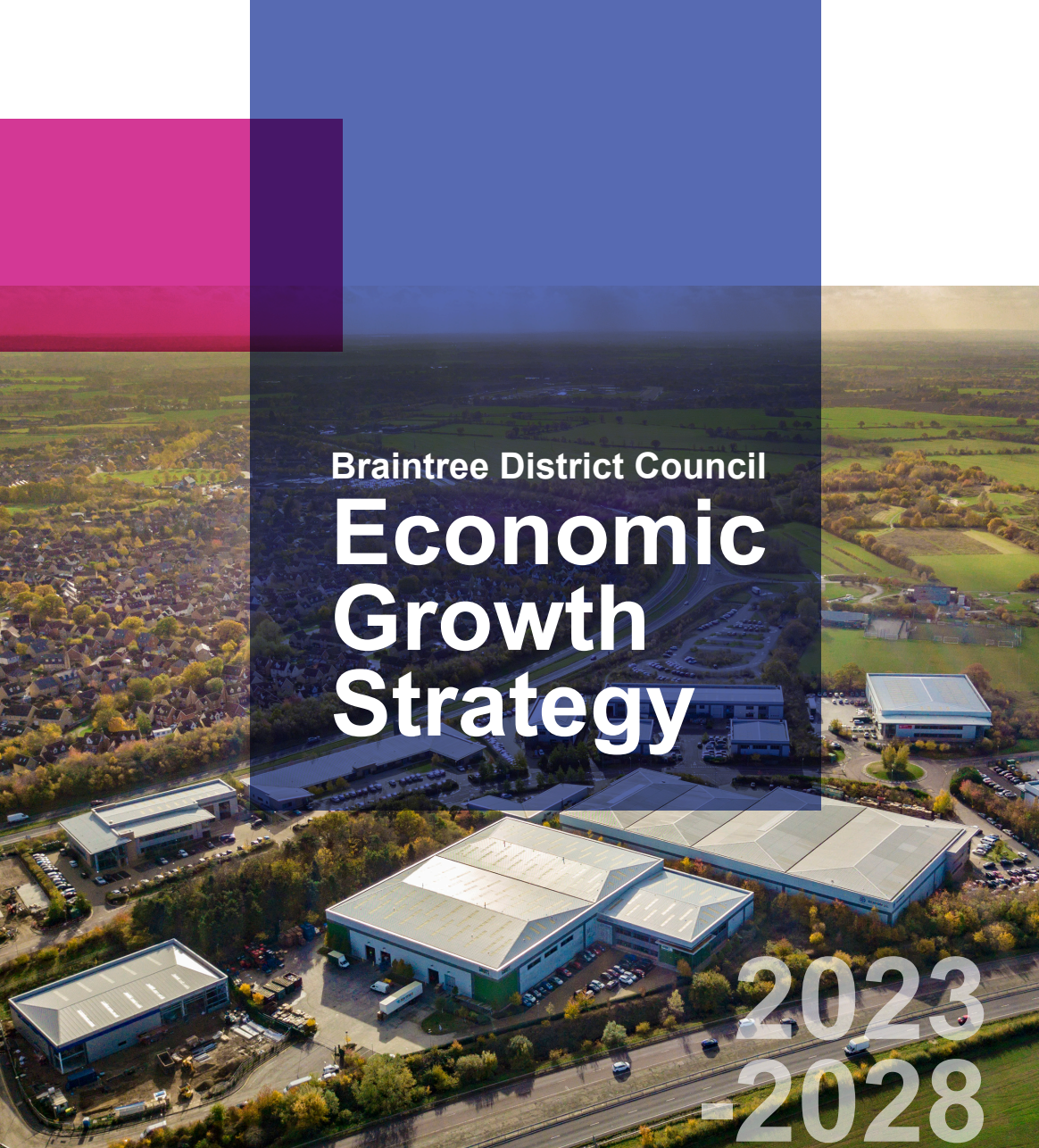
- Witham Chamber of Commerce
- Braintree Town Partnership
- Witham Industrial Watch

Monitoring

This strategy will be reported on an annual basis, with annual plans being derived to deliver the core priorities across the next 5 years. This will include short term projects which can be delivered quickly but also work towards longer structural changes in our economy and workforce which will take place over many years including beyond the lifetime of this plan.



Bull Inn, Halstead



Braintree District Council

Economic Growth Strategy

2023
-2028

Action Plan April 2023 – March 2024

Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan – Year 1

The vision of the Economic Growth Strategy is:
“To lead in sustainability, inclusivity, and competitiveness for a resilient local economy”

This action plan sets out how each area of focus within the core priorities within the Economic Growth Strategy will be achieved.

The Action Plan will be a live document and will be revised annually, to ensure a resilient and robust approach to the ever-changing economy as it develops, to ensure targets are met, risks are mitigated and as and when funding becomes available.

1 Infrastructure and Connectivity

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with partners to reduce rural connectivity issues					
1.	Work with Digital Essex and other relevant partners to promote grant funding schemes for rural digital connectivity opportunities and promote awareness of social tariffs/National Databank to residents	Raised awareness of digital connectivity opportunities in rural areas of Braintree District.	1 - 2 years	N/A	ED
2.	Work with elected Members to lobby for additional support to deliver rural digital connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of digital connectivity • Improved opportunities for residents and businesses in rural areas of Braintree District 	1 - 2 years	N/A	ED

2 Infrastructure and Connectivity

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support rural businesses to enhance their local communities					
1.	Delivery of a rural business grant scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Growth 	2 years	£589,191 Rural Prosperity Fund	ED
2.	Support rural entrepreneurship through the Young Entrepreneurs Programme, to help create jobs and services in the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New business start-ups Job creation 	1 - 2 years	N/A	ED
3.	Work with the Community Team to introduce businesses to community support schemes to improve resident wellbeing and tackle loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved resident health and wellbeing Increased volunteering Reduced loneliness 	1 - 5 years	N/A	CM/ED

3 Infrastructure and Connectivity

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with partners to secure funding for public transport, walking, and cycling connectivity improvements					
1.	Promote the Braintree District Cycling Strategy and progress the implementation plan	Raised profile of cycling and walking in the Braintree District	5 years	BDC are funding the Witham LCWIP project to the value of £25k	ED
2.	Work with partners to strategically promote the infrastructure priorities of the district, including Transport East	Improved strategic opportunities through partnership working	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED
3.	Partner with ECC on funding opportunities to enhance the active and sustainable travel network including supporting ECC with road infrastructure projects where applicable	Increased opportunities for sustainable travel within Braintree District	1 year	N/A	ED

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Allocate land to support new employment growth					
1.	Work in partnership with other teams to ensure appropriate commercial land is allocated and developed in the district	Increased appropriate commercial developments for grow-on space	1-5 years	N/A	ED

4 Infrastructure and Connectivity

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Raise the profile of the district and its business community					
1.	Continue to develop and promote the new place-based brand for the District which will be used to promote our rich economic opportunities to investors via 'LOCATE Braintree District' website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved marketing Increased inward investment Job creation 	2 years	N/A	ED, MC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Provide effective grow-on premise space					
1.	Work with the Asset Management Team and Strategic Investment Team to promote the availability of Council owned commercial space including tenancy and purchase opportunities at Horizon 120 and to explore further development site opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased tenancy take up Increase in new business start-ups Job creation 	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED

1 Resilient Business Support

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with partners to reduce rural connectivity issues					
1.	Continue to work with business support organisations, including the NEEB, to increase levels of targeted business support in order to generate more new business start-ups and business success rates to increase growth in the key sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New business start ups • Jobs created • Jobs safeguarded • Improved productivity • Increased skill development • Increased apprenticeships • Increased grants accessed 	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED
2.	Develop and deliver a programme of business support centred at The Plaza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased partnerships • Increased business collaborations • Improved offer of business support • Increased businesses taking up offers of support • Economic growth 	1 - 2 years	SPF Year 2 and 3 funding £97,806	ED
3.	Work in partnership with the NEEB to deliver an SPF funded programme of support focusing on: Finance – 121 financial and debt management support and advice, alongside signposting to other financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of businesses receiving financial support other than grants. • Number of businesses receiving non-financial support • Number of jobs created • Number of jobs safeguarded • Number of new businesses created • Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes • Number of businesses with improved productivity • Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm 	2 years	£138,269.31 from SPF	ED

2 Resilient Business Support

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Engage with businesses on relevant issues, lobbying government to achieve change					
1.	Conduct a business needs survey to ascertain local priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed service delivery Monitoring of satisfaction levels Increased business support take up 	1 - 2 years	£4,000 pa via the business engagement and support budget	ED
1.	Deliver a series of social media polls to obtain feedback on local issues impacting economic growth, to be shared with elected Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business engagement Informed service delivery 	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED/MC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support businesses to launch new products/services, outperform competitors, and boost productivity					
1.	Work with Higher Education Institutions to encourage innovation within businesses to help them grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased KTPs Increased R&D activity 	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED

3 Resilient Business Support

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Create a sustainable environment for new business start-ups					
1.	Review and update website content for advice and guidance for new business start ups	Improved business engagement	1 year	N/A	ED

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support key sector development including digital and creative sectors					
1.	Conduct a business tour of digital and creative businesses to promote the services of the ED team and to ascertain a tailored support approach and deliver a digital and creative sector business support event. Deliver a digital and creative sector business support event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business engagement Increased take up of business support schemes Improved support for high growth sectors Job creation 	1 year	N/A	ED

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the growth of the rural economy					
1.	Delivery of a rural business grant scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic Growth Increased grant take-up 	2 years	£589,191 Rural Prosperity Fund	ED

4 Resilient Business Support

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Nurture the Cell and Gene Therapy cluster					
1.	Explore opportunities with schools to promote the work of the Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy Centre to explore growth within the sector	Increased skills development in the life Sciences, encouraging cluster growth and sector development	1 year	N/A	ED/EC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the growth of the rural economy					
1.	Establish a 'Nearest Neighbour' business contact scheme to promote requested services/suppliers within a 30-mile proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased circular economy Access to new markets Reduced CO2 levels through transportation 	1 year	N/A	ED

1 Inclusive People and Skills

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with partners to deliver a programme of skills development					
1.	Work in partnership with Essex County Council and Multiply Partners to support the delivery of the Multiply programme; 'Multiply' is a new initiative that will help residents gain a qualification, get into employment, or generally build their confidence in using numeracy at work or in their everyday life.	Increased numeracy levels across the district, helping residents' budget at home, work and enable residents to seek higher skilled roles	2 years	Multiply – Essex County Council	EC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Encourage take up of degree level or higher qualifications					
1.	Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/ workshops to introduce students to new industry's & sectors course pathways	1 x industry workshop per the identified key sectors in the district i.e., advanced manufacturing, logistics & construction	1 year	N/A	EC
2.	Work in partnerships with schools & partners to provide parent information, guidance, and advice event for higher education/degree & T Levels	1 x event a year – 50 parents in attendance at a minimum. Increased knowledge across higher qualifications and increased confidence in vocational qualifications	1 year	Skills & Employment ED	EC
3.	Facilitate a series of school/higher education visits to promote degree level/higher qualification opportunities	1 x per year across 8 secondary schools to Year 9 & above	1 year	N/A	EC
4.	Analyse the district skills gap and create a brief to present to Colchester Institute, ACL and local skills providers for course/qualification need intelligence	Increased provision of training and courses to match the need of the district	1 year	N/A	EC

2 Inclusive People and Skills

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support residents to access employment locally					
1.	Deliver a Job's fair	1 x Job fair delivered	1 year	Skills & Employment budget	EC

3 Inclusive People and Skills

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Develop local workforce in green and enhanced digital skills					
1.	Deliver a green business showcase	1 x showcase to increase awareness in green business and encourage other businesses	2 years	Skills & Employment ED	EC
2.	Deliver enhanced digital skills showcase	1 x showcase to increase awareness of digital skills in business and encourage other businesses	2 years	Skills & Employment ED	EC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with businesses to offer higher skilled job opportunities					
1.	Work in partnership with partners and schools to deliver careers fair for students to meet local employers	1 x career fair	1 - 2 years	CHIP Fund	EC
2.	Work in partnership with skills providers and career support services to create career pathway materials for schools	5 x career pathway poster – quarterly provided based on key industries within the district On going research and insights provided to schools on sector growth and key required skills	1 - 2 years	Skills & Employment ED	EC

4 Inclusive People and Skills

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy centre to promote skills within the life sciences sector					
1.	Work in partnership with the CCGT & SELEP to develop a programme of skills development within the life sciences sector	Increased skills development in the life Sciences, encouraging cluster growth and sector development	1-3 years	N/A	EC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the digital skills sector development					
1.	Undertake a survey of businesses within the digital skills sector to ascertain barriers to employment	Knowledge of key barriers, followed up with action plan to address shortages working with key partners such as the Colchester Institute etc	1-2 years	N/A	EC

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Work with social housing providers/home builders to mitigate the impacts of housing need					
1.	Work with partners to establish a memorandum of understanding in shared objectives and to support tenants/residents to develop access to work skills	Increased support to residents/tenants who may require development in work skills, understanding of business behaviours, working with a range of skills providers	1-2 years	N/A	EC

1 Sustainable Green Economy

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the local carbon and environmental goods/services sector					
1.	Work with Essex County Council and other service providers to identify opportunities to develop low carbon skills, education, training and employment opportunities and support ECC Centre of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased employability Improved productivity Increased awareness of climate change issues 	1 - 5 years	N/A	EC
2.	Collaborate with the voluntary sector and business sector across Essex to share learning, data, best practice and, to look at joint initiatives to tackle climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge sharing increased grant funding Reduction in carbon impact 	1 - 5 years	N/A	EG

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Promote waste to energy activity in waste management sectors					
1.	Deliver a marketing campaign to promote waste to energy activity to the waste management sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved business engagement Increased number of businesses exploring waste to energy activity 	1 - 5 years	N/A	WM

2 Sustainable Green Economy

	Action	Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Encourage sustainability practices across all businesses					
1.	Improve engagement and communication with businesses within the District to improve their participation in recycling and waste minimisation, including working with manufacturers to support the reduction of packaging and make products more re-usable and recyclable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business engagement Reduction in waste Increased percentage of waste recycled 	1 - 5 years	N/A	MC
2.	Provide support to businesses across the District on the development and implementation of green travel plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased businesses implementing a green travel plan Reduction in CO2 emissions 	1 - 5 years	N/A	SS
3.	Introduce a Climate Change/Green Environmental Accreditation Scheme or Business Award scheme to recognise and showcase initiatives that can be adopted as best practice and to encourage businesses to become carbon neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased awareness of opportunities to become carbon neutral Increased sharing and recognition of best practice across businesses 	1 - 5 years	N/A	SS

3 Sustainable Green Economy

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Promote local supply chains for businesses to trade in a circular economy					
1.	Establish a 'Nearest Neighbour' business contact scheme to promote requested services/suppliers within a 30-mile proximity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased circular economy Access to new markets Reduced CO2 levels through transportation 	1 year	N/A	ED

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Promote waste to energy activity in waste management sectors					
1.	Work with partners to support the construction sector and its supply chain, championing modern design and construction methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved skills Increased retrofitting Increased business support 	1 - 5 years	N/A	ED

Action		Outcome	Timescale	Funding	Responsible Team
Support the land-based sectors to adhere to the Agriculture Act 2020					
1.	Work with landowners, EDFRA and ECC to encourage sustainable land stewardship practices on land across the district, including rewilding and tree planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved Biodiversity of farmland Improved carbon capture and carbon storage of farmland Improved water quality Reduced carbon use through fewer artificial inputs 	1 - 5 years	N/A	SS

Report Title: North Essex Economic Board business support SPF programmes	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/72
Report Presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth	
Enquiries to: Penny Calder, Programme Manager – North Essex Economic Board penny.calder@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for Braintree District Council (the Council) to provide funding to the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) to provide business support to businesses and residents in North Essex and sets out the procurement to be undertaken to award the NEEB SPF Business Support Contracts.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that the Council's contribution to the programme is £73,000 funded from Braintree's SPF funding, and that this is provided to the NEEB partnership to provide business support to the business community in north Essex.
- 2.3 To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Economic Growth, to award the two-year NEEB SPF business support contract at the conclusion of a successful Procurement, provided it is within the approved budget and funding has been secured from all North Essex partners.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council is a member of the NEEB, an informal economic partnership that brings together the Council, Maldon District Council, Uttlesford District Council and Tendring District Council, Colchester City Council, Chelmsford City Council and Essex County Council to support businesses and economy across the North Essex economic corridor.
- 3.2 NEEB has worked together previously to commission support, NEEB previously pooled money from its Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocated from central government to spend together on supporting businesses through the covid 19 pandemic (as sanctioned within the associated government guidance on ARG spending). As part of a wider programme funded by ARG to support the North Essex economy, Tendring DC has procured a programme of Energising Essex events on behalf of NEEB. Maldon DC have procured a Low Carbon programme for business support and Essex County Council have procured five business support

programmes for NEEB. These programmes are now nearing their competition dates – March 2023.

- 3.3 The government's announcement of Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) have allowed the North Essex authorities to continue to work together through NEEB to ensure opportunities are maximised for businesses and residents. Each authority, with the exception of Uttlesford have seen the advantages of working together on supporting businesses and have agreed to contribute funds from their SPF to a central NEEB pot.
- 3.4 As set out above, each NEEB partner has undertaken a procurement on behalf of NEEB, in order to assist with sharing resources across the partners. It is appropriate, therefore, that the Council takes its turn on this occasion, and will therefore be acting as the accountable body for this procurement on behalf of NEEB.
- 3.5 The budget for business support with SPF for 2023/4 is 87% less than ARG funded support 2022/23 and in 2024/5 is 73% less. NEEB will therefore need to maximise the SPF business support budget to enable full support across the districts who have contributed funds.
- 3.6 NEEB is supported by a dedicated Programme Manager who is based at the Council with the role funded by NEEB. The Programme Manager will be the project manager of this contract.
- 3.7 Due to the breakdown of the funding and the timing, it will not be possible to collaborate this financial year (2022/23). NEEB will be looking forward to 2023/4 and 2024/5 of Shared Prosperity funding for joint working (table 1).

SPF allocations		Year 2 (NEEB contribution)	Year 3 (NEEB contribution)
NEEB Partnership	Total (UKSPF core)	23-24 (UKSPF core)	24-25 (UKSPF core)
Braintree	£1,036,482.59	£21,000.00	£52,000.00
Chelmsford	£1,173,283.00	£25,000.00	£60,000.00
Colchester	£1,362,168.13	£65,000.00	£65,000.00
Maldon	£1,000,000.00	£10,269.31	£65,835.36
Tendring	£1,188,232.07	£17,000.00	£45,000.00
Uttlesford	£1,000,000.00	£0.00	£0.00
TOTAL	£6,760,165.79	£138,269.31	£287,835.36

- 3.8 Each authority was allocated different amounts of SPF by Government, with some receiving the majority in year 1, whilst others are receiving the majority in year 2. The financial contributions set out in table 1 from Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Maldon represent 10% of their yearly SPF allocation in each year. Tendring have allocated 6% of their yearly allocation and Uttlesford none. In recognition of this the deliverables from the contract have been proportioned to account for the % contribution of each district.

- 3.9 A NEEB business support working group has been set up with officers from each district who have contributed to identify common areas of interventions and support.
- 3.10 The NEEB SPF business support programmes marketing/communications will be supported by the dedicated NEEB Comms Lead based at Tendring District Council who has been allocated a separate budget to spend on promoting the programmes.
- 3.11 NEEB used an internal review of current business support programmes, district business surveys, engagement with businesses and partner organisations to identify the needs of business across North Essex.
- 3.12 From this data analysis, NEEB has identified three main themes to focus on for year 2 & 3 of SPF funding cycles: - Finance, general support and digital skills.
- 3.13 General business support will be designed to help support businesses safeguard themselves. The support will allow businesses to plan, manage and access support that meets their needs, in order to safeguard against any future disruption and to enable businesses to maximise opportunities to ensure that they not only survive but thrive.
- 3.14 Digital skills are vital to any business surviving in a digital world, with the increasing need for businesses to switch to online platforms as additional sales channels. The digital skills support will be designed to enable businesses to grow digitally allowing for innovation and growth.
- 3.15 Finance support will consist of providing workshops, 1-2-1 financial management support and advice to businesses, together with signposting to other financial support programme to create and safeguard jobs across North Essex.
- 3.16 Commissioning this support will enable over 700 businesses in North Essex to access financial and non-financial support, as well creating 84 jobs and 48 businesses as well as safeguarding 72 businesses over two years. A minimum of 100 Braintree businesses will be supported with 12 jobs created. The business support programmes will be offered fully funded to businesses and residents.
- 3.17 The aim of NEEB's business support is to reach as wide an audience as possible, targeting business sectors impacted as a result of the current economic climate and cost of living crisis will allow whilst ensuring a proportional approach across the NEEB geography.
- 3.18 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:

- A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities;
- A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services;
- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

3.19 The aim of the NEEB business support programmes is to ensure high quality and effective delivery of business support programmes, aligned to respond directly to the current cost of living crisis and economic pressures.

4. Options

4.1 The preferred option is for the Council to procure the NEEB SPF business support programme via delegated approval once approved. The funds used by the Council to procure are part of the shared prosperity fund specifically allocated to the NEEB authorities by the government.

4.2 If the Council does not go ahead with the procurement businesses and residents across North Essex will lose the opportunity to be supported with support programmes, aligned to respond directly to the current cost of living crisis and economic pressures. Business and jobs will not be safeguarded in North Essex.

5. Next Steps

5.1 If this report is approved, the Council will continue with the procurement process for a Contractor to provide the business support listed in this report and will award a contract if a successful bid within budget and to the required quality is received. The contract start date is currently planned for 27 April 2023 when support will be launched for businesses as soon as practical afterwards.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Funding will be provided via the NEEB agreement from already allocated parts of the Shared Prosperity Fund. The Councils financial contribution to the programme is £72,000.00, and the rest of the funds (£354,104.67) will be provided by the remaining NEEB partnership. NEEB members will be invoiced for their financial contributions in April 2023 by the Council, and once all funds have been received the procurement will be completed.

6.2 The Council will be the procuring authority for the business support programme and as such will be responsible for the tender and contract to ensure that they deliver on the agreed KPIs. A signed back-to-back funding agreement will be in place with NEEB authorities to ensure the Council is protected from financial risk.

6.3 Shared Prosperity Funding is delivered by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and if for any reason DLUHC decided

not to continue SPF, there is a clause within the contract terms and conditions that protect the Council from continuing with the second year of the contract.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 In commencing this procurement the Council will have regard to its own procurement procedure rules and all relevant legislation.
- 7.2 As the Accountable Body for this procurement, the Council will award and enter into a contract with the successful bidder, on behalf of the North Essex Authorities. A further back-to-back agreement will be in place with each of the North Essex authorities, ensuring that all financial contributions are contractual, providing the Council with the necessary safeguards around the contract value.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 There are no other implications arising out of this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

10. Appendices

- 10.1 None

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 None

Report Title: Community Development Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Review into Markets and Associated Events Within the Braintree District 2022/23	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/10
Report Presented by: Councillor Mrs D Garrod, Chairman of the Community Development Scrutiny Committee	
Enquiries to: Cherie Root, Corporate Director Operational. Cherie.root@braintree.gov.uk	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The topic 'Markets and Associated Events within the Braintree District' was submitted as a means of analysing how markets have been regulated and managed by the Council over the last five-year period and in order to help unify the Council's approach in this respect.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations from the Community Development Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 9 and is asked to provide a formal response to those recommendations at the next available meeting of Cabinet.

3. NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

- 3.1 Traditional markets have played a significant role in the UK's towns and cities for centuries. Local authorities are still the main provider of markets. They not only play a vital economic role, but also contribute in a number of positive ways to a wide range of other policy areas including healthy eating, culture, tourism, helping families on low incomes and new-start opportunities and regeneration.
- 3.2 The 2021/22 National Markets Survey undertaken by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) indicates that the industry faces major challenges in the years ahead. The number of traders in the UK was around 46,000 in 2009, and the occupancy figures in 2022 are approximately 17,000. The survey has also revealed that only 8% of traders are aged under 40, which would suggest that markets may have a problem in terms of occupancy in the coming years, as older and more experienced traders retire from the trade.
- 3.3 From a community development perspective, this Scrutiny Review sought to establish the Council's approach to holding markets and associated events

across the District, and whether these are cost effective for the Council and meeting the needs of the communities.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

4.1 Key questions for the Scrutiny Review were agreed:-

1. How are markets/events regulated and arranged by the Council, especially over the last five year period? Look at how many applications from traders/retailers have been received and/or refused over the last five years?
2. How does the Council support and advertise its markets/events? What support market traders were offered during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. promotional advertising, Government grants, etc.), and what was the uptake?
3. What roles do different Council teams have in terms of arranging organising/managing markets and associated events, and how effective is collaboration across these teams? (e.g. regular vs. 'speciality' markets).
4. What partners and/or outside bodies does the Council work with in order to help organise, manage and advertise markets and associated events? (e.g. National Association of British Market Authorities).
5. What are the impacts of regular vs. 'speciality' markets and associated events on local areas and communities? (e.g. public transportation to and from surrounding villages on market days, safe cycle parking at or near market sites, etc.)

5. FIRST EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION (10TH AUGUST 2022)

- 5.1 Members received a presentation and information from Braintree District Council's Officers Mr. Steve Wilson; Operations Manager and Mr. Philip Taylor; Markets Superintendent. Members heard how markets/events are regulated and which areas of the Council participated. These included Planning (Economic Development), Chief Executive's (Communications and Marketing), Environmental Health (Licensing), Operations (Street Scene and Waste Management). Essex County Council (Trading Standards) are also involved.
- 5.2 The Committee heard about the operations primary functions; monitoring compliance with the Market Terms and Conditions, including Health and Safety, food safety, the validating and vetting process for new stall holders including monitoring of mandatory public liability insurance which must be a minimum of £5m cover. Trading Standards would attend the market on an occasional basis. The committee felt the systems and procedures are comprehensive.
- 5.3 The Committee also enquired about the number of applications from traders/retailers which had been received. Applications were considerably higher for the specialty street markets. The committee was pleased to hear

that officers kept a list of reserve traders for occasions when replacements were required at short notice.

- 5.4 The table below demonstrates the applications received for the speciality street markets:

Year	Applications from Traders	Reserve Traders	Unconfirmed Applicants	Applicants self-withdrawn or cancelled
2022 (to Oct)	82	9	13	4
2021	79		21	
2020	There were no street markets			
2019	98			16
2018	No records identified			
2017	No records identified			

- 5.5 The traditional Braintree markets averaged 18 traders, with the occasional casual trader, whereas the speciality markets attracted much larger numbers of traders, often three times as many as the traditional weekly markets. Braintree holds a market every Wednesday and Saturday and Witham holds one on Saturdays. These markets were looked at for the purposes of the Scrutiny Review. The Wednesday markets are chartered, which means that legally the market must be held irrespective of the number of traders and increases the cost for traders. Another market in Witham was available as a very old charter, which was reinvigorated by a group set up in Witham. Halstead's charter is held by the Lord of the Manor and is operated by a private organisation. (Privately organised markets did not form part of the Scrutiny Review).

- 5.6 Market pitch fees were discussed and it was felt that these are comparable with other local towns. Other market towns are occasionally visited and examined elsewhere. There is an option of hiring equipment such as 'pop-up' stalls from the Council which is often taken up for trial purposes by new traders. Stall holders choose which methods of payment are used. However, more are offering cashless payment options.

- 5.7 A virtual market was introduced by the Council in March 2020 and was well received during the Covid-19 pandemic and it was agreed that the communications and marketing team provided excellent advertising and promotional information and supported the market as much as possible during this difficult time. However, the figures indicate that the market is now running at a loss, in part because a number of businesses ceased with their businesses due to the impact of the pandemic. Legislation required that only food businesses could trade and many were classed as non-essential retail.

5.8 Members viewed the market income trend analysis:

Year	Income	Expenditure	Net Surplus / Deficit
2013/14	£123k	£51k	£72k
2014/15	£107k	£50k	£57k
2015/16	£90k	£49k	£41k
2016/17	£85k	£49k	£36k
2017/18	£68k	£52k	£16k
2018/19	£68k	£44k	£24k
2019/20	£56k	£55k	£1k
2020/21	£26k	£45k	£19k
2021/22	£35k	£51k	£16k

- 5.9 It is recognised that recovery from the pandemic has been slow (physical markets started again in July 2021), online shopping is an attractive option, there has been increased competition from supermarkets and discount retailers, there is competition from other market towns and of course, poor weather is a disadvantage for an outdoor market. However, due to the Cost of Living Crisis from mid 2022 to date, markets are appearing to be quite busy again.
- 5.10 The opportunities for markets was also discussed and the newer monthly specialty markets have been well attended with younger traders bringing more creative and innovative products, people dining and socialising amid the buzz of the market atmosphere. The new regeneration of the town and pedestrianisation appears to have increased footfall and the feedback is very positive.
- 5.11 Potential farmers markets were raised by the committee to add diversity and variety to the district's markets and it was pleasing to hear that the Council is giving consideration towards appointing new farmer markets. However, the monthly street markets are well received and it is noted that independent organisations hold small farmers markets in many of the district's villages.
- 5.12 The meeting and presentation may be viewed via the Council's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPlpabDW56k>

6. SECOND EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION (31ST AUGUST 2022)

- 6.1 Members received a joint presentation from Braintree District Council's officers, Emma Goodings; Head of Planning and Economic Growth, and Louise Raine; Economic Development Support Officer. Mr Phil Taylor; Markets Superintendent was also in attendance. The committee also heard from Mx Olivia Washington; market trader ('Olivia's Curiosities/Olivia's Oddities') and regional finalist in the National Market Traders Federation Young Traders Market competition 2022. Mx Washington spoke about their experiences as a trader.
- 6.2 The origin of the monthly street market concept first emerged in response to the need to rejuvenate the district's town centres and attract a larger footfall. The planning process behind events such as the Christmas Light Switch-On

was explained, together with the budget. Overall, these events have been well attended. It is felt that customers are looking for a more 'unique experience' which includes consumption of food and drink with friends. One of the fundamental aims of the street markets concept was to engender a sense of community back into the Braintree town centre and the wider district, and it was felt that the street markets had been successful in this regard. They also meet key points within the Council's Corporate Plan. To date the Council has had approximately 400+ unique businesses who have applied to trade since 2017.

- 6.3 The support that the Council offered traders together with Government support during the pandemic was discussed in more depth and it was felt that this was comprehensive in every respect.
- 6.4 Questions were asked around the use of footfall measurement. Footfall counters via a third party had been used in the past but was felt to be too costly and unreliable for a number of reasons. This is awaiting new technology which may be available in the near future. One of the Council's business tenants is currently developing a piece of software that measures footfall and it is possible that the Council could work with them to trial this technology.
- 6.5 Members heard from Mx Washington. They provided information about their business, how they found the Braintree and Witham markets and also one in Suffolk which they also attend. Mx Washington entered the National Market Traders Federation Young Traders competition and members were advised about the process. Mx Washington won the 'Highly Commended General Retail Category – later advertised on the National Market Traders Federation website.
- 6.6 The meeting and presentations may be viewed via the Council's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPIpabDW56k>

7. THIRD EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION (19TH OCTOBER 2022)

- 7.1 Members received a presentation from Natalie Sadler; Marketing and Communications Officer and evidence was heard from Councillor Tom Cunningham; Cabinet Member for Economic Growth.
- 7.2 The Marketing and Communications Officer detailed the process behind the promotion of both the traditional and street markets, she explained the extensive marketing that had been taking place on social media, outdoor advertising, newsletters etc. Traders participated by sharing posts and stories, and tagging information on social media platforms. Regular press coverage and partner support is also evident. This work has been exceptional.
- 7.3 The Committee noted the huge resource implications associated with the promotion and organisation of the Street Markets and other events in the town centres and the resource implications that had on various teams within the organisation. In this respect, Members would draw attention to 'Other Considerations' shown below.

- 7.4 A question was raised about the lack of seating in the High Street and town centre. Councillor Cunningham explained that it was intended that this space be kept open and versatile in order to help facilitate future events. Other factors, such as the need for there to be provision for emergency vehicles and retail deliveries had to be considered within the Council's event planning process. It was added that many of the food establishments now included outdoor seating. In this respect, Members would draw attention to Recommendation 10 shown below.
- 7.5 A question was raised about the deterioration of transport facilities between Braintree Shopping Village and the town centre. Councillor Cunningham explained that there was a historic Section 106 agreement for a transport service between Braintree town centre and Braintree Village (previously Freeport Designer Village). The Section 106 agreement had paused following the conversion of Freeport to Braintree Village in 2019. Members were advised that discussions were underway. In this respect, Members would draw attention to Recommendation 5.
- 7.6 The meeting and presentation may be viewed via the Council's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tG5JdKFZl6g>

8. CONCLUSION OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 8.1 Having reviewed all the evidence within this Scrutiny Review the Committee has identified that:
- The Council was reactive, proactive and effective in supporting traders during and following the pandemic by:
 - Introducing a virtual market via the Council's social media feeds to provide an alternative platform for traders to interact with customers
 - Supporting the 'shop local' and 'small business Saturday' campaigns
 - Traders were also offered free listings on the 'Visit Braintree District' website, as well as digital assets that they could utilise themselves
 - Some traders also engaged with the 'Click It Local' online sales and delivery platform, which was funded by the Council which provided traders with an alternative means of reaching customers and selling their products
 - Following the pandemic the Council had utilised the Government's "Welcome Back" funding scheme to fund a food and drinks market in February 2022. This received positive feedback but required a huge amount of additional resources
 - Consideration had been given to how best to encourage young traders to participate within the area. Unfortunately, there was not enough interest generated from the 18–30-year-old age bracket to make the suggested Young Traders Market a reality, so younger traders were accommodated within the regular markets and speciality street events
 - Following the pandemic markets were re-started in July 2021. Unfortunately, some of the historic market traders had ceased with their businesses due to the impacts of the pandemic and it had taken a prolonged period to rejuvenate the markets and encourage residents back into the town centres. The Committee is concerned that if the Council is not proactive in reinvigorating

the markets then the resource could be lost. The Council has a role to play to attract people and maintain the service that we provide and generate finance for the authority.

- Market income had more than halved from during the Covid-19 pandemic, expenditure had only dropped by approximately 20% and this had resulted in a £19k deficit in 2020/21. Figures for 2021/22 showed an improvement, but expenditure was high, resulting in a £16k deficit.
- Historically the market income was significantly higher, expenditure was usually approximately 50% of the income, resulting in a healthy surplus year on year.
- The speciality street markets:
 - Were well attended and attracted a larger, more diverse audience who were enthusiastic with the wider range of traders
 - Had been successful in delivering their original purpose, to restore a sense of community in the town centre and wider district
 - Attracted more visitors into the town centre and helped to increase the rate of trade within local businesses, which had been particularly important following the pandemic
 - Required a huge amount of resource to organise and run
- The pedestrianisation of the town centre had significantly positively impacted interest in and footfall at the markets.
- The Council was giving consideration to the introduction of farmers markets to add diversity and variety to the district's markets.
- The Head of Planning and Economic Growth and the Development Support Officer- Economic Growth worked collaboratively with the Market Inspector and the Operations Manager to effectively arrange, organise and manage the markets. They also engaged with the George Yard Shopping Centre in Braintree, who provided additional space for traders when necessary and the St John's Ambulance who provided a service for the larger scale events such as the Christmas Lights Switch-On.
- The markets were well regulated and organised:
 - The application process for market traders was detailed and efficient and enabled Officers to identify the trader's requirements. It was unusual for an application to be refused, and would normally be a result of a duplication of traders, although this was carefully managed when mapping the locations of traders stalls
 - Traders were provided with information packs and 'market maps' in advance of trading days which provided useful information such as arrival times, parking, location in the town centre and a sequencing plan for arrival
 - Traders were encouraged to pre-pay for their pitches, rather than pay on the day

- Feedback was sought from traders following each event as to their experiences on the day, any issues that had arisen and what could be improved going forward
 - Officers from the Economic Development Team had been proactive in attracting new traders by attending other neighbouring market events and speaking to traders about the possibility of trading within the Braintree District. There were a number of pop-up stalls available to hire and trial to support new traders, and these were advertised through the Council's social media channels
 - Footfall counters had previously been employed at a cost of £10k per annum. The contract ended during the pandemic and was not continued due to cost and the inaccuracy of the service provision. One of the Council's business tenants was currently developing a piece of software that measured footfall, and it was hoped that the Council could work with them in the future to trial this technology
 - Traders were "not allowed" to park their vehicles on the markets unless "essential" for their market stall. There were ongoing discussions with individual traders as to the appropriateness of different vehicles around this, but it was underlined that there was plenty of nearby parking available across the town centre
- The markets were effectively and adequately advertised, although a number of potentially useful additional marketing suggestions had been identified:
 - There was a variety of physical branding used in the town centres such as a-boards that the Council had been able to purchase through Government funding to effectively advertise the markets
 - The specialist street markets had separate branding from that of the regular markets which was used on the Council's website and social media channels, and was printed on to posters for use on local noticeboards
 - Bloggers and Vloggers had attended past events such as the Christmas Lights Switch-On, which enabled those events to be promoted more widely via social media and YouTube
 - It was suggested that a written communication could be sent to some of the more rural businesses in the District to see if they would be interested in trading at the Braintree markets

9. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 9.1 With regards to the second Term of Reference; *"Recommend any further assistance that the Council could deliver during the current financial year in order to support the District's residents further."*
- 9.2 Following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review, the Committee has the following recommendations:-

Recommendation 1

The market industry is a significant employer at a local level. It is suggested that Braintree District Council run a marketing campaign in an attempt to encourage and recruit traders and actively promote the market industry at their annual Job and Skills Fair. It is suggested that the Council consult with

the National Association of British Market Authorities for information and/or potential participation in this respect.

Recommendation 2

In order to encourage new traders, it is suggested that the council display links on the Council's website to the organisations associated with markets such as the National Market Traders Federation, the National Association of British Market Authorities and the Farm Retail Association.

Evidence:- The National Market Traders Federation offers a wealth of benefits to their members, including public, product and employer's liability protection up to £10 million, the cover for costs relating to HMRC enquiries; including PAYE and VAT disputes, start-up and general business advice and advertising. Braintree District Council do not currently hold membership to the National Market Traders Federation.

Recommendation 3

Whilst footfall measurement has occurred in the past, it is suggested that the Council considers other methods of footfall measurement if it becomes available at a reasonable cost. The Council has a business tenant who is currently developing a piece of software for this purpose and the committee would encourage participation in a trial, should it come to fruition. The Council may also wish to explore the company Springboard; a UK based MRI software company and provider of footfall counting and artificial intelligence (AI)-powered analytics to government bodies.

Evidence: The Institute of Place Management, who has undertaken research and reviews into markets, says "The ability to attract footfall to a location is a key indicator of vitality, so testing for a market effect, establishing the contribution of individual markets to locations' overall footfall patterns, profiles and performance will demonstrate the contribution of markets to a centre's vitality and longer-term economic viability".

Recommendation 4

Whilst the virtual market was successful during the pandemic 2020, there is still reference to this on the Market Trader Application Form on the Council's website. It is recommended that all reference to the virtual market is now removed as it has ceased to be an available option.

Recommendation 5

There has been a lack of transport for customers to commute to and from Braintree Shopping Village since 2019. It is suggested that this is sought to be resolved at the earliest opportunity, particularly on market days, to benefit customers exploring both areas.

Evidence:- Members of the group felt that the public valued the free bus link between the town centre and Braintree Village and wished to see it reintroduced.

(NB: Since writing this report Essex County Council, jointly with Braintree District Council has launched the proposed Braintree Future Transport Strategy consultation; ending 09/01/2023 which focusses on Braintree town,

looking at how people travel, the transport challenges and opportunities in the town, and sets out a vision and objectives to help guide future developments. The Committee hopes that the overall travel between the town and shopping village is considered).

Recommendation 6

It was suggested that Braintree District Council reach out to smaller businesses and the Committee is pleased to see that officers responded to this with their social media channels. Many businesses may not have considered that a street market, together with associated social media and other media coverage, may benefit their business. It is recommended that businesses, in particular small businesses (smaller makers) throughout the entire Braintree District, which produce a product/goods or services, and which could conceivably be advertised and/or sold in a street market, should be contacted with a view to offering a 'taster' day, to include the potential provision of a pop-up stall. This could perhaps include local charities to add variety.

Evidence:- This type of event is likely to be to the benefit of all parties and customers. It would also facilitate communication between Braintree District Council and more remote businesses who have not previously engaged with the Council.

Recommendation 7

To explore the possibility of Braintree District Council offering Parish Councils social media and communications IT training to support and encourage the sharing of Braintree District Council's content regarding markets and events with their residents through their own social media activities.

Evidence:- Braintree District Council's Communications and Marketing team advised that the distribution and sharing of their content is well received and helpful to encourage participation and customers. This could widen the trader and customer base.

Recommendation 8

It is noted that the National Markets Trader Federation Young Traders Market competition for young entrepreneurs aged 16 – 30 years had a participant from the Braintree District. The East of England regional final was hosted by West Suffolk Council in Bury St. Edmunds in July 2022. It is recommended that Braintree encourage traders to participate and apply to host next year.

Evidence:- This provided positive media coverage and attendance to the market. The latest National Association of British Markets survey suggests that currently only 8% of traders are below the age of 40.

Recommendation 9

That the Council runs a public consultation to find out what is important to customers such as the opening hours, how residents use the markets and how the Council can support more people to become traders, what additional facilities and support traders might need to improve their trading conditions and increase income. To also understand support for sustainability; such as

use of less plastic and increased recycling, what range of products they would hope to see and the views from young people and start-ups.

That the Council then go forward to create a Markets and Events Strategy to provide a vision for the future and strong framework. This would benefit the Council's operations team, traders and customers. It could include a local plan for each market and propose a series of activities to ensure that the markets thrive during the lifetime of the strategy and beyond.

Evidence:- To explore new ideas arising from consultation. To support the delivery of the Council's actions. To determine and monitor the sustainability of the markets.

Recommendation 10

The Council run a regular focussed periodic review to keep in touch with the needs of customers, traders, residents and business and to assess the level of satisfaction and aspired changes and adaptations to this service.

Evidence:- To meet the Council's corporate priorities; Connecting People and Places, Supporting our Communities, Delivering and Innovating, Enhancing our Environment and Promoting Prosperity.

10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 10.1 The Braintree market charters date back to 11th Century and relate to ancient law. For example, the charter for Halstead is held by the Lord of the Manor. It is understood that no one else can hold a market within seven miles of Halstead and it must be sited on the steep hill on the high street (which traders find difficult). This is regulation in its earliest form. Modern markets are much easier to understand.
- 10.2 Traditional markets are part of our heritage and have played a significant role in towns and cities for centuries. However, their central community role is threatened by changes in retail trends, public sector cuts, regulation; which has an associated cost and the lack of transport for people living in rural areas. For the majority, the absence of a regular market is unthinkable, but it is recognised that it is not cost effective for the Council. This is a dilemma, and the Community Development Scrutiny Committee would encourage the Council to continue to find new ways to bolster these traditional and much-loved events.
- 10.3 The Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University conducted a comprehensive review entitled Markets Matter; Reviewing the evidence and detecting the market effect (first published 2015) and identified 25 reasons why markets matter:-

a. Markets matter economically:-

- Markets have a significant turnover and notable multiplier
- Markets positively impact on town centres
- The markets industry is a significant employer nationally and at a local level

- With low barriers to entry, markets are excellent business incubators and support business formation
- Markets contribute financially to local activities
- Markets support inter and intra-generational economic mobility
- Markets provide employment and self-employment opportunities that are open to all
- Markets create multi-use and multi-scale economic environments, promoting commerce and competition
- Markets contribute to making other businesses viable
- Markets increase town centre resilience
- Markets provide access to affordable goods
- Markets attract tourists

b. Markets matter socially:-

- Markets are places of social interaction
- Markets facilitate community cohesion and social inclusion
- Markets are crucial to the distinct identity of a town or area
- Markets animate vacant or underused space
- Markets benefit disadvantaged communities
- Markets contribute to community development

c. Markets matter politically:-

- Markets promote sustainability
- Markets offer food security
- Markets promote community health
- Markets are places of innovation, experiment and education
- Markets engage people in society
- Markets are flexible
- Markets shaped the world we live in and are part of our cultural heritage

10.4 The full report by the IPM can be found at:-

<https://v1.placemanagement.org/media/19883/markets-matter-final.pdf>

10.5 The National Association of British Market Authorities states: *“The NABMA has continued to lobby for industry funding and as a result is pleased that the Shared Prosperity Fund, with some £2.6 billion, is available until March 2025. NABMA has persuaded government to make a specific reference in the guidance to supporting markets, so this is a great change to get some additional funding that can be used for capital and revenue purposes, with its administration by unitary and district councils, but available through partnership arrangements that should include local councils. This means that our members can, for example, bid to procure resources to get new traders, to support Love Your Local Market and other initiatives operated by the National Association of British Markets and the National Market Traders Federation.*

10.6 The NABMA 2022 report can be found at: <https://nabma.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ManifestoMay17.pdf>

11. LINKS TO MINUTES AND AGENDAS OF MEETINGS

- [10 August 2022](#)
- [31 August 2022](#)
- [19 October 2022](#)

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

12.1 Members of the Community Development Scrutiny Committee would like to thank the following individuals for their contribution to the Scrutiny Review:-

- Councillor Tom Cunningham (Cabinet Member for Economic Growth)
- Emma Goodings (Head of Planning and Economic Growth Braintree District Council)
- Louise Raine (Economic Support Officer Braintree District Council)
- Natalie Sadler (Marketing and Communications Officer Braintree District Council)
- Philip Taylor (Markets Superintendent Braintree District Council)
- Olivia Washington (market trader)
- Steve Wilson (Operations Manager Braintree District Council)

Report Title: Performance Management Scrutiny Committee scrutiny review into s.106 expenditure	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/10
Report Presented by: Councillor Mick Radley, Chairman of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee	
Enquiries to: Dominic Collins, Corporate Director Growth dominic.collins@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Performance Management Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) has now received its second evidence gathering session as part of its Scrutiny Review into the subject of 'Section 106 Expenditure at Braintree District Council (the Council).
- 1.2 Throughout this evidence gathering process, officers have presented various aspects of Section 106 which Members of the Committee have had the opportunity to scrutinise. In particular, the Committee is very grateful to Dominic Collins, Corporate Director for Growth and his team who have shared their knowledge and experience to help Members better understand the scope and activities carried out by the Council in respect of Section 106. The Committee are also grateful for the support given by Kerry Harding, Director of Estates - NHS for her contribution to the scrutiny review.
- 1.3 The drive from central government for the Council to meet it's housing targets has resulted in significant housing growth across the District, a trend that will continue in the coming years as the approved Local Plan shapes the future of the District.
- 1.4 This growth in housing has progressively imposed a significant burden upon the infrastructure of our communities as developers have driven forward with several significant new developments. The Town and Country Planning Act, Section 106, provides the opportunity for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to secure obligations from developers to provide some mitigation to offset against the impact upon communities. The Council and other responsible authorities have been resolute and successful in securing many legal agreements with developers that provide both financial contributions and other commitments as part of the planning approval process.
- 1.5 This scrutiny focused upon delivery of the obligations coming from the financial contributions by both the Council and the NHS - contributions to Essex County Council (ECC) and other authorities were outside of the scope of this scrutiny and therefore not covered by this report. Given the limited time available the principle

scrutiny was examining the Council's processes and performance, with less of a focus upon the NHS, much of which is outside the control of the Council.

- 1.6 Evidence provided to the Committee identified that significant monies were being held by the Council that remain unspent, even where the monies had been received many years earlier. As at 31st March 2022, a total of £7.3million (including £1.3million for NHS and other authorities) was held; the Council's contributions covered over 171 different contributions which had been held for an average of 5.2 years. The level of funds being held has progressively increased over previous years with expenditure by the Council being significantly lower than the funds being received by developers. Over the past six years, expenditure by the Council against the Section 106 monies held has only been £2.2million against £7.1million being received from developers. However the committee recognized that in some cases, contributions required the accumulation of several different contributions to enable delivery.
- 1.7 The increase in receipts has mainly been driven by the growth in housing which has risen from 291 to 1,081 per year over a six-year period. In addition to funds already received the Council has been successful in securing many other contributions which are in the pipeline in further agreements yet to be realized which will place further demand upon delivery in the coming years. In 2020/21 alone, a total of £6.9million in contributions were secured which will be received by the Council in the coming years as the relevant developments are built.
- 1.8 This has placed a significant pressure upon already stretched resources within the Council, many of which are shared across a number of other activities and responsibilities. The Committee were informed that there are no current or future plans to increase resources, although one graduate had recently been recruited.
- 1.9 The Committee questioned Officers to try to understand if there were any process improvement actions that could be taken to speed up delivery of projects. The Committee were informed that given a number of statutory steps required, there was no scope to significantly speed up the process.
- 1.10 It is clear from the evidence presented that the pace of delivery has not kept pace with the pace of monies received. Residents being subjected to a rapid housing growth in their communities have an expectation that at minimum any mitigations actions are taken in line with the growth in housing and not several years after completion which is currently the case.
- 1.11 The Committee therefore concludes that actions are urgently required by the Council to speed up the delivery rate of projects that would utilise the S106 monies held by the Council and implement the mitigations without further delay. Action is required to recover the backlog of unspent contributions and put in place the process and resources required to ensure that the Council is able to meet the growing Section 106 receipts in the coming years.
- 1.12 Regarding the NHS, the Committee were informed that the Council was holding £1.2million of contributions at 31st March 2022 on behalf of the NHS. Evidence was given by Kerry Harding that a number of projects were in progress across the District, most of which required the accumulation of several different contributions to

enable delivery (see first evidence gathering for a list of allocated projects in progress).

- 1.13 The Committee challenged what appears to be a low level of contributions requested by the NHS. The Committee was informed that this was a tried and tested formula that was consistent nationally. From three examples, it was found that NHS contributions amounted to just circa 6% of the total contributions which the Committee feels is very low and unlikely to be in line with residents expectations and wishes.

2. Cabinet Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee as set out in Appendix A of this report; and
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to approve its response to those recommendations as set out in Appendix A of this report.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 Key questions for Scrutiny Review:

- What is the current performance in the expenditure of developer financial contributions received by the Council?
- Scope to include contributions received for the Council responsible expenditure and also those received on behalf of the NHS.
- For the council responsible expenditure, what are the current processes, constraints and resources and are they adequate to deliver expenditure performance at an acceptable level? If performance is not at an acceptable level are actions and targets in place to address this?
- For NHS responsible expenditure, does the NHS have clear plans in place to spend the contributions received by the council on their behalf, and if so, what are the actions and timing to deliver increased healthcare capacity resulting from those contributions?
- To avoid duplication of resources and effort, the Scrutiny Committee to consider agreeing to the proposed Members Reference Group (MRG) on the same subject conducting their work and reporting their recommendations to the committee upon it's conclusion. Note: the proposed MRG was not launched so this was no longer relevant to the scrutiny.

4. RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

First Evidence Gathering Session – 25th July 2022 Section 106 - Introduction and Knowledge Gathering

- 4.1 In this first evidence gathering meeting, the Committee received a presentation from Dominic Collins, Corporate Director and Emma Goodings, Head of Planning and

Economic Growth which was followed by a presentation by Kerry Harding – Director of Estates NHS Mid and South Essex.

4.2 Mr Collins and Ms Goodings, officers from the Council, gave their presentation in two parts – ‘Part 1 - Policy Basis’ and ‘Part 2 – Local Approach’.

4.3 The main points were as follows:-

Part 1 - Policy Basis

4.4 Planning obligations were legal obligations entered into via a planning agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in order to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal. Planning obligations related to land and they were legally binding and enforceable. Agreements could be made jointly between a person having an interest in land and the Local Planning Authority; or as a unilateral undertaking.

4.5 Section 106 planning obligations could restrict the development, or use of land in a specified way; require specified operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over land; require land to be used in a specified way; or require a sum(s) to be paid to an Authority on a specified date(s), or periodically.

4.6 A planning obligation could be unconditional, or subject to conditions; any restriction or requirement imposed could be indefinite, or for a specified period; and the payment of any sum(s) could be for a specified amount and for an indefinite, or specified period of time.

4.7 Limits relating to planning obligations were set out in Section 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010. A planning obligation could constitute a reason for granting planning permission for a development only if it was necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; if it related to the development directly; and it related fairly and reasonably to the development in scale and kind.

4.8 The National Planning Policy Framework stated that Local Planning Authorities should consider whether development, which would otherwise be unacceptable, could be made acceptable by the use of conditions, or planning obligations. However, planning obligations should only be used where it was not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition. Furthermore, where up-to-date policies specified the contributions which would be expected from a development, any planning application which complied with these should be assumed to be viable.

4.9 The Government had published detailed guidance on planning obligations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-obligations>. This included guidance on evidence and policy; viability and negotiation/changing agreements; timeframes; restrictions to seeking obligations; vacant building credit; and monitoring and reporting, including Infrastructure Funding Statements.

4.10 In summary, planning obligations should only be used to make a development acceptable where it would not be otherwise; obligations were subject to negotiation based on policy and evidence; contributions secured via a Section 106 Agreement

had to be spent in line with the Agreement and on schemes associated with the development to which they related; contributions relating to open spaces had to be used for publicly accessible space, not private space; and contributions could not be used to remedy existing issues, or for the general maintenance of existing facilities.

- 4.11 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill proposed that a new tariff should be established, which would be set locally. It was anticipated that this would operate in a similar way to the CIL, but further information was required in respect of how the tariff would be set; when contributions would be collected; and how affordable housing and other on-site requirements would be provided. Re-assurance was also required that contributions collected would be at least as much as those currently collected via Section 106 Agreements. Further detail on this proposal is awaited from government.

Part 2 – Local Approach

- 4.12 The process for securing contributions via Section 106 Agreements was based on negotiations between a developer and the Council's Planning Case Officer. Contributions sought on behalf of others, such as Essex County Council and the NHS, were based on responses submitted following consultation on planning applications. Contributions for affordable housing and open space were secured in accordance with policies set out in the Braintree District Local Plan 2013 – 2033. On-site and sometimes off-site facilities were provided by developers. Trigger points were agreed for the payment of funds/completion of facilities throughout the course of a development. Section 106 Agreements were signed by all relevant parties, with planning permission being issued at the same time.
- 4.13 Contributions sought via Section 106 Agreements were based on policies set out in the Braintree District Local Plan 2013 – 2033. These included general policies and specific policies relating to affordable housing; open space; and transport and infrastructure. The specific policies were supported by evidence based documents. Policies in the Local Plan were subject to a viability appraisal to ensure that they were reasonable for most developments.
- 4.14 Each year the Council publishes an 'Open Spaces Action Plan' which supports policies in the Braintree District Local Plan relating to open space and allotments. The Action Plan includes a list of potential future projects for publicly accessible open space, play space, formal recreation and allotments across the District. The Action Plan is the starting point for considering which projects could be included in Section 106 Agreements and for spending funds secured. It also provided evidence for developers as to how contributions could be spent on local projects. The Council updates and approves the Action Plan on an annual basis following consultation with Parish Councils, Town Councils, sports clubs governing bodies
- 4.15 Contributions secured on some sites might not, on their own, be sufficient to deliver a specific project and the Council therefore sought contributions from other developments, or other funding sources, in order to achieve the total funding required. Also, as larger projects might deliver better value for residents, contributions may be held by the Council until additional funding could be secured. More flexibility was now available, as previous restrictions on pooling no more than five contributions had been removed.

- 4.16 A group of Council Officers monitored the funds held and those which were expected to be received via Section 106 Agreements. Specific projects were identified and were prioritised based on deadlines for expenditure. The Council's normal procurement and approval processes for expenditure had to be followed. Support was also given to Parish Councils and Town Councils, if required, in delivering schemes on land owned by them. Officer resources had to be balanced between delivering schemes funded via Section 106 Agreements and other corporate schemes and priorities.
- 4.17 Information relating to Section 106 Agreements was available in various formats. For major applications submitted to the Planning Committee for determination, details of proposed Section 106 Agreement Heads of Term, if applicable, were included within the Agenda report. Section 106 Agreements were also published on the planning portal section of the Council's website alongside the corresponding planning application. As required by the Government, Infrastructure Funding Statements are produced each year in December and information was supplied in the requisite format. Information relating to contributions secured for particular Parishes could be provided on request.
- 4.18 It was reported that the Council had never handed back to a developer any funds which had been secured via a Section 106 Agreement. Contributions received via Section 106 Agreements were not classified as a 'tax' and they could not be spent randomly. However, contributions did not have to be spent in the Parish or area where the related development was taking place. Instead, contributions could be spent where the impact of the development might reasonably be felt. Contributions received via Section 106 Agreements could be pooled and used alongside funds from other sources in order to deliver schemes, where the wording of the relevant S106 agreement allowed. However, expenditure of Section 106 contributions was often not linear. If they wished, Parish Councils and Town Councils could take the lead on spending contributions.
- 4.19 Members were then invited to ask questions of the Officers. In response to the questions that were raised, the following information was provided:-
- It was reported that Section 106 contributions could not be spent on remedying existing facilities eg. repairs to a playground, as expenditure had to relate to matters set out in Section 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010. This sought to ensure that expenditure was focused on the provision of new facilities for new residents. It was not possible for the Council to change a signed Section 106 Agreements unless through agreement with all those party to the agreement. However this takes time and the Council would likely to be required to pay the legal fees of all parties.
 - It was reported that negotiations took place between developers and the Council regarding the Heads of Term to be included in a Section 106 Agreement and that developers often 'pushed back' on initial suggestions. It was anticipated, that if the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill introduced a new tariff arrangement which operated in a similar way to the CIL, contributions could be spent as required eg. contributions secured from a development in Sible Hedingham could be utilised for the benefit of residents living in Hatfield Peverel; or alternatively,

contributions could be pooled and allocated to a larger project such as a new leisure pool.

- It was stated that time limits on the expenditure of contributions were set out in each Section 106 Agreement and that if contributions were not spent within this time they must be handed back to the developer. There were no apparent restrictions to contributions arising from developments in the Braintree District being spent in another District if they meet the tests set out in section 122 of the CIL Regulations 2010.
- Currently, the Government had stipulated the minimum number of new properties which would trigger the payment of Section 106 Agreement contributions. However, it was not known how many properties would be required as a trigger under the new tariff arrangement proposed by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. This was subject to an announcement by the Government. It was possible that a national tariff would be set, but this could be affected by varying property values across both the country and the District.
- The Heads of Term of an existing Section 106 Agreement could be changed if, for example, priorities changed over a period of time. Developers would normally request any change, but all parties to the Agreement would have to be satisfied with it. The Terms of Agreements were kept as flexible as possible.
- Section 106 Agreements could contain trigger points at which contributions became payable eg. on completion of the 99th dwelling on a development of 100 dwellings. However, some developers sought to delay the payment of contributions by deliberately not building the requisite number of dwellings. This was a disadvantage to the system. Also, the non-linear nature of Section 106 Agreements meant that the Council did not necessarily know when contributions would be received. However, in order to avoid this situation the Council sought to secure early trigger points. Furthermore, contributions were index-linked so that if a development recommenced at a later date and the trigger point was subsequently reached, contributions would become payable at that time. It was not known if the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill would introduce new controls, but it was possible that a Council-Tax levy might be imposed on dwellings which had planning permission, but which had not been built.
- It was acknowledged that planning could be contentious and controversial and also that local people may not support the benefits negotiated on their behalf via Section 106 Agreements. However, Parish Councils and Town Councils were encouraged to keep details of their open space requirements, as set out in the Open Spaces Action Plan, up-to-date, as this helped the Council when negotiating. Furthermore, Parish Councils and Town Councils were encouraged to engage in the planning process even if they did not like a particular development and to make it clear what benefits they might wish to secure from a development. Once negotiations for a Section 106 Agreement had reached the Heads of Term stage it is usually too late to change them. It was acknowledged also that Parish Councils and Town Councils might not have the appropriate skills to deal with Section 106 Agreements, or the financial resources to match-fund contributions for specific projects if required. It was agreed that the process should be made as simple as possible and it was noted that the Council sought

to assist Parish Councils/Town Councils where it could. If CIL or governments future proposals are introduced Parish Councils/Town Councils might achieve financial benefits if they had an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

- It was acknowledged that residents were often frustrated that benefits accruing from new development did not come forward 'on the ground' in a timely way. Furthermore, Infrastructure Funding Statements for 2019/20 and 2020/21 showed that contributions amounting to over £6m, which had been secured via Section 106 Agreements, including over £3.3m for open space provision, remained unspent. Some of these contributions had been secured some time ago. It was also acknowledged that if the Council had more resources, benefits could be delivered quicker. However, it was reported that difficulties were currently being experienced in recruiting specialist staff. Alternatively, the work could be carried out by a sub-contractor. However, this could be expensive and it reduced the funds available. Communication was considered important particularly in order to address the public's perception of what could be achieved via Section 106 Agreement contributions. It was also important to measure the success of such contributions.

4.20 Ms Harding (NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System (ICS)) gave her presentation. *It was noted that the ICS was a new partnership between organisations which met the health and care needs of Mid and South Essex.*

4.21 The main points were as follows:-

- Process:

An Integrated Care Board (ICB) Planning Policy Officer was the single point of contact for health.

Liaison took place with Local Planning Authorities on a regular basis to ensure that the process adopted remained current; and to keep up-to-date with changes to Local Development Plans, trajectory changes and the outcome of planning applications/mitigation requests.

All consultation documents were responded to on behalf of all ICS health partners.

Major applications were presented to and discussed at meetings of the ICS Strategic Estates Group.

Separate Working Groups were established, as necessary, to respond to strategic/major infrastructure applications.

- Planning Formula:

The current planning formula for primary care was: 1,750 patients = 120sqm of space (NIA) @ £3,015 m2.

1,750 patients was considered to be the current optimal size for a single GP list. 120sqm of space was aligned to Department for Health guidance.

£3,015 per m2 was based on the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) cost multiplier for new build and extensions to health centres and hospitals.

The number of patients generated by a development was calculated using Borough/District Council average household size taken from the 2011 Census.

Services most likely to be impacted - a 2km radius was considered to be a reasonable distance to access services without the need for a car, therefore enabling reduced car journeys and creating healthy/sustainable communities.

- Evidence to Support Requests:

Requests for Section 106 Agreement contributions should meet the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 and evidence must be provided to show that a request is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; that it is directly related to the development; and that it is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

- Utilisation of Section 106 Contributions:

Funding obtained via Section 106 contributions in order to increase capacity within health and care may be used for the reconfiguration of existing premises; to build a new facility; for IT infrastructure; for the refurbishment of the existing estate; for the extension of existing premises; or for fixed equipment.

- NHS Criteria for Spend:

Section 106 Agreement/CIL contributions were considered to be NHS capital and were public money which was subject to the NHS prioritisation and approval process. Requests to a Council for the draw-down of funds required the submission of supporting evidence and an approved PID/business case.

Section 106 Agreement contributions were subject to abatement in accordance with the Premises Cost Directions 2013.
Contributions should not be allocated directly to a GP/Practice.

- Resources:

The presentation included details of Section 106 contributions which had been secured and how these had been, or would be, allocated.

A total of £3,038,092 had been secured in S106 agreements and £1,212,801 was currently available to spend. The planned use of the funds is as follows:

£	Project
£156,497	Silver End Extension
£75,898	Church Lane Phase 2 works
£249,625	Increased capacity Halstead Elizabeth Courtauld Surgery
£36,437	New Hedingham Health Centre
£96,395	Increased capacity Kelvedon Health Centre
£102,976	Fit out of Manor Street

£240,757	New Witham Health Facility
£254,414	Not currently allocated – Sydney House, Great Notley pump house

Details of the periods which these contributions have been held by the Council are set out on in the table on page 13.

- Next Steps:

The ICS would continue to develop business cases in order to initiate development and expenditure.

The ICS would work with Primary Care Networks to develop clinical and estates strategies in order to develop plans for the expenditure of existing and future Section 106 resources.

4.22 Members were then invited to ask questions of Ms Harding. In response to the questions that were raised, the following information was provided:-

- It was reported that contributions received by the NHS via Section 106 Agreements were subject to the same financial processes as any other NHS funding, in order to ensure that the best value was achieved. Abatement periods were set and funds could be recovered if necessary. If sufficient funds were received via Section 106 contributions, these could be spent exclusively on infrastructure projects without the need for match-funding. The NHS had been subject to a restructure and the former Clinical Commissioning Groups no longer existed.
- Reference was made to the time line between new housing developments being built and occupied, and mitigating infrastructure secured via Section 106 Agreements eg. improvements to GP practices, being provided. It was queried if something was blocking this process.
- It was reported that the NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System (ICS) reviewed proposed development sites allocated in the Braintree District Local Plan and considered their cumulative impact. Work identified in response to this new development was implemented in phases where possible. In each case, it was important to consider the needs of patients and to ensure that the proposed process and model were right. However, work was dependent on the ownership of existing facilities and whether the owners were willing to do what the NHS sought to achieve. In some cases, the owners might also be required to commit funding to the proposed works. It was noted that some Doctors' Surgeries were owned by individual GPs, or groups of GPs. Capacity within the ICS Team had increased and it was hoped that this would improve the Team's impact. The Council and the NHS worked together in order to bring forward specific projects. As an example, a new Doctors' Surgery was being provided at Sible Hedingham where a private provider had also assisted. The Council might also be able to assist if it owned a building in which a Doctors' Surgery could be located.
- It was considered important to keep the public informed about proposed projects; their progress; and why some took time to implement. It was also important that

the public should be made aware that GPs worked individually and that the NHS could not require them to relocate to a specific Doctors' Surgery in order to meet patient demand. Therefore the issues weren't just about building the premises, it was also about making sure there was the availability of the right GPs, nurses etc to occupy and deliver the right services. It was acknowledged that communication had not been good in the past, but some Alliance Teams had now been established by the NHS which were able to spend more time in the community. It was considered important that the public should be informed about contributions received via Section 106 Agreements and how these were being used within the community.

5. Second Evidence Gathering Session – 21st September 2022
Section 106 - Open Spaces and NHS Expenditure

5.1 The Committee received a presentation by the following team:

Dominic Collins – Corporate Director (Growth)
Emma Goodings - Head of Planning and Economic Growth
Sarah Burder – Chartered Legal Executive – S106 Monitoring Officer
Nicola Murphy – Senior Landscape Architect – S106 Delivery Officer
Neil Jones – Principal Planning Officer – Lead S106 Planning Officer

5.2 The team explained their individual roles in the S106 process and those of other officers who support the overall activity. It was clarified that none of the officers have full time activity on S106 and share their time across other activities in line with prevailing priorities. As such, it is very difficult to quantify the current level of resources specifically engaged in delivery of S106 projects. However, a high level estimate is that across a range of officers the hours spent per week are broadly equivalent to two full time equivalent (FTE) officers engaged in work on schemes/designs, procurement activity, commissioning of construction/delivery of projects, monitoring and working with Parish and Town Councils.

5.3 Additional staff from the Operations team, Strategic Investment team, Leisure team, Housing Team and Planning teams can also be involved in the delivery of individual projects on a case by case basis depending upon the need. This activity is highly variable and as such very difficult to quantify in terms of resources.

5.4 The S106 process was thoroughly explained from Pre-application through to delivery. The Council, as the LPA, are responsible for collating the overall S106 legal agreements although in some cases the agreements can include obligations for ECC, the NHS and others.

5.5 Contributions for the NHS are collected by the Council and distributed to the NHS at their request, as projects were ready to be delivered. The S106 Monitoring Officer ensures the use of the funds complies with the legal agreement. Contributions to ECC can include education, highways and other activities for which they have responsibility. Where required ECC are part of the legal S106 agreement, and the funds go direct to them when available.

- 5.6 The process of monitoring and collection of funds is well structured and well managed ensuring the monies due from developers are collected in line with the schedule of payments in the agreements and taking into account any index linking.
- 5.7 Delivery of projects can range from simple projects to larger quite complex projects. When implementation is carried out reference is made to the agreements and the Open Spaces Action Plan. The delivery of projects is managed through consultation with stakeholders, feasibility and design work, procurement process and implementation.
- 5.8 For those areas of the District which are parished, in many cases the opportunity is available for Parish and Town Councils to manage the implementation of projects. A process and criteria is available to Councils if they choose to accept this responsibility. Some Parish and Town Councils have taken up this opportunity and in parished areas only spent circa 10% of the BDC expenditure. However, officers experience is that use of this procedure is highly variable and dependent upon the resources and skills available in each Parish and Town Council. However officers are open and supportive in encouraging Councils to use this process.
- 5.9 The Committee raised the question about the possibility of variations to agreements as a way of being more flexible with the use of the funds available. Officers advised that this could be complex and costly as developers would be reluctant to change without financial compensation for their legal costs.
- 5.10 The Committee were presented with the below chart which tracks the S106 contributions spent by the Council and the NHS compared to the contributions received.

Financial Year	S106 Contributions Received	S106 Contributions spent	District Housing Delivery
2016/17	£ 393,797	£ 364,888	291
2017/18	£ 567,239	£ 114,957	492
2018/19	£ 1,516,432	£259,161	534
2019/20	£ 1,931,100	£ 221,645	883
2020/21	£ 1,012,795	£ 924,953	847
2021/22	£ 1,658,983	£ 322,939	1,081
Total	£ 7,080,346	£ 2,208,543	
Difference between contributions and spend over past 6 yrs	£ 4,871,803		

- 5.11 As can be seen from the chart, the spending of funds received has been significantly below the level of funds received of £4.87million over the past six years with spend lower than receipts in each year. It can be reasonably expected that the District Housing Delivery has been the main driver of the increasing level of funds being received. The Committee acknowledges the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic may

have had during 2020/21 and 2021/22, however, expenditure in each of the previous 4 years was significantly below receipts.

5.12 This differential, plus unspent funds in earlier years, has resulted to an increasing level of funds being held by the Council awaiting spend and delivery.

5.13 The below chart shows the level of funds being held by the Council. It can be seen that overall these have increased in each of the past three years. The chart breaks down the total unspent funds held into categories to enable a better understanding.

Cat			31/03/20	31/03/21	31/03/22
A	Open spaces, art, cycling, PROW, etc	Funds held	£ 3.4m	£ 3.5m	£ 4.1m
		No of contributions with zero spend	170	170	171*
		No of contributions with >0 and <50% spend	9	8	9
		No of contributions with >50% spend	28	28	32
		Av period funds held	4.2 yrs	4.8 yrs	5.2 yrs
B	Community facilities	Funds held	£ 1.4m	£ 1.8m	£ 1.9m
		No of contributions with zero spend	7	8	8
		Av period funds held	1.4 yrs	2.1 yrs	3.1 yrs
	Total Council responsibility		£4.8m	£ 5.3m	£ 6.0m
C	NHS	Funds held	£ 0.6m	£ 0.6m	£ 1.2m
		No of contributions with zero spend	15	15	27
		Av period funds held	1.2 yrs	2.2 yrs	2.0 yrs
D	Other non-Council	Funds held	£0.1m	£ 0.1m	£ 0.1m
	Total held by Council		£ 5.5m	£ 6.0m	£ 7.3m

*Many of the contributions are small less than £3,000.

6. Category A - Public Open Spaces, art, cycling and PROW etc

6.1 This group contains the greatest number of contributions received and being held. There is a big variation in the size and scale of the individual contributions.

6.2 It can be seen that at 31st March 2022 there were 171 unspent contributions with no spend to date and a further 41 where some expenditure has occurred. These

contributions have been held for an average of 5.2 years with 16 being held for 10 years or more. The total value of these contributions is £4.1m.

- 6.3 The Committee were informed of the complication of Section 106 delivery as it can be nonlinear in terms of receiving the contributions and spending them in the communities in accordance with expectations. In some cases, contributions collected singly are not sufficient to deliver facilities and may require to be combined with other Section 106 contributions to meet the cost of delivering community facilities.

7. Category B – Community Facilities

- 7.1 This group has been categorized separately as there are generally smaller number of contributions with high value where funds are being accumulated for expenditure on larger projects in the future.
- 7.2 At 31st March 2022 there were 8 contributions being held with a total value of £1.9m.

8. Category C – NHS Healthcare

- 8.1 These contributions are being held by the Council on behalf of the NHS. It can be seen that there are now 27 contributions being held with a total value of £1.2million. These have now been held for an average of 2 years. It can be seen in the first evidence gathering session, some of the projects where these funds are due to be spent.
- 8.2 Given the above analysis of the categories, the main focus for improvement in delivery therefore needs to be in Category A for Open Spaces, art, cycling and PROW, etc where there is a considerable backlog of unspent contributions.
- 8.3 The subject of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) was discussed as this is one of the Terms of Reference for this scrutiny. The Council doesn't currently have any specific KPIs related to the expenditure of S106. Officers searched other authorities and none were apparent, however, it did reveal that the Council secured more S106 funding by entering S106 agreements (£6.9million in 2020/21) than any of the other authorities reviewed.
- 8.4 For the past three years legislation has required councils to report annually performance through an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS). The Council's statements for 2019/20 and 2020/21 are currently available on the Council's website. The IFS for 2021/22 is due for publication by the end of 2022. These statements go some way to providing an indication of performance, however, they do not go far enough to provide a clear focus on where improvement is required. To drive forward a reduction in the lead time to deliver projects in line with residents expectations, a small set of focused KPIs will be required and improvement objectives set.

9. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 9.1 The Committee's work schedule and upcoming Local Elections in May 2023 has prevented further evidence gathering on this scrutiny; however, the two evidence gathering sessions and follow up information has enabled the Committee to draw some conclusions and make recommendations.
- 9.2 It is clear from the evidence provided that the expenditure has not kept pace with the growth in contributions being received and the level of funds held by the Council is increasing and not falling.
- 9.3 As the rate of housing growth in the district increases further in line with the Local Plan this will put more pressure on resources as more Section 106 contributions are secured. Urgent action is required to put in place the resources and improvements required to recover the backlog on delivery of contributions being held and meet the challenge of increased contributions in the coming years.

10. MINUTES AND AGENDAS OF MEETINGS

[18th May 2022](#)

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 11.1 Members of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee wish to express their gratitude to the following Council officers for their contribution to the Scrutiny Review:-
- Dominic Collins, Corporate Director;
 - Emma Goodings, Head of Planning and Economic Growth;
 - Sarah Burder, Chartered Legal Executive, S106 Monitoring Officer;
 - Nicola Murphy, Senior Landscape Architect;
 - Neil Jones, Principle Planning Officer;
 - Jessica Mann, Governance and Members Officer and
 - Kerry Harding, Director of Estates at NHS Mid and South Essex.

12. Summary of Issues

- 12.1 The Performance Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the issue of S106 delivery focused on those areas within the District Councils control and those within the control of the health authority, at a series of meetings between May and November 2022.
- 12.2 Officers who are responsible for the delivery of S106 schemes plus a representative of the health authority were able to attend meetings, provide evidence and answer the queries of the committee.
- 12.3 It is worth noting that the government indicated within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, first introduced in May, that the S106 process would be replaced by a new Infrastructure Levy (at least for off site development). Further consultation on the detail of the new Levy is expected this year but the indications from the bill are that this will be a locally determined fee based on the gross development value

of a completed project. This approach, if implemented, could mean that Council's will be receiving some or all of the contributions after the development has completed, as it would only be at the stage that the gross development value of the completed project would be known. The Government have indicated their intention that the new Levy may go further than the current Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations it was indicated that in addition to the levy not being ringfenced to mitigate the impact of the particular development that it was secured from, that it may also be able to be used for more than just infrastructure-based schemes.

- 12.5 The timetable for the introduction of the new Levy and the detail around its operation are awaited, but it is clear that this will be a wholesale change in the way that the authority currently collects and spends funds received from developers.

13 Next Steps

- 13.1 If the response to the recommendations are accepted then these will be implemented by officers.

14. Financial Implications

- 14.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the response to recommendations within this report.

15. Legal Implications

- 15.1 There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

Appendix A

The Recommendations of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee and Cabinets response

Below are the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee recommendations to Cabinet, followed by the Cabinets response to each Recommendation.

[18th May 2022](#)

[27th July 2022](#)

[21st September 2022=](#)

1. **Recommendation 1**

The Council urgently reviews the organisation and levels of resources assigned to delivering Section 106 expenditure and if necessary, increases those resources to ensure they are adequate to deliver a rapid reduction in the backlog of unspent funds currently being held and ensure early delivery of projects coming from future receipts.

Cabinet Response

A graduate landscape architect role was added to the establishment this year and has been a post filled since June. However, with the resignation of the senior landscape architect in December this resource has not had time to be properly tested as to the impact it can make on scheme delivery. The Council continually

seeks to utilise its existing in-house resources in the best way possible and working with the strategic investment team to make use of their skills.

It is acknowledged that the increase in development activity and the number and complexity of S106 agreements has meant that the Council's S106 monitoring officers time is committed to monitoring agreements, including the collection of financial contributions. This means there is little time available to support the delivery of S106 projects. The Council's S106 Monitoring Officer currently works part-time. A proposed increase by one extra day a week would allow the S106 Monitoring Officer to provide more support to Parish Council's to progress projects on their land, and the Council's Operations Team to progress small schemes within the Open Space owned by the District Council.

It is also worth noting, in relation to this recommendation and several others that the government has indicated its intention to move to a new type of collection system for planning contributions more akin to the Community Infrastructure Levy system. Further consultation is awaited which will provide some more detail and potential timescales for implementation. The government has suggested that it may seek a phased approach to implementation and so Braintree could volunteer to be an early adopter.

Given therefore the current budget pressures on the authority, the need to let the revised staffing structure bed in and the likely revisions of the system in the upcoming years, a review of the S106 delivery service with a view to increasingly resources further than one additional day for the Councils S106 Monitoring Officer is not supported at this time.

2. Recommendation 2

The main focus of reducing the backlog of unspent funds being held should be in the area of Public Open Spaces, public art, cycling and PROW etc.

Cabinet Response

The Council notes and accepts the above which accounts for the majority of money held by the Council under S106 which it has the ability to spend. However, if S106 funding secured for another purpose is coming to the time limit in which it must be spent then officers would need to ensure that those projects are also prioritised to ensure that the benefit to the residents secured under a planning permission is not lost.

3. Recommendation 3

A closer examination of current processes should be made with the view of exploring any improvement that could be made to speed up the delivery of projects.

Cabinet Response

The Council continually reviews the processes that it follows in order to provide the most efficient and effective way of supporting our residents. However, these must be balanced by the need to ensure value for public money and transparency in decision making. To this end the S106 team like all others in the Council must for example ensure that tenders or contracts are let with best value in mind through appropriate procurement processes or receipt of multiple quotes. Decisions on spend must also be made in line with the Council's constitution which includes some decisions being made at a Cabinet level, which does add time to the process.

In the case of some major S106 schemes it is also important that stakeholders like the Parish or Town Councils and residents get the opportunity to have their say and input into the proposals. This can involve multiple informal and formal consultations periods across the life of a project, and it is imperative that this is allowed for. It can take considerable time for the authority to plan, deliver and analyse the results of community consultation periods and this was a particular issue during the pandemic. Where projects involve Parish Councils the process must also allow time for Parish Councils to discuss projects and take decisions at meetings. Some Parishes might have these more infrequently than others. Taking all this into account, it is not considered that significant changes to the current system can be made, however this will need to be subject to a complete review when a new Infrastructure Levy is introduced.

4. Recommendation 4

The Council establishes three new KPIs to focus upon its performance in delivery of the expenditure of section106 funds under their responsibility for Public Open spaces, art, cycling and PROW etc contributions. These are:

- 1 Total value of funds held;
- 2 Average period the funds have been held, and;
- 3 Number of unspent contributions where less than 50% of the funds have been spent.

To aid transparency the KPIs should be included in the Council's Performance Management Report which are published quarterly and annually.

Cabinet Response

The Council is required to publish statistics on contributions held in the Infrastructure Funding Statement on a yearly basis. It is likely that these requirements may change when a new Infrastructure Levy is put in place. This piece of work is a considerable administrative burden to the team and is expected to be used as the main data source for the service. The IFS is published on the website, and it will be highlighted to members once published each year through the portfolio holder's response to Council.

It is recognised that members would prefer a more regular update on figures however the reconciliation of in year spend is only made at the end of the financial year. Therefore, any more frequent data would be subject to errors and it is not considered that this would be helpful to members. As well as the annual figures in the IFS, these could also be reported via the Performance Management Report.

5. Recommendation 5

The Council sets challenging targets to reduce the number of unspent contributions, reduce the average period of times funds are held before spending and reduce the overall value of funds being held. The Committee recommends the following targets:

<i>KPI – Open spaces, art, cycling and PROW etc</i>	<i>For Ref 31/3/22</i>	<i>31/03/24</i>	<i>31/03/25</i>	<i>31/03/26</i>
<i>Average period funds held</i>	<i>5.2 years</i>	<i>Max 3 years</i>	<i>Max 2 years</i>	<i>Max 1 year</i>
<i>No of unspent contributions</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>Max 100</i>	<i>Max 75</i>	<i>Max 50</i>
<i>Total value of funds held</i>	<i>£4.1M</i>	<i>Depends upon the level of future receipts</i>		

Cabinet Response

The Council notes and accepts the need to maximise its spending of S106 contributions for the benefit of residents. However, as officers explained at the sessions, targets would be a blunt instrument which would not reflect the complexity of the projects, contributions and timings across the S106 programme. Advice was sought from all local planning authorities in Essex and none indicated they had any targets in place.

The targets proposed for the average period that funds are held is not considered a helpful target. The Council has a record of always spending the funds it has secured from developers for the benefit of residents within the timescales that are agreed within the agreements. A blunt target of average period funds held would not reflect the complexities of large projects where multiple contributions need to be brought together, meaning that some of the contributions can wait for several years before the project can begin. If the targets above were to be met, officers would need to focus delivery efforts on the quickest and easiest schemes they could, with reduced staff resources available to progress larger more complex schemes. Schemes that for example involved unresolved land issues or required detailed surveys would be delayed, disadvantaging residents who would benefit from those schemes but also potentially delaying scheme progress to an extent that there are issues with spending contributions within the timescales allowed by the agreements. As such it is not considered to be within the public interest to implement such targets. It is not considered that the number of unspent contributions is a statistic of great relevance. This is because individual contributions can be small amounts of a few hundred or thousand pounds, ranging through to tens or even hundreds of thousands of pounds. The number of contributions therefore is not reflective of actual spend. In order to meet this target, these smaller contributions may need to be prioritised which would result in multiple small-scale projects being progressed across the District, taking significant staff resource, but making a low contribution to the overall value of S106 contributions held by the Council. Many of these contributions also have quite broad arrangements for spend, making them flexible and ideal in some cases to add to larger project pots.

Many of these smaller contributions were provided prior to a change in government rules which meant that the Council could collect contributions from small developments. This is no longer possible and so naturally the number of these is

reducing over time as they are incorporated into larger schemes to get best value from the contribution. However, in addition to this, some of these small contributions are located in rural areas where future S106 contributions are unlikely to be collected, under the current regulations. Council officers will be writing to all Parishes that have money, available, to remind them of the process for using S106 funding and encouraging them to deliver Open Space projects. The additional one day a week of the S106 Monitoring Officers time ensures that there will be support for the Parishes as required.

It is noted that in the above table in setting targets for total value of funds held that this is dependent on funds negotiated and received by the authority. When the authority receives the funds is also dependent on build out rates and trigger points on each site and so cannot be linked easily to housing targets for example. As such it is not considered a workable target could be achieved. In addition, if the new proposed contribution process is similar to that of the current CIL process, contributions would not be linked to specific projects and there would be more freedom for the Council to choose what the money is spent on – the consultation has indicated that this would also include using the money for other local authority business, not just infrastructure.

6. Recommendation 6

To focus on delivery performance improvement, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure should report performance against KPIs and actions being taken to improve them to Council in the Cabinet report on a quarterly basis.

Cabinet Response

Given the response to recommendation 5, this recommendation cannot be taken forward. Other reporting is set out in the response to recommendation 4.

7. Recommendation 7

A file listing details of the unspent contributions should be posted on the Councils website at year end in addition to the current data files supporting the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Cabinet Response

Central government requires Infrastructure Funding Statements to publish certain data and in a certain format so that it can sort and compare data on a national basis. BDC complies fully with that request. It is not considered necessary to publish details of individual unspent contributions but the total amount of unspent funds for each Parish can be published annually on the website. at the same time as the IFS (this data has always been available on request).

8. Recommendation 8

Where possible greater use should be made of the opportunity for Parish and Town Councils to deliver projects. In consultation with Parish and Town Councils, the current process should be examined to give them greater flexibility and remove constraints which may be barriers to them engaging in the process.

Cabinet Response

As set out in the report, the Council works very successfully with a number of Town and Parish Councils who spend S106 monies within their Parish or Town. It is noted

that some Parish Councils find the requirements of the process complex, however as the money is the responsibility of the District Council it must ensure that the procurement rules of the authority are met, for example where the value of work exceeds £5,000 asking for three comparable written quotes to ensure that value for money is being delivered, and that decisions made by the Parish are appropriately minuted at meetings to show the transparency of decision making. Detailed guidance notes on the process have been written and are sent to Parishes and Towns when they are working on projects. The Council proposes that training sessions are held with Parish/Town clerks or members that have money available to them to ensure that the processes (and reasons behind them) are understood, to aid in the efficient delivery of schemes.

9. Recommendation 9

The Council, with other Councils, should engage with the NHS at a senior level with the objective of funding an improved weighting and better balance of NHS contributions compared to the overall level of contributions secured in larger developments.

Cabinet Response

The Council acknowledges the concerns of the committee that the NHS is not asking for sufficient contributions to adequately cover the cost of providing health care provision to new residents. This is an issue that has been consistently raised with the health authorities over a number of years by officers and planning committee. It is not for the local planning authority to set the amounts that are requested by statutory providers to deliver improvements but to secure those contributions that are asked for in full. The Council has always done this. Nevertheless, noting the consistent concerns of members and residents on the matter, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure in consultation with the chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will write a letter to the Chairman of the Integrated Health Board, explaining the Councils concerns, particularly in light of rising prices for materials etc.

10. Recommendation 10

To provide less ambiguity and more clarity the Council should consider changing the name of the Open Spaces Action Plan (OSAP) to something more appropriate.

Cabinet Response

The Council agrees what whilst the OSAP has been named as such for around 10 years, its name could lead to misunderstandings of the purpose of the document. It is therefore proposed to change the name of the document to Potential Open Space Improvements or POSI.

The Potential Open Space Improvements document has a specific purpose of providing evidence to support the Council's requests for open spaces. The Council awaits consultation and guidance on the governments proposed infrastructure levy and how this process will ensure that funding secured from developers meets the needs to local communities.

Report Title: Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Review into Litter Management in the Braintree District 2022/23	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/11
Report Presented by: Councillor Mrs M Cunningham, Chairman of the Partnership Scrutiny Committee	
Enquiries to: Cherie Root, Corporate Director Operational Cherie.root@braintree.gov.uk	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee were tasked with conducting a Scrutiny Review into the topic of 'Litter Management' at Braintree District Council.'
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee are as follows:-
 - Driving forward existing partnerships;
 - Helping to bring partnership working into the Council's mainstream work;
 - Bringing together partners within the public sector for the benefit of the community;
 - Developing an approach to future partnership working with both the public and the private sector;

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations from the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 11 and is asked to provide a formal response to those recommendations at the next available meeting of Cabinet.

3. What is Litter?

- 3.1 Litter generally includes synthetic materials associated with smoking, eating and drinking that are improperly discarded, left by members of the public, spilt during other operations or transported on the wind from another area. The Environmental Protection Act 1990, for example, states that litter is 'anything that is dropped, thrown, left or deposited that causes defacement in a public place'.
- 3.2 The topic of 'Litter Management Across the Braintree District' was first submitted by Councillor Abbott as a means of improving coordinated working with the Council's

partners in order to deter and manage littering, debris and unauthorised advertising along the trunk roads through the Braintree District. Following extensive discussions with the Management Board and the Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees, it was agreed that the topic should be allocated to the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee for the purposes of Scrutiny Review. In line with the Terms of Reference for the Committee, Members would need to focus their Scrutiny Review on how the Council engages with its partners and the effectiveness of those arrangements (e.g. with volunteer groups).

3.3 In order to facilitate the Scrutiny Review into 'Litter Management,' Members of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee sought to address the following questions:-

- 1) What past campaigns/exercises have been arranged by the Council in order to improve the management of litter across the District? What were the benefits/costs of these? Notes: Could look at past exercises such as the "Don't be a tosser" campaign, who was involved etc.
- 2) What are the cost/resources implications of litter management activities for the Council? Notes: E.g. staffing levels required. Could examine implications of recent investment / £20k - £30k of new signage and bins across the District over the last 18 months.
- 3) Who are the Council's Partners in respect of litter management, and how effective are these arrangements?
- 4) How does the Council engage with its Partners when undertaking new campaigns and activities?
- 5) Going forward, how could the Council improve coordinated working with partners in order to help ensure that we both deter and manage littering, debris and unauthorised advertising along trunk roads? Notes: E.g. could look at litter management exercises undertaken by other Local Authorities, successes/failures, etc.

4. INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

- 4.1 At the first meeting of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee on 12th May 2022:
- The Terms of Reference and Work Programme were introduced to Members.
 - The Committee was invited to consider any next steps that they wished to take in order to progress the Scrutiny Review Members noted that due to the District Elections scheduled for May 2023 the Scrutiny Review would need to be completed by March 2023.
 - Members indicated that they would like to invite a representative of National Highways to advise on their procedure for delegating litter issues on national highways to authorities such as County or District Councils.

- Members sought to understand how District Councils communicated with one another on cross boundary issues and who was responsible for resolving those issues.
- Members sought to better understand the definition of litter as well as the duties and responsibilities of the individual parties and historic awareness campaigns conducted by the Council.
- Members indicated that it would be helpful to receive an overview of what different services across the council did in terms of litter management, as well as their relationship with Parish and Town Councils. Potential future witnesses for the review were identified and included officers in the Marketing and Communications team and volunteer/community groups such as Braintree East Group, Halstead in Bloom, Green Heart Volunteers as well as volunteer litter pickers in Kelvedon and Feering.
- Members sought to better understand the schemes that local businesses have in place in order to address litter.

5. INPUT FROM THE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS TEAM – 13th JULY 2022

- 5.1 The Chairman was pleased to welcome Ros Alam, Marketing and Engagement Officer, and Tania Roberge, Marketing and Communications Manager, to the meeting. The Marketing and Engagement Officer and Marketing and Communications Manager gave a presentation for Members detailing the various litter campaigns that the Council had undertaken over the previous ten years and the partnerships that had been developed as a result. During the presentation, reference was made to the Green Heart of Essex campaign (Green Heart), one of the earlier litter management campaigns implemented by the Council, the success of which helped to pave the way for future litter management campaigns.
- 5.2 The Green Heart programme launched in 2010 in response to a number of factors, such as the high cost associated with keeping the district clean and tidy (£1.3million) and the results of the 2008 'Place' survey, which indicated that customer satisfaction levels around cleanliness were decreasing at 64%. The Green Heart programme lasted for a period of two years, and its ambition was to make the district one of the cleanest and greenest in the UK with an investment of £250,000.
- 5.3 The ambition of the Green Heart was to be achieved by:-
 - Encouraging partners, businesses and residents to get involved;
 - Implementing a joined up cross-Council approach to service delivery, and;
 - Encouraging everyone to take responsibility for keeping the District clean.
- 5.4 The programme involved strong partnerships from Parish and Town Councils, voluntary groups, Essex County Council, Highways Agency, neighbouring Councils, Eastlight Community Homes (then Greenfields Community Housing), businesses schools and market traders. A number of littering 'hotspot areas' were identified across the district, such as Galley's Corner in Braintree, which led to the creation of the Galley's Corner Partnership. After approximately six months of campaigning, which involved night time observations with the Police, issuing fines, providing car litter bags, sharing advice, the Council recorded a reduction in littering of 47%.

- 5.5 Schools across the district were signed up to the programme and introduced a zero tolerance approach to litter, with litter picks and competitions, and work was also undertaken with housing associations to implement littering 'blitz' days at various housing estates. Over 200 volunteers (known as Green Heart Champions) were also signed up to the programme in order to conduct litter picks within their local areas.
- 5.6 As part of the Green Heart programme, a number of educational campaigns were undertaken by the Council, which included the controversial but successful 'Report the Tosser' campaign. The campaigns were then followed by a reporting mechanism designed to empower people to report cases of littering and/or dog fouling; as a result, over 1,200 reports were received.
- 5.7 The outputs from the Green Heart programme included: Green Heart branding applied to vehicles, uniforms and litter bins; a pledge to support signed by residents and businesses; installation of new larger litter bins along the A12 and A120; bee and butterfly friendly shrubs; installation of new cigarette bins in town centres, and Parish Councils planted a host of golden daffodils and Jubilee Oaks. In terms of the overall outcome of the programme, the district saw a reduction in litter of 55%, customer satisfaction levels for cleanliness rose from 64% to 87% and the district as a 'Place to Live' rose from 85% to 92%.
- 5.8 Following the conclusion of the Green Heart programme, the Council was keen to continue with its partnership working and develop a more Essex-wide approach under the title of 'Love Essex' in order to identify and foster new partnerships. Accordingly, the 'Cleaner Essex' group which was comprised of all fifteen Essex Local Authorities, all Essex McDonalds, KFC and Dominos and independent local businesses was formed. Some of the benefits of partnership working in this respect, such as shared expertise, economies of scale and sponsorship opportunities, were also touched upon.
- 5.9 In 2017, the focus of the Love Essex group shifted from littering to fly-tipping, due to an increase in cases of 16% in 2016 and the significant costs associated with clearance. As a result, the Council adopted Keep Britain Tidy's 'Crime Not to Care' campaign which was implemented across Essex. The aim of the campaign was to educate the general public about the impacts of fly tipping and make them aware that they were, by law, responsible for the disposal of their rubbish. The campaign was advertised via the press, social media, banners, vehicle livery and local roadshows. As a result of the campaign, the average number of fly tips in Essex decreased by 15%, and by 7% in Braintree.
- 5.10 The campaign subsequently went on to be nominated in the Keep Britain Tidy awards in regard to its partnership working.
- 5.11 In respect of the Braintree District, a number of other campaigns that had been undertaken were also referenced, which included anti-dog fouling campaigns and, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, a new anti-litter campaign which aimed to reduce the amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) waste. The PPE waste campaign was linked back with past campaigns such as 'Report the Tosser' and strengthened with new messages about the impacts of masks and other forms of PPE waste on the natural environment. It was added that the Council still encouraged and recruited Green Heart 'Champions,' the numbers of which were constantly increasing.

- 5.12 To summarise, Members were provided with a list of the factors which comprised a successful marketing campaign, such as: a good campaign slogan, budget, staff resources, cross departmental working, follow-ups on enforcement issues and monitoring and evaluation.
- 5.13 The full presentation may be viewed via the link below to the Council's YouTube Channel:- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0CjXBo9Sec>
- 5.14 Further to the presentation, the following information was provided in response to the questions raised by Members:-
- During the Green Heart of Essex campaign, all businesses were contacted in order to ask them to take responsibility for their litter; primarily, this approach was targeted at fast food outlets, public houses and betting shops, or any premises where it was thought there would be a large amount of litter.
 - In terms of littering, 'hotspot' areas were targeted during the campaigns. Areas where there was a lot of littering were identified first and a partnership was then established with the businesses in those areas. It was added that the issues identified at the time were not necessarily specific to younger people; in fact, much of the littering that had been identified took place in the district's town centres, especially where there was a busy nightlife. Members were asked to let the Council know if they were aware of any local hotspot areas for littering in their Wards.
 - Members were advised that the 'triggers' for new litter campaigns were a combination of factors; for example, in the past, the Marketing team had worked closely with the Council's Street Scene team, who would inform them of any reoccurring issues or emerging trends regarding litter. When the smoking ban was first implemented, a campaign was undertaken around smoking related litter. Similarly, when a number of fast food outlets began opening up, a campaign was conducted around car littering. The team would also link in with national campaigns, which could be accessed free of charge.
 - Once a campaign had finished, monitoring work would be undertaken for a few weeks afterwards, unless feedback indicated that monitoring needed to be extended. Whilst it was possible to reintroduce or 'reinvent' past campaigns, long-term campaigns often became less effective if the same messages were being circulated. As such, the marketing team tried to vary the ten campaigns that were undertaken in order to keep littering messages fresh and eye-catching.
 - Members were informed that over the past ten years, the Council had conducted at least one litter specific campaign each year, if not more, some of which had been centred on the Braintree District, whereas others were Essex-wide and national campaigns such as Keep Britain Tidy.
 - The Marketing and Communications team were responsible for much of the Council's social media coverage around litter. The team also managed social media interactions and press releases around successful littering prosecutions, which helped to ensure that enforcement action taken by the Council was being highlighted to the public alongside deterrent campaigns.

**6. INPUT FROM COUNCILLOR CHRISTA DOBSON (FEERING PARISH COUNCIL)
– 28th SEPTEMBER 2022**

6.1 The Chairman was pleased to welcome Councillor Dobson of Feering Parish Council to the meeting.

6.2 Councillor Dobson said that after Lockdown in 2020 there had been a rise in fast food littering along roads within the village, and with other resident she had decided to discuss the idea of a community litter pick with the members of the Environment Working Group at Feering Parish Council:

- The first litter pick was advertised and arranged and the tools such as litter pickers, hi-vis jackets were provided by the District Council's Street Cleaning Team.
- Twenty five residents took part and there was interest in making it a regular event.
- The litter picking volunteers complemented the work of the Parish Handyman who collected litter along the outskirts of the village where it was not necessarily safe for volunteers to cover.
- Although there were initial setbacks, the local community had gone on to benefit from the litter picks, the hours for volunteering were flexible, and it allowed residents to meet new people and broaden their social circles. There was also an element of cross-working with litter pickers in neighbouring Coggeshall and Kelvedon. Furthermore, with the litter pickers covering residential areas, the Handyman was able to concentrate on clearing areas of land that were less accessible to residents, such as rural roads.
- In terms of the Council's involvement, temporary, yellow 'no littering' signs were previously provided along Inworth Road as a deterrent for car littering, which reportedly worked well. Indeed, once the signs were removed, rates of littering increased along the road again. Consideration was also being given towards the use of the 'Don't be a Tosser' campaign signs.
- It was felt that a 'Report Littering' campaign should be undertaken by the District Council to highlight both of the issue of littering and the consequences for those people who are caught.
- It was suggested that the District Council could produce information posters that could be displayed on Parish noticeboards about the issue of fly tipping along rural roads and the need to check that Waste Carriers were actually licensed to undertake waste clearances. Furthermore, it was felt that both Coggeshall Road and Inworth Road in Feering would benefit from a 'fly-tipping camera' or permanent signage.
- Cigarette butt littering was a major issue in and around locations such as the train station in Kelvedon, with rates worsening after Covid. There seemed to be a prevalent issue with littering amongst younger people and a lack of waste and/or recycling bins particularly around shops and parks. It was felt that the Council could work with Parish Councils to consider these issues and how they might be managed more effectively with use of the Council's neon green bins in wider areas across the district.

- Littering issues along the A12 and A120 grass verges were mainly due to drivers throwing rubbish out of their vehicles onto the roads. It was asked whether the District Council could give consideration towards managing the areas in the District more effectively by making building sites responsible for picking up their own litter, working collaboratively with Essex Highways and/or National Highways to find a solution, or by clearing verges before they were trimmed.

6.2 In response to questions from Members, Councillor Dobson said that:

- The volunteer group had received an abundance of equipment from the District Council to assist them with clearing litter, which included litter pickers, bags, high visibility jackets and gloves. He said that it would also be useful for the group to receive some litter picking hoops.
- The litter picking team used the purple bags to collect the litter, which were then deposited next to, or as close as possible to, public bins. The bags would then be collected on a Monday by the Handyman and left at the central waste collection point for removal by the District Council. It was noted that some of the volunteers recycled wine bottles or other types of glass when they came across this type of litter. It was noted that this practice should remain the choice of the volunteer and not a requirement, due to health and safety issues associated with collecting this type of waste.
- In respect of litter from fast food restaurants, it was felt that the customers were the ones that needed to be targeted in respect of awareness around litter management. It was noted that littering from fast food establishments seemed to be far less of an issue in other countries which was likely due, in part, to the higher fines charged for such offences, but also a prevalent, anti-litter culture. Councillor Dobson was able to facilitate the work of the litter picking volunteer group with the support of the District Council, through the supply of the necessary equipment, and by linking in with 'Keep Britain Tidy's' Autumn cleaning campaign (in lieu of the Spring clean in 2020, which was postponed due to Covid). The success of the group was mainly attributed to the willingness of volunteers to take part and give up their time on a regular basis to combat littering, as well as the involvement of the local Handyman. It was noted that many people now had dashcams in their vehicle which could be used to obtain evidence when identifying littering offenders.
- Permanent anti-littering signage would be useful to have around 'hotspot' areas of the District, as this seemed to deter people from littering in the Inworth Road area. Heavier fines for littering would also be useful.
- It was agreed that a list of registered waste carriers could be displayed in local areas across the District and in Parish magazines, which would be useful in terms of helping residents to avoid using the services of 'rogue' carriers, who were known to collect waste and then dispose of it illegally in the form of fly tipping.

6.3 In response to the information that was provided, the following questions and actions were raised:

6.4 Councillor Abbott asked whether:

- Whether the purple sacks containing waste which were later collected by the Council, were taken for recycling or to landfill.
- The District Council could develop a more co-ordinated approach to clearing litter along the A12 with Essex Highways.
- The Council could undertake communications around issues relating to dog waste bags that were left on tree branches and in hedges along public rights of way routes throughout the district.
- It would be possible to contact a member of National Highways and ask that they attend a future meeting of the Committee to talk about issues in relation to the A12. Councillor Abbott agreed to send the Essex Highways Officer's contact details to Governance Officers outside of the meeting.

6.5 Councillor Courtauld agreed to explore whether Members' Councillor Community Grants could be used to help fund more litter picking equipment for parishes within his ward, such as litter picker hoops.

6.6 Councillor Sandum raised a question around the possibility of the District Council requesting that the Governance increase littering fines, as it was felt that the current fines were not enough of a deterrent. It was added that it would also be useful if successful prosecutions within the district could be promoted locally, both to reassure people that littering was taken seriously and as a deterrent for would-be offenders. At the end of the questions, the Chairman expressed her thanks on behalf of the Committee to Councillor Dobson for her presentation and the information provided.

7. INPUT FROM BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL OPERATIONS TEAM AND HEAD TEACHER GREAT BRADFORDS JUNIOR SCHOOL - 16th NOVEMBER 2022

7.1 INFORMATION: The Chairman was pleased to welcome Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager, Steve Wilson, Operations Manager at Braintree District Council and Justin Wrench, Head Teacher of Great Bradfords Junior School to the meeting.

7.2 The Chairman invited the Head Teacher of Great Bradfords Junior School to introduce himself first and inform the Committee about the litter management activities undertaken at Great Bradfords Junior School. The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- Members were advised that Great Bradfords Junior School was a large school of 360 children aged between 7 and 11 years.
- The school's code of conduct was set around three important values which were; ***To be safe, To be kind, and To be responsible.***
- Great Bradfords had set up a committee called the Global Green Team which comprised of twelve Year 5 children aged between nine and ten years old who focused largely on eco and green improvements in the school. Part of their role was also to carry out regular litter picks across the school sites and they had previously been supplied litter picking tools from Braintree District Council.

- The committee had also assisted in ensuring the planting of over one hundred trees in 2020, the installation of solar panels to the school in 2021, and this year had secured the fitting of over three hundred and fifty LED lights across the school.
- It was reported that in Year 4, the children followed a project entitled 'Who is responsible for our waste and planet'. The focus of this was around the issue of litter and the impact this was having on the planet. This included the children litter picking the entire school site, collecting data from this, and identifying issues of why litter was collecting in certain areas.
- It was noted that due to the school being situated at the bottom of an estate and within close proximity to the road, a large majority of litter was blown on to the school site from the road.
- One of the main issues the children had identified was that they only had access to single use bins that were not designed particularly well and wind would often blow the contents out of the bins and disperse litter around the school site.
- As part of the project the children used IT software to design their own bins. They had also recently invited the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Andrew Hensman and Councillor Mrs Wendy Schmitt, Cabinet Member for Environment to the school together who took part in a debate with the children around bins and litter.
- The Head Teacher informed Members that they were still awaiting some action regarding new and additional bins. He had recently received an update and unfortunately this fell outside the remit of Braintree District Council, and was a matter for Essex County Council and their funding, however it was reported that the Cabinet Member for Environment was currently negotiating with some large companies locally to source funding for some additional bins for all local schools.
- In the recent past, a Year 6 cohort had led a project on the use of single use plastics and their impact on the environment. The children were tasked with writing to local and multi-national companies along with the local MP who passed the information on to the Prime Minister at the time. Members were advised that the children had received a response from the Prime Minister and the project was passed on to the Minister for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
- The project had culminated in a whole school litter pick over a series of two weeks which saw every child in the school go out and remove litter from the local community. Hi-vis jackets and litter picking tools were loaned to the school from the District Council to assist with the initiative.
- There was a project evolving with the current Year 6 cohort entitled 'What does it take to transform' which looked at the impact of climate change but also different biomes across the world and how these were being affected along with the impact of deforestation.
- Members were informed that the children were holding an exhibition next month which would include some artwork formed solely from litter and single use plastics which focused on the topics of the effects of climate change and deforestation. An invitation to attend the exhibition was extended to Members.

8. In response to questions from Members, the Head Teacher supplied the following information:

- The majority of schools would have their own variations of eco councils and littering projects although he could not confirm that this was the case for all schools.
- The duties of the twelve children who made up the Global Green Team included encouraging other children to participate in litter picks, going round to classrooms at lunchtimes ensuring teachers had switched off lights, interactive white boards, and projectors.
- They had not yet considered the option of whether any grants were available to assist with the issue of new and sorting bins but were keen to explore this further to see if any funding was available.
- The trade waste for Great Bradfords School was managed by Braintree District Council, and they were currently looking at package options for waste management as it was noted that charges for schools food waste was quite significant.
- It was agreed to circulate to Members copies of the school children's project work to enable Members a greater understanding of the work the schools had carried out.
- The Head Teacher advised Members that should they have any follow up questions, Members were welcome to email him, and if Members were interested in visiting the school and meeting the children he would be happy to facilitate this.

The Chairman invited Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager and Steve Wilson, Operations Manager to make their presentation to the Committee.

The full presentation slides are available to view on the Council's website at the following link:

<https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1235/Committee/21/Default.aspx>

The key points from the presentation were as follows:

- Members were reminded that as the principle littering authority the District Council had a statutory authority under the Environmental Protection Act to maintain public highways and to clear litter from land in which they were directly responsible for.
- It was reported that the waste and street management structure consisted of Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager along with a supervisor, twenty five operatives, and two highway rangers who worked on behalf of Essex County Council. They had a total of fifteen vehicles.
- The street cleaning service had a controllable budget of £1.25 million which was mainly split between staff and vehicles along with a proportion being delegated to the street cleansing agreement with the Parish Councils. - The primary functions of the street cleansing service included staff patrolling the main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, including the town centres, surrounding areas, and open spaces.

Other duties involved district wide litter picking crews, an “A roads” team who patrolled major A roads and litter hotspots throughout the district.

- It was noted that whilst some of the teams were labelled as the Braintree and Witham Teams, they were not limited to these areas and covered areas outside of this remit.
- Currently across the district the Street Cleaning Team were emptying a total of 1125 litter bins and the frequency of collection depended on a number of factors which included the area, footfall and usage. They also reviewed trends and complaints and in order to increase collections where necessary. The street cleansing service were also responsible for 957 dog bins, again the frequency for these differed across the district based on the same variations as the litter bins.
- The street cleansing service also provided a rapid response team who were predominantly called out to clear fly tips in the district in almost all occasions within one working day.
- Members were informed that the street cleansing service work in partnership with a number of bodies including Parish Councils, Essex County Council Highways, national highways and voluntary groups across the District. Internally the Street Cleansing Team worked closely with Communications and Marketing who were the strategic lead on the campaigns delivered.
- The Street Cleansing Team were also the main support for all litter campaigns rolled out across the district and were responsible for the set up and monitoring of the projects. It was reported that the team had carried out some research following a previous litter signage campaign and had recorded a 28% reduction in ground litter.
- Following the roll out of new bins installed in laybys along the A12 and A120, it was reported that there had been a reduction in ground litter in the laybys from 15% down to 7-8% and the team had seen an increase in the amount of litter being collected from the bins. These were monitored once a month and following the installation of the new bins, saw an increase on one route from around 250kg of litter from laybys, to 310kg collected.
- It was reported that the stretch of A12 that the Council were responsible for had a total of 49 bins installed at laybys, whereas the section of the A12 within Colchester City Council's jurisdiction was serviced by one additional layby in comparison and only maintained six bins in total.
- The Street Cleansing Team were also considering a greater use of digital technology including CCTV and “litter cams”. “Litter Cams” were highly sensitive static cameras that could detect the smallest pieces of waste being thrown out of a vehicle. These had recently been trialed in Maidstone, however it was questioned whether these just moved the litter further along the highway.
- It was reported that the litter and dog bin routes throughout the district would be reviewed in 2024. It was also being considered to bring in a new policy enabling members of the public to put in requests for new and additional litter bins throughout the district.

- It was noted that one of the biggest challenges being faced was the cultural issue of the 'throw away' society and it was important to continue to educate people.

In response to questions asked by Members, the following information and actions were raised:

- It was reported that one of the biggest challenges in litter prevention was on slip roads as these were difficult to install signage and litter pick. Due to the fast travelling vehicles on these roads special permissions and traffic management were required to service these roads. The District Council were working to overcome this by gaining support from the collaborative partnerships that had been set up.
- It was considered that litter bins were not always clearly visible therefore the initiative to install bigger brighter bins would enable drivers to locate the bins easier and encourage usage. It was believed that the decrease of litter seen on the ground and increase of litter collected from the bins was an indication that this had been successful.
- Members were informed that part of the collaborative work being carried out along the A12 with other authorities presented the Councils the opportunity to align their communications and work together on the same initiatives to project a stronger and clearer message.
- Councillor Abbott advised he had been in contact with a representative of National Highways who had confirmed they undertook weekly inspections of litter along all major roads and reported this to the responsible authority. Councillor Abbott then sought clarity from officers to confirm whether any correspondence had been received from National Highways in respect to certain areas along the A12. The Operations Manager reported that he had also been in contact with National Highways regarding the same issue and had been advised that the Braintree District was one of the better areas along the A12 in comparison to areas under other local authorities and that they continued to work closely with National Highways.
- In response to a question raised, it was reported that the waste from litter bins could not be recycled due to issues around contamination and was therefore sent to landfill sites. Officers confirmed that they had contacted the Probation Service to enquire whether there was the option for offenders undertaking community service to work alongside the District Council to complete tasks such as litter picking and repainting graffiti but were yet to receive a response. It was confirmed that the collaborative partnership was in its infancy with the main group meeting each quarter and sub-groups meeting monthly.
- It was noted that previous litter sweeps along the A12 had been carried out at night whereby traffic management were booked in advance. There was one occasion where the litter pick team were able to piggyback behind a national highways contractor which was a much cheaper alternative for the District Council however this was at the discretion of the contractor.

9. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 As part of the Scrutiny Review it was considered a valuable addition to our evidence gathering would be to forward a questionnaire to all Parish and Town Councils inviting them to take part. The questions that were put forward were:
- What, if any, litter management activities are undertaken by your Parish Council, and who is involved with this? (E.g. what are the cost/resource implications of litter management).
 - Which, if any, partners does your Parish Council work with to undertake litter management activities?
 - What past/current successes have there been with managing litter in your area? (e.g. any past successful campaigns that you could provide details on, any volunteer groups, etc).
 - Are there any challenges associated with managing litter in your area?
 - Going forward, how do you think coordinated working between Parish/Town Councils with the District Council could be improved in order to deter and manage littering in future?
- 9.2 Responses were received from twenty-four Councils, and can be found collated in [Appendix A – Survey Responses](#).
- 9.3 An invitation was also extended to National Highways to attend a Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee meeting to give further evidence for our review, but the Area Manager, Nigel Allsopp was unable to attend but answered questions in writing by email which were put before him. Please see [Appendix B – National Highways Area Manager response](#).

10. CONCLUSION OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 10.1 Having reviewed all the evidence within this Scrutiny Review the Committee has identified that:
- There are no fundamental concerns regarding how the Council works with its partners, although additional engagement was welcomed as a positive step. When considering future partnerships, consideration could be given to looking more widely or deeply for partners. Other initiatives identified at Full Council may require the concept of partnering to change, although the Committee could assist Officers in who they approach.
 - The Council undertakes effective campaigns with a range of partners to improve the management of litter across the district.
 - Parish Councils value the Council's service provision and are keen to engage further to achieve even greater improvements.
 - Investment in additional resources has resulted in a reduction in litter.

- The Council is effective at engaging with its partners when undertaking new campaigns and activities.
- Litter on the most major and most minor routes are the most problematic to remove and resolve.
- Fast food, building site litter and litter from operatives working on building sites made up a significant percentage of litter in some areas, and warranted targeted action.
- There remains a need to educate people to not drop litter, to be aware of the consequences of dropping litter and to not drop litter as a result.
- Public perception is that the penalty for littering is too low and should be increased to act as a deterrent and alter littering behaviours.
- Officers, Members and residents play an integral role in litter reduction and the success evident within the review often is at least partially as a result of an individual or group or department's efforts to go above and beyond and provide exceptional service.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS OF SCRUTINY REVIEW

- 11.1 The Committee started the Scrutiny Review in July 2022 knowing that we were not going to solve the litter issue entirely. Litter management in itself is a very large topic but we feel the direction that we followed as a Committee involved in partnership working will hopefully add value to the service the Council already provides and that the recommendations contained in this report represent cost efficient ways of tackling litter through education, enforcement, raising awareness and continuing to work with the partnerships that the Council is already involved with and to look to further opportunities to work with other partners in the future. Following the conclusion of the Scrutiny Review into Litter Management in the Braintree District, Members of the Partnership Development Scrutiny Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation - 1

Operations to work closely with National Highways through their new committee. Cooperation to be sought from National Highways to give local authorities who are members of that committee better access to the trunk road network (A12 and A120) by means of Programmed Traffic Management to carry out litter picking along with any other regular maintenance work by other partners. Cabinet Member responsible for Highways to raise the concerns with Essex County Council and National Highways and encourage them to attend to raise the profile of the issue and be solutions driven.

Evidence

The Traffic Management is an essential and expensive element of these major works. At present Operations try to piggy back onto other Contractors Traffic Management facility on an adhoc basis, which doesn't allow for a regular programme of litter clearing to these areas, therefore large areas remain littered for long periods.

Recommendation - 2

Encourage Operations Department to look at recycling bins to encourage greater recycling in town centres. (Re: example of Bin in Buxton Derbyshire, High Peak Borough Council in partnership with Nestle Water (Photograph [here](#))

Evidence

If we are encouraging greater time spent in our town centres for the purpose of socialising, then we need to have the appropriate waste receptacles in place to promote our council's green agenda on recycling.

Recommendation - 3

Communications team to continue to work with the fast food outlets to investigate and implement appropriate campaign materials to monitor and regulate littering levels and to try to educate those that continue to discard their takeaway litter both as pedestrians and from vehicles.

Evidence

The returned responses from parish and town council surveys indicate that for a number of parishes especially within a few miles of a takeaway premises litter thrown from vehicles is a continuing and increasing problem. Evidence is also borne out by Committee members from their wards.

Recommendation - 4

The Communications and Operations team along with the Cabinet Member to encourage the Essex County Councillor Portfolio Holder to invest in secondary schools to get the subject issues onto the educational agenda and effectively engage schools in a litter reduction campaign to ensure that this agenda sits at the forefront of educational settings and young people's priorities.

Evidence Responses received from Parish Councils surveys suggest that younger children are very conscientious in depositing litter correctly, but the responsibility appears to wain in some older secondary age children.

Recommendation - 5

The Communication and Operations Team, along with the Cabinet Member to encourage the Essex County Councillor Portfolio Holder to invest in an education programme with all schools to design posters containing litter prevention information be designed and made available for businesses, shops, leisure and tourism sites, pubs and restaurants. The availability of these posters be promoted through the media. We believe this recommendation will be a low cost initiative that will give residents and businesses the power to display promotional literature to discourage littering.

Evidence

The knowledge gained from our evidence gathering sessions were that in the last ten years that at least one litter campaign was carried out each year by the authority and this could form a future campaign and by producing posters to have displayed in prominent places throughout the district and designed by young people in schools it could form part of Recommendation 4 (education) and in turn be a visual reminder to businesses and the public.

Recommendation - 6

It would be very helpful if Braintree District Council could facilitate signposting on their website so the public can easily access the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs` (DEFRA) directory of licensed waste carriers in the area. This signposting could also be shared with Parish Councils for them to disseminate to their residents.

Evidence

Following the presentation from Councillor Dobson of Feering Parish Council, she outlined the concerns that residents had when requiring a skip hire or similar to remove waste from properties, whether the carrier was a bona fide operator.

Recommendation - 7

Where success appears to have been achieved following the mobile 'Do not litter' signs being 'in situ' in what were persistent hot spots of discarded litter, consideration might be given to a permanent sign being put in their place outlining the penalties if littering occurs. It would require Highways involvement and an opportunity to explore joint working with the County Council should be pursued to promote this shared agenda, alongside continuation of the successful current system in place to reduce littering.

Evidence

From Parish Council surveys evidence shows that significant improvement was seen following the removal of the signs for some considerable time afterwards. It was felt that benefit could be had from a permanent sign in place.

Recommendation – 8

The Operations team to explore further opportunities to support community groups and Parish Councils with procurement of equipment to aid their litter collection and gathering evidence of littering and fly tipping. Signposting of grant funding availability and other opportunities would continue to be explored.

Evidence

From the Parish Council responses the acknowledgement that Braintree District Council Operations were invaluable in their support to the Parish Council and the benefit of partnership working for favourable outcomes in customer service was very evident.

Recommendation - 9

That the Portfolio Holder liaises with the Local Government Association to lobby the Secretary of State to look at imposing much greater fines to act as a real deterrent for both dropping litter and fly tipping, so that it truly identifies the environmental crime that it is and identifies the perpetrators of the offence.

Cabinet to review the fines they charge and the success achieved in payment of the fines, alongside consideration of whether the framework also requires review.

Evidence

Taken from *Defra's Review of fixed penalties for environmental offences and introduction of civil penalties for littering from vehicles outside London Summary of responses August 2017 - Page 4.*

An overwhelming majority of responses (87%) agreed that the fixed penalties for littering should be increased.

Fourteen councils felt that increasing the fixed penalties would help to maintain or increase the deterrent effect. An increase in fixed penalties would send a tougher message to those who continue to litter and could mean that a fixed penalty notice is viewed as more than just a minor offence.

Eight councils said it would lead to reductions in litter, change littering behaviour and generally lead to a better quality of environment.

12. LINKS TO MINUTES AND AGENDAS OF MEETINGS

[11th May 2022](#)

[13th July 2022](#)

[28th September 2022](#)

[16th November 2022](#)

13. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Ros Alam, Marketing and Engagement Officer, Braintree District Council
- Nigel Allsop, Essex Highways Area Manager
- Councillor Christa Dobson, Feering Parish Council
- Tania Roberge, Marketing and Communications Manager, Braintree District Council
- Levi White, Waste and Street Cleaning Manager, Braintree District Council
- Steve Wilson, Operations Manager, Braintree District Council
- Mr Justin Wrench, Headteacher, Gt Bradfords Junior School, Braintree

Report Title: To adopt the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/63
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills	
Enquiries to: Carly Jones, Strategy and Business Support carly.jones@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To recommend that Braintree District Council (the Council) adopts the Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028.
- 1.2 The Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028 (the Strategy) has been developed and taken out to stakeholder and public consultation on the 3 key priorities which address the main housing issues that residents in the Braintree District are facing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet considers and approves the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028, as set out in Appendix 5.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Housing continues to be a key government priority. Coupled with changing demographic trends, particularly an aging population, and the changing focus of health and care services towards an integrated system in the community, the Council needs to consider how to align its approach to Housing with population health management.
- 3.2 Whilst there is no statutory requirement to have a Housing Strategy, it is recommended that the Council has one in place to provide a clear strategic direction for housing within the district. The new Strategy provides a clear vision and direction to guide the Council's housing activity. The adoption of the Strategy will aid the Council in delivering an effective future housing service over the next five years, supporting the current and future housing offer and needs for those choosing to live in the Braintree district and a route map to tackling challenges faced by the Council.
- 3.3 In the preparation of the Strategy, the Council also held Housing Strategy Workshops on 17 and 18 October 2022. These consisted of a member's workshop with 5 District Councillors followed by a second workshop with 30 individuals from the NHS, other Local Authorities, internal officers from key departments and representatives from the voluntary sector and housing

providers. The purpose was to gather views on the main housing issues, across all tenures, within the district. The feedback from this event has influenced and developed the Strategy before it was submitted for public consultation.

- 3.4 The workshops highlighted that meeting the needs and supporting communities, improving home standards, access to housing and affordability are priority areas to focus on. A key theme identified through the workshops was that residents needed both immediate short-term support reflected in the cost of living, but also the need for creative measures to be implemented to explore long term sustainable change, which would support future living costs and energy efficiency. Accordingly, these themes have been brought into the Strategy.
- 3.5 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- Connecting People and Places
 - Enhancing our Environment
 - Supporting our Communities
 - Promoting Prosperity
 - Delivering and Innovation
- 3.6 This Strategy is aligned to the corporate plan. The aim of the Healthy Housing Strategy is to promote homes that are energy efficient, sustain health and well-being, meet the needs of the growing population, and build resilient communities with access to opportunities. As well as supporting the build of new homes, the Council is committed to improving the district's current housing stock and supporting residents to live in suitable, stable housing.
- 3.7 The Council will achieve this by working on its 3 key priorities for the next five years which are.
1. Enable a consistent programme of good quality homes which best meet the needs of the current and future residents
 2. Support communities and enable housing across the district to meet the needs of all our residents, especially those who are vulnerable.
 3. Improve access to and the quality of existing homes including the Private Rented Sector
- 3.8 The Strategy complements the newly adopted Local Plan and other key strategies and policies, which address areas out of scope for the strategy including housing demand and the infrastructure required to support housing growth.
- 3.9 The Strategy will be supported by a delivery plan, which will be managed by the Head of Housing and Community. This will ensure that the key priorities of the Strategy over the next five years are achieve.

4. Consultation

4.1 To assist the Council in the finalisation of the Strategy, the Council undertook a public consultation, in line with best practice, to seek input into the Strategy and the Councils approach to the development of new homes and improvements of existing homes, helping people avoid homelessness and how the Council can strengthen the links between housing, health, the environment and economy. This consultation took place between 13th December 2022 and 7th February 2023, and full details are set out in paragraph 4 below.

4.2 The consultation included engagement with residents and key stakeholders to seek feedback and direction on the development of the strategic direction the Council has set out in the Strategy. To ensure that the Council reach the wider stakeholders, the Council consulted through the following mechanisms:

1. A local press release
2. Promotion and discussion via social media
3. Braintree District Council website
4. Emails to key partners
5. Discussion at various partnership forums
6. Surveys sent to all partners and residents
7. Survey on the Councils website

4.3 As part of the consultation, the Council asked for feedback around the following three areas:

- 1) The extent to which respondents agree with the proposed priorities and objectives set out within the Strategy;
- 2) General themes and feedback; and
- 3) Profile of respondents

An evaluation summary of the consultation can be found at Appendix 3 and illustrate show respondents' feedback has been considered and where necessary incorporated into the final Strategy document.

Consultation Feedback:

- A total of 246 responses were received
- Received responses from residents, staff members, PRS landlords/agents, community groups, affordable and social housing providers and development, construction and planning professionals
- 48 respondents wanted to see better infrastructure and facilities (GPs, schools, roads etc.)
- 21 highlighted their concern with the loss of green spaces/need more green spaces
- 21 wanted to know what action we were taking to improve existing homes
- 15 made comments on the importance of energy efficient homes

Key Themes

- 80% of respondents rated 'Reducing the number of empty properties in the district by exploring options to bring them back into use' as important (highest)
- 77% respondents rated 'ensuring all new homes emphasise energy efficient' as important
- 'Building positive relationships with property owners and estate agents' and 'Working in partnership to deliver new, high quality, affordable homes in the district' were the least important priorities of the strategy

The Healthy Housing Strategy received many comments regarding the lack of detail around infrastructure. These comments have all been passed onto the planning department for their consideration in future work they undertake. Comments from the Healthy Housing Strategy Consultation are in Appendix 4

Recommendations from the consultation

- Update the strategy to provide clarity around The Local Plan and neighbourhood development plans. The HHS can be used to inform and complements the production of future Local and Neighbourhood Plans
- Combined priority 'Exploring incentives to reach more people to help them access the PRS' and 'Building positive relationships with property owners and estate agents to help improve routes into the PRS' into 1 priority
- Create a new priority 'Explore option to improve existing housing stock in the district' using housing condition survey being undertaken by Environmental Health and actions from the Climate Strategy
- Explaining terminology 'vulnerable' 'affordable' and 'healthy'

5. Options

- 5.1 The Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy. However, the key options considered are:

Option 1 – No Housing Strategy

- 5.2 The option to not have a housing strategy is not recommended. This is because a local housing strategy comprehensively describes the approach our district plans to take to meet its housing objectives and is considered best practice. With the current financial landscape our residents and businesses are facing, the possibility of a 40% reduction in new starts next year and an ambitious target to be net zero, this strategy bridges the gap and offers a strategic approach to supporting new and existing affordable, suitable housing for our residents in a time of uncertainty.

Option 2 – Approve the new draft Housing Strategy

- 5.3 To approve and adopt the new draft Strategy. This option is recommended as it is widely considered best practice to have a Housing Strategy which will provide a clear vision and strategy to guide future housing activity, ensure that

we continue to meet affordable housing targets, align with The Local Plan, and support the links to economic regeneration and wellbeing.

- 5.4 Option 2 is a preferred option to enable a clear strategic direction regarding Housing in the district. The Councils Housing Action Plan will have a robust proactive monitoring process to horizon scan and consider evolving issues and responding to this changing landscape and to consider proactive interventions where required.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The next steps would be to adopt the strategy and publish on the Councils website

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Strategy commits the Council to explore several areas that may have financial consequences, and where additional funding is required beyond the current resources available to the Housing Service (including from Homelessness Prevention grant), these will be brought to the Cabinet or Council as required.
- 7.2 The approved budget for 2023/24 included transferring £427k of New Homes Bonus receivable in 2023/24 to reserve to support delivery of the Economic Growth and Healthy Housing Strategies. Allocation of this funding to specific actions within strategies is still to be finalised.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a duty on Housing Authorities to formulate, publish and update Homelessness Strategies. However, the Deregulation Act 2015 removed the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Housing Strategy. Therefore, there is no similar legal requirement for a Housing Strategy, but it is expected that Councils will formulate and update strategies that set out their aims and objectives.
- 8.2 The previous Housing Strategy is now out of date, and it is considered best practice for the Council to continue to have a strategy in place. The Housing strategy supports several strategies including The local Plan, The Bouncing Back Together Plan and The Climate Strategy.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 The Strategy considers the needs of vulnerable families and adults. The Strategy is intended as a strategic document, but of the actions involved in implementing the Strategy may have safeguarding implications, which will be considered at the time.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. List of Appendices

[Appendix 1 Housing Strategy Survey](#)

[Appendix 2 poster](#)

[Appendix 3 Summary of results](#)

[Appendix 4 Comments from HHS](#)

[Appendix 5 Healthy Hosuing Strategy](#)

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 *None*

Report Title: To award a contract for planned maintenance works for the Council's owned roads and car parks	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/09
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills	
Enquiries to: Paul Quin, Interim Asset Manager, E mail: paul.quin@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to award a contract to the successful tenderer to carry out works on the Braintree District Council (the Council) roadways and car parks.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1.1 Note the procurement of the planned maintenance works contract for the Council's owned roads and car parks with a budget of £250,000 with an additional 10% contingency, and
- 2.1.2 Authorise the Corporate Director, Growth, to award the contract to the successful bidder following a tender process utilising the EPH Framework PROC21-0108 Footpath and Road Repairs and Replacement – Lot 2 Civil Engineering Contractors, provided the award is within the agreed budget.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Each year, the Council commissions an assessment of the condition of the roadways, paths and car parks within its ownership to ascertain the need for maintenance and repair.
- 3.2 The purpose of this approach is to identify immediate and future requirements deemed necessary to maintain the safety and functionality of road and pathway surfaces. By carrying out regular maintenance, the intention is to prevent unexpected, exceptional capital costs occurring that are not budgeted for.
- 3.3 Whilst some repairs become necessary as the result of severe weather conditions causing undue deterioration, in the main, this approach enables structured, informed expenditure year on year.

- 3.4 In November 2022, Montagu Meyer McFarlane (MMM), Consulting Engineers delivered a report detailing the condition of roads, paths and car parks across 25 locations throughout the district. Detailed within Appendix 1.
- 3.5 MMM have then prepared, based on the surveys, a Scope of proposed works for 2023 together with a template Bill of Quantities for the tenderers to fill in their rates and prices. This will form part of the Invitation to Participate in a Mini Competition under the Footpath & Road Repairs & Replacement Framework PROC21-0108 Lot 2 for Planned Maintenance Programme for the Council Owned Roads, Footpaths and Car Parks 2022/23. There are 4 contractors on this Framework. Each of these will be invited to tender.
- 3.6 The inspections carried out by MMM have identified 10 sites that require emergency repairs and maintenance to be carried out. The Bill of Quantities identifies the specific works recommended in each case.
- 3.7 Tenderers will be invited to submit their pricing for two lots:
- i Lot 1 Price
 - ii. Lot 2 Fixed price
- 3.8 Lot 1 will define standard costs which could then result in further allowable costs occurring once the contractor starts on site and discovers unexpected additional elements to tasks. This would take cost control away from the Council. Hence, Lot 2 is there to give the option of the contractor stating their position for them to absorb the risk of cost differentials cropping up.
- 3.9 The works will be divided up into packages with the first detailing full reinstatement works (as shown at Appendix 1) and the remaining five packages, the planned maintenance by site (shown in one schedule of Appendix 2). If tenders come in within budget, all packages of works can be actioned fully, however if the tenders exceed the budget the Council has reserved the right to determine whether to postpone some or all of the maintenance works until next year. This would then involve a further tender process.
- 3.10 The estimated value of the proposed contract is £250,000 and an additional 10% contingency margin is proposed, to allow scope for total expenditure up to £275,000. This excludes professional fees of £7,200 for tender analysis, contract and site supervision.
- 3.11 Site locations and brief summary of proposed works:

SITE ADDRESS	
St. Andrews Road, Halstead	Full reinstatement – Resurface and white line road.
Halstead Leisure Centre car park	Clear drains and overtop concrete areas with tarmac
Swinbourne Drive, Braintree	Replace BT cover with a H.D cover. Resurface road and re-lay road entrances.
Gt. Notley community centre car park	Resurface car park and white line.

Springwood Drive car park & lorry park, Braintree	Clear up debris at rear of lorry park. Concrete surface the trailer standing areas.
Spinks Lane car park, Witham	Paint car park white lines
28-30 Wulvesford, Witham	Tarmac surface to rear car park
Site entrances, Swinbourne Drive, Braintree	Replace BT cover with a H.D cover. Resurface road and re-lay tenant entrances.
Car park & paths, Goldingham Hall, Goldingham, Braintree	White lining
Driberg Way, Braintree	Temporary works to pavement

- 3.12 Many of the tasks involved within the proposed works involve the need for working outside of normal hours. In the case of schools, commercial premises and community facilities, it is not viable to obstruct access to users during normal operating hours. Hence, weekend working will be necessary. This tends to come at a premium cost.
- 3.13 Where full reinstatement works are actioned, future years' maintenance will be mitigated, thus moderating the annual budget going forwards. Works should be completed over approximately 8 weekends through the Spring/early summer of 2023.
- 3.14 Once the tenders are received, there will be scope for clarification questions to be addressed, following which each tender will be evaluated by the appointed panel using a scoring matrix which will be based 95% on price and 5% on compliance with specification and statement on delivery programme.
- 3.15 Although tenderers on the framework will have been financially assessed when being appointed to it, a further assessment will be carried out prior to award, to ensure that their situation has not altered in the intervening period for the worse.
- 3.16 Following individual evaluations, an evaluation panel meeting will take place to moderate and reach a consensus score between panel members. This will determine the winning tender.

4. Options

4.1 Do Nothing

If the Council were to do nothing, roads and car parks within the district would deteriorate over time. This would cause not only risks to the health and safety of users, but also reputational damage for neglect. In time, maintenance works would develop into a need for widespread major reinstatement which would put too much demand on capital expenditure. In the interests of good estate management, doing nothing is not a recommended option.

4.2 Carry out ad hoc maintenance

Instead of tendering a structured maintenance programme, the Council could just react to individual needs as and when they arise. This would lead to

reactive maintenance and unplanned/non-budgeted expenditure. This is not a recommended option.

4.3 Council Operations team to carry out works

Many of the required works are specialist, involving specialist plant and machinery that the Council does not possess. Within the civil engineering industry, this contract is regarded as modest. Whereas larger contractors can afford such plant and machinery as part of their overhead, the cost would be disproportionate for the Council. This is therefore not a recommended option.

4.4 Award the contract through Framework tender process

The Council could use the appointed framework (The Essex Procurement Hub in this case) to invite tenders from approved contractors to carry out these works on the Council's behalf. In gaining a position on the Framework, contractors have already satisfied the requirements relative to financial stability, quality of work, health and safety policies, human rights, insurances and resources. They have also agreed to adopt standard Terms and Conditions of Engagement as referred to below at 8.3.

This option provides a structure and ordered approach to the identified roads and car parks maintenance needs of the Council and is the recommended option.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The contract price will be up to £250,000, with an additional 10% contingency to allow for higher than estimated pricing by contractors. Professional fees of £7,200 will also be incurred. The total value of the works, including the contingency provision, is within the overall capital budget for Planned Maintenance.

5.2 Should tenders come in higher, some works may be postponed to future years to bring the overall contract within budget.

5.3 If tenders should come in lower than expected, the Council will be able to determine whether there are additional works that would be beneficial to also include in this round where appropriate to do so.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 In undertaking the procurement the Council has had regard to its own Procurement Procedure Rules and all relevant statutory provisions. The contract will be awarded under the Framework's standard Terms and Conditions, supplemented by the JCT Minor Works Contract (MW 2016). The latter is recognised as an all - encompassing format and accepted industry wide for these types of works.

6.2 By carrying out these works, the Council will mitigate potential claims relative to Health and safety hazards which might otherwise exist as a result of potholes, uneven surfaces or potentially injurious features.

- 6.3 In order to gain a position on the Essex Procurement Hub Framework, contractors will necessarily have agreed to standard Terms and Conditions of Engagement. These take precedence over the JCT Minor Works contract.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendation in this report

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 8.3 There are no equality and diversity implications applicable to this decision.
- ## **9. List of Appendices**
- 9.1 None
- ## **10. Background papers**
- 10.1 Planned maintenance of roads and car parks 2023 prepared by MMM
- 10.2 Invitation to Participate in Mini Competition
- 10.3 2022 2023 Planned Maintenance Owned Assets Roads and car Parks
- 10.4 Road maintenance Tender documents

Report Title: Parking Strategy 2023-2027 and new Off-Street Parking Places Order	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/66
Report Presented by: Councillor Richard van Dulken, Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation	
Enquiries to: Samir Pandya, Operations Strategy and Policy Manager sampa@braintree.gov.uk	

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve a Parking Strategy which sets out the Council's approach to the provision and overall management of parking across the Braintree District over the next four years (from 2023 to 2027). The Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 and includes an Action Plan that reflects how its key aims and objectives will be achieved. The Strategy replaces the Parking Protocol which was last updated in 2018.
- 1.2 Some of the actions arising from the Strategy require an amendment to Braintree District Council's Off-Street Parking Places Order (OSPPO) before they can be introduced and so authority is being sought to commence the statutory process required in order to make the necessary changes. These relate to the car parking tariff which was last reviewed in 2018; a move to a cashless-only system of payment in the Pay & Display car parks; the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging points and the introduction of flexible parking tickets options. There is also a proposal to withdraw the *10p after 3pm* parking concession, although this does not form part of the parking tariff and so does not feature in the OSPPO. The proposed parking tariff is set out at Appendix 3.
- 1.3 The effect of the new OSPPO, if confirmed as proposed, will be to revoke the existing Braintree District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2022 ("2022 Order"). However, the provisions in the 2022 Order will be brought forward into the new OSPPO save for the changes set out in paragraph 3 and Appendix 3 of this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet:
 1. Approves the Parking Strategy 2023-27 and Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 1;

2. Approves the proposed revised parking tariff and structure, with a view to it coming into effect from 1 June 2023, following the conclusion of the statutory process and further decision to bring in a new OSPPO;
3. Agrees to introduce free parking for blue badge holders as set out within the report, subject to the outcome of the statutory process and further decision being taken to bring in a new OSPPO;
4. Agrees to withdraw the 10p after 3pm (Mon-Sat) and 10p all day (Sunday) parking concession.
5. Gives authority to commence the Order making process for a new OSPPO to change:-
 - a. the parking tariffs and structure;
 - b. the types of season tickets available;
 - c. the Pay & Display payment methods; and
 - d. the daily charge to Travelodge customers for using Victoria Square and other car parks in Braintree.
6. Authorises the Operations Strategy & Policy Manager, in consultation with the Head of Governance, to take all such steps as are expedient and necessary to make a new OSPPO in accordance with recommendation 4 of this report; and
7. In the event that representations are received to the making of the new OSPPO, authority is delegated to the Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation to consider the objections received within the statutory consultation period and determine whether the Order should be confirmed (with or without modifications).

3. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

3.1.1 There have been a number of changes since the Parking Protocol was last updated which have impacted demand for parking and will influence how both on and off-street parking is managed over the coming years. These are listed below and have been considered when updating the Strategy.

- The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the way we work, resulting in the need to travel to the workplace less frequently (if at all).
- Covid has changed the way we pay for goods and services with cashless payments now having become the norm.
- The global focus on climate change is pushing us away from traditional modes of transport towards greener alternatives and more sustainable travel options.
- There has been a growth in the popularity of e-bikes (and e-scooters) which enable people to travel greater distances, reducing reliance on cars.
- The cost-of-living crisis may have prompted some households to seek more affordable travel options (walking, cycling, etc.).
- Growth in the District inevitably puts more traffic on the roads and thus demand for parking space, either at home or when travelling.

- The phasing out of petrol and diesel cars and acceleration of electric vehicles is driving demand for charging points at convenient locations.
 - Increased familiarity with mobile technology provides an opportunity to move to a cashless-only method of payment for parking that offers greater flexibility and convenience to car park users.
- 3.1.2 In addition to the above, the parking tariff has been reviewed to ensure that it remains competitive, continues to support the local economy, delivers value for money and generates revenue to address the current budget shortfall of circa £200k within the service. The main changes to the Strategy are outlined below.

3.2 Revised parking tariff and structure

- 3.2.1 The parking tariff has not been increased for some 9 years other than a moderate increase to the first two tariffs in April 2018. The existing tariff is out of sync with other Essex authorities and car park maintenance costs have increased significantly in the intervening period, along with the management fee paid to the North Essex Parking Partnership for off-street enforcement. Some changes have been proposed to the tariff structure in relation to the commuter car parks to ensure that these remain competitive with other parking provision locally.

Full details of the proposed tariffs are set out at Appendix 3, but the main changes are listed below.

Commuter Car Parks, Witham:

- Off-Peak Day Rate moved from 9.30am to start at 10.00am
- Night Rate brought forward from 7.00pm to start at 4.00pm
- Day time and night time tariffs amended.

Commuter Car Park, Braintree:

- Standard Day rate increased by up to £1
- Annual Season Tickets - increased by £100
- Introduction of a Flexible 90-day Pass
- Overnight Season Ticket – increased by £20 p.a.

Short/Long Stay Car Parks

- Day time Tariff – increased by up to £1
- Night rate – increased by 50p
- Annual Season Tickets - increased by £100
- Introduction of a Flexible 90-day Pass

Other

- Withdrawal of the '10p after 3pm' (Mon-Sat) and '10p all day' (Sunday) parking concessions.
- Introduction of FREE parking for blue badge holders

3.3 Cashless Only Payments

- 3.3.1 The use of technology is an integral part of everyday life and cashless payment has become the norm when paying for goods and services. The

Council's customers appreciate the convenience of cashless pay, with 66% of car park transactions now being cashless.

3.3.2 In 2018, the Council upgraded all its car park ticket machines to accommodate 'contactless' payment and, moving forward, it is proposed to maximise the use of technology to collect parking fees. This will prevent theft and reduce the incidence of vandalism to the machines, improving reliability and convenience to the customer, and reducing the operating costs of collecting and managing cash from payment points. This change will deliver a net saving of £10k per annum with the Council's Service Level Agreement with the NEPP, as they will no longer be required to collect cash from the ticket machines.

3.3.3 It is acknowledged that the move to a totally cashless system of payment may impact some car park users. However, signage will be updated with very clear instructions on how to pay for parking in advance of the machines being replaced, giving people time to prepare for cashless payment.

3.4 Flexible Ticket Option

3.4.1 Given the change in working patterns arising from the Covid pandemic, it was considered that a more flexible arrangement should be included in the parking tariff to accommodate people who travel regularly but no longer need to park 5-days a week throughout the year as they may have done in the past. This will also support those who undertake seasonal work (Christmas or Summer Holidays for example) or who only need to travel regularly for a short period of time. It is therefore proposed to introduce a Flexible 90-day Pass which will enable customers to buy a block of 90 (virtual) daily 'permits' that can be used as and when required over a 12-month period for the same price as a quarterly season ticket. This will be available at all car parks that offer season tickets.

3.5 Permits/Season Tickets

3.5.1 There is currently a disparity in the tariff for parking permits (which come with a designated parking space) and season tickets (which do not) and this is seen as being unfair. It is proposed that both tariffs be increased by £100 in 2023 but that the price for parking permits be reviewed as part of the Council's annual Fees & Charges in future years to address the disparity and reflect the added value they provide.

3.6 Blue Badge Parking

3.6.1 In October 2014, the Council introduced charges for blue badge holders based on the principle that all those who use the car parks should pay for parking. However, benchmarking undertaken as part of the recent tariff review has revealed that nearly all of the other Essex Authorities provide free all-day parking for blue badge holders, although some set a maximum limit of 3hrs. It is therefore proposed that the Council aligns its tariff with most other Essex Authorities and offers FREE all-day parking to blue badge holders using designated bays in the Council's Pay & Display car parks, providing their badge is on display.

- 3.6.2 It is considered that offering free parking for blue badge holders will encourage greater use of the spaces allocated for people with disabilities.

3.7 Standards in the Council's Public Car Parks

- 3.7.1 This section (para 3.8 in the Strategy) has been updated to incorporate the current arrangements for inclement weather and to reflect the fact that anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated and CCTV may be used to help manage this if considered necessary.

3.8 Operating Hours

- 3.8.1 A note has been included to explain that the operating hours for all of the Council's car parks can be found in the OSPPO and are also clearly displayed at each site.

3.9 Vehicle Technology Led Demand

- 3.9.1 In November 2020, the Government announced a commitment to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and a requirement that all new cars and vans be fully zero emission by 2035.
- 3.9.2 The government is working with industry and local government to grow a network of EV chargepoints – both on-street and at petrol station-style charging hubs. On-street provision is a matter for Essex County Council, but the Council is adapting its off-street parking infrastructure to make provision for EV charging within its car parks. Currently the Council has installed 25 EV chargers across Braintree & Witham including 2 at the Enterprise Centre, 2 at The Plaza and 1 at iConstruct in Braintree. All others are in the main public car parks.
- 3.9.3 Essex County Council may see increased demand for dropped kerbs from residents and businesses who want the convenience of charging their vehicles on their own property. This will further reduce available parking space on the public highway and a balance will need to be struck between approving such requests and meeting demand for on-street parking space.

3.10 Changes to the OSPPO arising from the Parking Strategy

- 3.10.1 The Council is responsible for a number of car parks in various locations in the District which it controls by means of an OSPPO. An OSPPO is a legal means by which the Council regulates the use of its car parks and sets out the charging periods and tariffs for the parking places included within the OSPPO.
- 3.10.2 Whilst changes to parking tariffs can be accommodated by making a variation to the OSPPO, more fundamental changes require a new OSPPO to be issued. As the proposed changes will require amendment to the main articles of the OSPPO, in accordance with the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) the Council is required to make a new OSPPO. Accordingly, the Council will need to advertise the new OSPPO which will incorporate all the proposed changes set out in this report.

3.11 Other changes to the OSPPO

- 3.11.1 Under the terms of the Lease Arrangement with Travelodge, Braintree, an annual inflationary increase is to be applied to the tariff for Travelodge customers who use the car parks in Braintree. This is reflected in the revised tariff.

3.12 Corporate Objectives

- 3.12.1 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:-

- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play;
- A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure;
- A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities;
- A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services.

4. **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The proposed OSPPO will be subject to statutory consultation in accordance with The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (as amended).
- 4.2 There is a legal requirement to advertise the proposed OSPPO, inviting comments from members of the public and key stakeholders before advertising the final changes in light of the outcome of the consultation.
- 4.3 Should any representations to the proposals be received, these will have to be considered and a final judgement made on whether to confirm the OSPPO or not, with or without modifications. To help streamline this process, it is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation to consider any objections received within the statutory consultation period and to determine whether the OSPPO should be confirmed with or without modifications.

5. **OPTIONS**

- 5.1 There are two options for consideration:

5.1.1 Do nothing

This option would leave the Council with no Parking Strategy for the District and no changes to the car parking tariffs for 9 years other than a moderate increase to the first two tariffs and it would not address the current financial gap in the parking budget.

5.1.2 Approve the new Parking Strategy and the associated car park tariff changes

This option would provide a refreshed Parking Strategy for the District which reflects the changes in parking behaviours including the post-impact of Covid-19. It would also allow the Council to update the car parking tariffs in line with other Essex Authorities (**Recommended Option**).

- 5.1.3 The pros and cons for each option are summarised in **Appendix 2**.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Car parking charges were previously reviewed in 2018 and resulted in only modest changes being made. Given the uncertainties post-pandemic, the normal cyclical review was postponed for the 2022/23 budget.
- 6.2 The revised parking tariff has been benchmarked against other councils and operations for both Pay & Display and commuter parking and final changes will be subject to statutory consultation.
- 6.3 It is also proposed to withdraw the 10p after 3pm parking concession and switch to cashless parking. These two changes are expected to increase income by £50k and reduce operating costs by £10k respectively.
- 6.4 The proposed withdrawal of charges for blue badge holders is expected to result in a net loss of income of between £10k-£20k based on 60% take-up over the course of a year.
- 6.5 The total additional income from the proposed changes to car parking assumed in the 2023/24 budget is £234k, profiled for a commencement date of 1 June 2023 (subject to approval of the recommendations set out in this report and the conclusion of the statutory process). To support modernisation of the service, £150k capital requirement was included in the 2023/24 budget for replacement parking machines. The income and expenditure savings arising from these proposals will offset the current budget shortfall in the parking service.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 OSPPOs are made under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) (the 1984 Act). It is recommended that a new OSPPO be made to replace the OSPPO 2022 to incorporate the changes referred to in section 3 of this report.
- 7.2 The proposed OSPPO will be advertised and consulted upon in accordance with the requirements of the 1984 Act and The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 (as amended).
- 7.3 The Regulations require a minimum 21-day period for the submission of any objections. Any objections received in the statutory consultation period should be considered before making a decision as to whether to confirm the OSPPO. For expediency, it is requested that authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation to consider the representations and to determine whether the OSPPO should be confirmed (with or without modifications).

- 7.4 A final version of the OSPPO shall be made and, in accordance with the Regulations, a 'notice of making' shall be published within 14 days and those who have made objections to the OSPPO notified of the Council's decision.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The tariff proposals will impact all users of the Council's car parks, however, the charges remain competitive when compared with other Essex authorities. The legal consultation process outlined above will ensure that any objections to the proposals are considered before finalising the OSPPO.
- 8.2 The proposals outlined will deliver greater flexibility in terms of what customers require and this will not only offer greater convenience, but also more choice.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) indicates that the proposals in this report may have an adverse impact on certain age groups and people with disabilities. All adverse impacts will be mitigated as detailed in the EIA.
- 9.4 Demographic data shows that 23% of the population in the Braintree District are aged 65 and over, which is lower than average. Many will be used to making contactless payments using their debit/credit cards when shopping at local shops or online, although it is recognised that that some may be less likely to have a mobile phone and use apps. That said, it is estimated that 96% of the population now have a mobile phone.
- 9.5 Signage will be updated with very clear instructions on how to use cards to pay for parking or use MiPermit three months before the machines are replaced. This will give prior notification to customers of the removal of cash options, giving them time to adapt and/or make alternative arrangements.
- 9.6 It is possible that drivers aged 17 won't have a bank account/debit card, but this is very unlikely and the impact on younger people is likely to be minimal.

- 9.7 The Council makes good provision in its car parks for people with disabilities, with designated parking bays at the most accessible locations and wheelchair-friendly ticket machines and this will continue. Users may find the cashless option more convenient as transactions can be completed without leaving the vehicle or be paid for in advance of travelling.
- 9.8 The proposal to introduce free all-day parking for blue badge holders will benefit people with disabilities and may encourage them to visit the town centres more frequently. It would also offer a safer parking environment, both for them and their vehicle if they would otherwise park on-street.
- 9.9 It is recognised that the proposed increases in the parking tariff may prompt some people on low, fixed income (state pension, universal credit, etc.) to change their behaviour and not drive into town as often as they did, opting instead to use public transport. There are good public transport links to the town centres as an alternative to driving.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Parking Strategy 2023-2027.
- 10.2 Appendix 2 – Options Pros and Cons.
- 10.3 Appendix 3 – Proposed Car Park Tariff Changes.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Equality Impact Assessment.
- 11.2 The Braintree District Council (Off Street Parking Places) Order 2022.

APPENDIX 2 – Pros and Cons for the two options

Option 1 – Do Nothing		Option 2 – Approve New Parking Strategy including making/publishing of the OSPPO for new Car Park Tariffs (Recommended)	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Business and customer support for price freeze on car park tariffs.	Does not address the financial gap from loss of income since the impact of Covid-19 in 2020.	Increased income will help address the budget shortfall in 2023-24.	
	Greater differential of car park tariffs with other Essex Authorities who have increased their prices taking inflation into account.	Remain competitive with other Essex Authorities and Network Rail whilst providing good value for money at our pay and display car parks.	Likely to get objections from customers and businesses to any car park tariff increases when the OSPPO is published for public consultation.
	Cannot introduce new 'flexible' car parking for part-time or seasonal workers.	Option of new 'flexible' car parking pass for part-time and seasonal or shift workers.	Likely to receive some objections to the proposal to move to cashless parking.
	Reduced income verses increased annual costs of maintenance and enforcement service by the NEPP.	Increases in the annual maintenance costs including electricity and the NEPP management fees would be covered by the new tariffs.	
	Failure to increase the tariff will widen the gap in charges imposed by other authorities in Essex.	Cashless Pay mitigates the risk of thefts from cash boxes, lowers maintenance costs and offers greater convenience to customers.	

APPENDIX 3 – Proposed Car Park Tariff Changes

COMMUTER CAR PARKS

Car Park / Facility	Detail of Charge (Tariff)	Current Tariff	Revised Tariff
CAR PARK Station Approach, Braintree SHORT & LONG stay	Mon-Fri Up to 1hr	£ 1.00	£ 1.50
	Mon-Fri 1 to 3hrs	£ 2.00	£ 2.80
	Mon-Fri 3 to 6hrs	£ 3.00	£ 4.50
	Mon-Fri (up to 24 hrs) Over 6hrs	£ 4.50	£ 5.50
	Saturday Up to 1hr	£ 1.00	£ 1.50
	Saturday (up to 24 hrs) Over 1hr	£ 2.00	£ 3.00
	Sunday (Day Rate) (valid to 7pm)	£ 0.50	£ 1.50
	Overnight – all days (entry from 7pm – valid to 7.30am next day)	£ 0.50	£ 1.00
	Season Tickets		
	Quarterly	£145.00	£174.00
	Annual	£550.00	£650.00
	Overnight Permits (valid 7pm to 7.30am next day)		
	Quarterly	£ 30.00	£ 36.00
	Six months	£ 55.00	£ 66.00
	Annual	£100.00	£120.00
	Market Traders (Wed & Sat)	£ 1.50	£ 2.00
	Bank Holidays & Public Holidays	Free	Free
	Electric Charging Points		
	Monday – Friday & Sunday	Standard Rate Applies	
	Saturday – up to 1hr	Standard Rate Applies	
	Saturday – Over 1hr	Day Rate Applies	

CAR PARK White Horse Lane, Witham LONG stay	Mon-Fri Day Rate – entry from 7am	£ 5.50	
	Mon-Fri Peak Day Rate – entry from 4am		£ 6.50
	Mon-Fri Off Peak Day Rate – entry from 10am		£ 5.50
	Saturday Day Rate (24 hrs)	£ 2.00	£ 3.00
	Sunday Day Rate – 7am to 7pm	£ 0.50	
	Sunday Day Rate (valid to 4am next day)		£ 3.00
	Night Rate – entry from 7pm	£ 0.50	
	Night Rate – entry from 4pm		£ 3.00
	Overnight Permits (valid 7pm to 7.30am next day)		
	Quarterly	£ 30.00	£ 36.00
	Six months	£ 55.00	£ 66.00
	Annual	£100.00	£120.00
	Bank Holidays & Public Holidays	Free	Free
	Electric Charging Points		
	Monday – Saturday	Standard Day Rate	
	Sunday (7am to 7pm)	Standard Day Rate	
	Evenings (all days) – (valid 4pm to 4am next day)	Standard Night Rate	

Car Park / Facility	Detail of Charge (Tariff)	Current Tariff	Revised Tariff
CAR PARK Easton Road, Witham LONG stay	Mon-Fri Peak Day Rate – entry from 4am to 9.30am	£6.50	
	Mon-Fri Off Peak Rate – entry from 9.30am to 7pm	£3.50	
	Mon-Fri Peak Day Rate – entry from 4am to 10.00am		£7.50
	Mon-Fri Off Peak Day Rate – entry from 10am		£5.50
	Saturday & Sunday (valid to 4am next day)	£2.00	£3.00
	Night Rate – entry from 7pm (valid to 4am next day)	£1.00	
	Night Rate – entry from 4pm (valid to 4am next day)		£3.00
	Bank Holidays & Public Holidays	Free	Free
	Electric Charging Points		
	Monday – Saturday	Standard Day Rate	
	Sunday (7am to 7pm)	Standard Day Rate	
	Evenings (all days) – (valid 4pm to 4am next day)	Standard Night Rate	

THE PLAZA, BRAINTREE

Monday to Sunday (All Days) 7am to 10pm	Current Charge	New Charge
Up to 30 mins	£1.00	No change
Up to 1hr	£2.30	
Up to 2hrs	£3.60	
Up to 3 hrs	£5.20	
Over 3hrs	£6.80	
Permit Holders (tenants/delegates/BDC employees)	No charge	
Electric vehicle charging (max 2 hrs)		
Permit holders (7am – 7pm) Max. 2hrs	No charge	
Permit holders (7pm – 7am)	No charge	
Visitors (7am – 10pm) Max. 2hrs	Day rates	

SILKS WAY, BRAINTREE

Permit Holders Only – valid 24/7	Current Charge	New Charge
Annual Permit	£450.00	£550.00

BRAINTREE ROAD, WITHAM

Residents-Only Parking Permit – valid 24/7	Current Charge	New Charge
Calendar Month	£ 10.50	£ 12.00
Annual	£126.00	£140.00

LOCKRAMS LANE, WITHAM

Season Ticket Holders Only (designated bay) Valid all hours all days EXCEPT Saturdays	Current Charge	New Charge
Quarterly	£121.00	£145.00
Annual	£473.00	£573.00

TRAVEL LODGE, BRAINTREE

Permits valid in Braintree Town car parks	Current Charge	New Charge
Day Rate (valid 24/7) including electric vehicle charging	£3.00	£4.50

ALL OTHER CAR PARKS

SHORT-STAY TARIFF	Old Charge	New Charge
Monday to Friday and Saturday (and Sunday at George Yard CP)		
Up to 1hr	£1.00	£1.50
1 to 3 hrs	£2.00	£2.80
3 to 6 hrs	£3.50	£4.50
Over 6 hrs (Day Rate)	£6.00	£7.00
Sunday (7am to 7pm)	£0.50	£1.50
Overnight (7pm – 7.30am)	£0.50	£1.00
90-Day Flexible Pass (valid throughout the financial year)	-	£174.00
Bank Holidays & Public Holidays	FREE	FREE

Other Parking Options	Detail of Charge (Tariff)	Current Tariff	Revised Tariff
Parking Permits (valid all days 24/7)	Annual	£550.00	£650.00
	Quarterly	£145.00	£174.00

Overnight Permits Valid from 7pm to 7.30am next day	Quarterly	£ 30.00	£ 36.00
	Six months	£ 55.00	£ 66.00
	Annual	£100.00	£120.00

Season Tickets (excludes Easton Road and White Horse Lane car parks.)	All days 24/7	Annual	£550.00	£650.00
	All days 24/7	Quarterly	£145.00	£174.00

Market Trader Vehicles	Sat (Witham) - All hours	£ 1.50	£ 2.00
	Wed & Sat (Braintree) - All hours	£ 1.50	£ 2.00

Electric <i>rapid</i> charging point George Yard MSCP	All days	7am-7pm	Max 1 hr	£ 1.00	£ 1.50
	All days	7pm-7am	Max 1 hr	£ 0.50	£ 1.00

Electric charging point Other car parks (excluding commuter car parks and The Plaza)	All days	7am-7pm	Max 2 hr	£ 2.00	£ 2.80
	All days	7pm-7am	Max 16hr	£ 0.50	£ 1.00

Blue Badge Holders (designated bays only)	All days in Pay & Display car parks if displaying blue badge.	Standard tariff	FREE
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PARKING STRATEGY 2023 – 2027



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Parking Strategy

This Strategy sets out the Council's approach to the provision and overall management of parking within the Braintree District.

The Council does not currently provide any public car parks in Halstead (these are managed and operated by the Town Council), however the principles set out in this strategy apply equally throughout the Braintree District.

1.2 Why we need a Parking Strategy

On average, 96% of the lifetime of a car is spent parked (RAC report – Spaced: Perspectives on Parking Policy). The other 4% of the time, the car plays an integral part of people's lives, whether that be travelling to/from work, doing the school run, visiting relatives, having days out or doing the shopping. As such, parking affects many facets of everyday life for residents of, businesses in, and visitors to the District.

Choices must be made about parking provision, parking controls, charging levels and enforcement to enable the safe and efficient movement of traffic and to maintain the environmental and economic sustainability of the District.

1.3 Our key objectives are to:-

1. Provide high quality, clean, safe and secure car parking facilities
2. Make adequate and appropriate provision for public car parking within the District
3. Accommodate the parking needs of vulnerable groups
4. Support the vitality of our towns and local businesses
5. Have in place a high-quality enforcement regime to control inconsiderate parking
6. Set competitive charges for use of our car parks
7. Influence local transport issues and support sustainable transport
8. Provide adequate directional signage and advertisement
9. Ensure the effective use and management of the Council's car parks to provide an income for the Council to reinvest in the service
10. Take account of innovation in payment mechanisms and emerging vehicle technology when considering planned improvements in the parking service.

These will be achieved through action-based initiatives, with stakeholder consultation where appropriate, to ensure the outcomes are widely supported and provide value for money.

1.4. EXISTING PARKING PROVISION

This comprises a combination of:-

- **On-street (public highway):** Parking on the adopted highway is largely unrestricted, except where necessary to facilitate highways safety or local convenience. 'Residents Only' parking schemes continue to be popular as demand for parking space exceeds supply. The latter involves a charge to those participating in the scheme, but otherwise no charges currently apply to on-street parking within the District. A minority of street traders are permitted to park on the public highway on market days if their vehicles are integral to their business.
- **Public Off-street (car parks):** The District Council offers a mix of 'Pay & Display', residential and 'permit holder only' car parks in Braintree and Witham town centres, as well as parking at various industrial sites across the District. Facilities include three commuter car parks and 10 short/long-stay surface car parks including a 3-deck multi-storey car park. In addition, 4 rural public car parks are operated by local parish councils and Halstead Town Council operates two public car parks. There is a bus park in Braintree town centre and our industrial estates make provision for lorry and car parking.
- **Private off-street:** There is a range of privately owned public car parks, for example, those at supermarkets, rail stations, Braintree Village, GP surgeries, community halls, leisure facilities, and business parks.

1.5 FUTURE PARKING PROVISION

Demand for parking space, particularly on-street, is likely to grow as the population of the District increases, but parking provision also needs to reflect societal, technological, ecological and legislative changes. In updating this strategy, consideration has been given to the following issues:-

- a) Car ownership and usage levels in the Braintree District have historically been higher than regional and national averages, partly due to its more rural location. The Council is working with Essex Highways and other stakeholders to increase sustainable travel options for all residents and has invested to provide digital connectivity for people to work from home if they choose to do so. However, the population of the District is increasing and so the number of cars in the District will continue to be high.
- b) Climate Change is pushing us away from traditional modes of transport towards greener alternatives and we have seen rapid growth in the number of electric vehicles on our roads in recent years. As part of its climate change objectives, the Government has announced that the sale of new

petrol and diesel cars will be phased out by 2030 and all new cars and vans will be zero emission by 2035. The growth of EV's is likely to accelerate as we approach these deadlines and this will prompt increased demand for electric vehicle charging points – both on and off-street. This will prompt increased demand for dropped kerbs (managed by Essex County Council) to enable residents and businesses to charge vehicles on their own property, which will further deplete on-street parking space.

- c) Since the start of the covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, we have seen a sea change in people's behaviour, with many more people acquiring bicycles and using these for both exercise and leisure. The popularity of electric bicycles has meant that people are prepared to travel greater distances and even commute to/from work using this mode of transport. E-bikes are currently the most popular bikes on the market and their popularity is on the rise.
- d) We have also seen a transformation in working patterns, with many companies adopting hybrid working and thus employees not needing to travel so frequently; whilst others may work permanently from home or work remotely.
- e) The pandemic also affected people's shopping habits, with an ever-increasing number shopping on-line and taking advantage of supermarket deliveries, which has reduced the need to travel still further.
- f) Socio-economic factors have also come into play and this may drive more people away from car journeys (and indeed car ownership), towards more affordable travel options such as walking, cycling, using public transport, shared travel and car clubs.

2. NATIONAL/LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Local Planning

The Council, through the planning system, seeks to allocate new development to those areas which are most sustainable, in line with national policy, which have the best access to local facilities, services and transport, and by providing services on site as necessary.

The Council, working with Essex County Council as the Highways Authority, sets out the sustainable transport packages which must accompany new residential and commercial developments. This includes prioritising new cycleways, footpaths and bus stops and routes within and around new developments.

The Essex Planning Officers Association is currently reviewing the car and cycle parking standards which apply across Essex and which sets both the number of spaces necessary and their design and function. All new properties must also be built with electric vehicle charging points.

2.2 National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework guides planning policy nationally and specifically refers to planning for parking in the following paragraphs:-

107. In setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, policies should consider: a) the accessibility of the development; b) the type, mix and use of development; c) the availability of and opportunities for public transport; d) local car ownership levels; and e) the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

108. Maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport (in accordance with chapter 11 of this Framework). In town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

109. Planning policies and decisions should recognise the importance of providing adequate overnight lorry parking facilities, considering any local shortages, to reduce the risk of parking in locations that lack proper facilities or could cause a nuisance. Proposals for new or expanded distribution centres should make provision for sufficient lorry parking to cater for their anticipated use.

Local standards for car parking are set out within the Replacement Local Plan Policy RLP56 and the Publication Draft Local Plan Policy LPP45 which states that parking should be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards. This includes all new homes having access to electric charging at the property. This means that new developments in the Braintree District should follow standards for domestic car parking, disabled, and visitor bays, motorbike and scooter parking (PTW) and cycle racks as set out in the Essex County Council Vehicle Parking Standards 2009 (link below).

<https://www.essexdesignguide.co.uk/media/1960/essex-parking-standards.pdf>

This document is currently in the process of being updated, and a revised version is likely to be published later this year for consultation. Once approved it will form the up-to-date parking standards for Braintree.

3. BDC's OVERALL APPROACH TO PARKING

3.1 Managing Demand

The Council will experience significant growth over the next 15 years, resulting in an estimated 20% increase in the dwelling stock in the District. There will also be significant growth in employment land as well as facilities to serve new residents including new retail and leisure facilities. The Local Plan allocates locations for this new growth.

Within this Plan, new housing, employment and other growth (which will result in potentially significant transport movements) are proposed to be in locations which are most able to be served by public transport including buses and trains or are within walking and cycling distance of key facilities to try and reduce the need to travel by private vehicle. However, with a significant rural population, car use is likely to continue to be the only practical option for many residents.

3.2 How parking is managed and by whom

On-street parking: This is managed and operated by the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) on behalf of Essex County Council via an agency arrangement. The NEPP set out to achieve a common operating model across North Essex, adopting best practices and innovation, whilst also accommodating variation in local policies and decision making. Member authorities (including Braintree District Council) have a voting seat on the Joint Committee so have some influence on how on-street parking is managed within their respective districts/boroughs.

Off- Street Parking: The public car parks in Braintree and Witham are managed by Braintree District Council, with parking enforcement and ticket machine maintenance undertaken by the NEPP via an SLA with the Council. The Council does not have any public car parks in Halstead, as these are managed and operated locally.

Private car parks: Private car park providers manage their own facilities depending on whether or not they wish to charge for parking or control use of their car parks by, for example, restricting parking time.

3.3 Provision for special needs (blue badge/mother and baby/visitor attraction, etc.)

There is a statutory requirement for disabled parking provision which applies to both residential developments of over 200 dwellings and to large commercial car parks. Current provision for people with special needs represents approx. 5% of the parking spaces available in our larger car parks, which is in line with national guidelines and good practice. As we expand our off-street parking

provisions, we will seek to maintain the number of specialist spaces to at least the recommended minimum. Provision for parent-child parking and other specialist spaces is at the discretion of the car park owner.

As part of the pedestrianisation of Braintree Town Centre, on-street parking for blue badge holders was removed from the High Street and provision was improved and extended in Bank Street. However, these spaces are subject to a suspension on Wednesdays and Saturdays to accommodate the street markets.

The bigger visitor attractions within the District generally have their own associated parking facilities e.g. Marks Hall Arboretum, Cressing Barns, Gt. Notley Country Park, none of which are operated by the Council.

3.4 Commuter Parking Provision

As part of the review of the Local Plan and as a result of the anticipated housing growth over the Local Plan period (2016 – 2031), the Council will seek opportunities to increase car parking capacity where necessary to meet future demand.

3.5 Parking on Industrial Estates

Parking on industrial estates can be problematic, with congestion arising from inconsiderate parking, coupled with vehicles loading/unloading. With many residential roads in our town centres now having 'residents-only' parking, this has left non-residents and commuters vying for on-street parking space in other areas including the industrial estates. Traffic Regulation Orders can help mitigate the problems but can also have the unintended consequence of moving problems further down the road as drivers seek alternative free parking.

The situation has lessened following the changes in working patterns arising from the pandemic. However, where parking issues are identified, the Council will continue to work in partnership with Essex County Council to seek solutions including the option of pavement parking if appropriate.

3.6 Parking provision on new developments

Parking standards are set out in the Essex Parking Standards according to Use Class as different land uses require different standards. The standards for minimum and maximum spaces to be provided are set out in the document, although discretionary exceptions to the minimum may be made for developments which are highly accessible by sustainable transport.

The car parking standards set out below apply to all new residential developments, however, separate parking standards apply for shops, offices, care homes, leisure facilities and other uses. These standards are all minima.

- For developments of 1 bedroom, 1 space is required.
- For developments of 2 or more bedrooms, 2 spaces are required.
- 0.25 visitor spaces per dwellings (rounded up) should also be provided.
- Motorbike/scooter (PTW) parking should be provided at 1 space per 20 car spaces.

Applicants should refer to the full documents for detail on variations, materials, design and layout of parking. This document is currently under review and the standards above are therefore subject to change.

On new roads, if parking or waiting restrictions are not included at the outset, the Parking Partnership will not normally consider any proposals for parking or weighting restrictions for a period of five years.

3.7 Rural Car Parks

The Council transferred its 4 rural public car parks to the local Parish Councils to manage and maintain. Had they not transferred, the Council would have sought to introduce a Pay & Display system to offset some of the cost of their ongoing maintenance. This may be the case for any new car parks the Council provides in rural areas, although each case will be considered on its own merits.

3.8 Standards in our Public Car Parks

The Council aims to provide car parks that are clean, safe and secure and that meet the needs of its customers. We will also continue to ensure that our parking bays are in line with national guidance and that adequate provision is made for people with disabilities.

During inclement weather, the car parks are cleared of snow and gritted, and the top floor of the multi-storey car park is closed to the public if conditions are hazardous.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Police. Discretionary use of CCTV may be implemented, although this will not be used to monitor accidental damage.

3.9 Operating Hours

The operating hours for all of the Council's car parks are set out in the Off-Street Parking Places Order and are clearly shown on signage displayed at each car park.

3.10 Payment Methods

The Council currently offers both cash and cashless parking options at all of its Pay & Display car parks. Cashless parking via the Mi-Permit system was

introduced by the North Essex Parking Partnership in 2013/14. This technology enables customers to pay for parking using a mobile device (including booking in advance) or a debit or credit card if paying at the ticket machine. If using a mobile, customers can top up parking without having to return to the car park. Our car park customers clearly appreciate the convenience of cashless pay, with 66% of transactions now being cashless.

In recent years, there has been a spate of thefts from ticket machines across Essex including in the Braintree District and repairs have not only been costly, but it has become difficult to obtain the spare parts needed to repair the machines. The Council therefore plans to dispense with cash payments altogether and move to a fully cashless payment system in all of its Pay & Display car parks. This will not only minimise lost income, but also reduce the operating costs of collecting and managing cash from payment points.

Pay on Exit systems (using Automated Number Plate Recognition) were considered, as this would allow users to park for as long as needed without the risk of incurring a penalty charge notice. However, this option was discounted on the basis that ANPR evidence cannot be used for enforcement purposes if users don't pay.

3.11 Accessibility

Essex County Council (ECC) is the Highways Authority and is responsible for the installation and maintenance of roadside signage. The Council, working with ECC, aims to ensure that directional road signage to car parking is clear and directs traffic to the most suitable car park via the most appropriate route.

A review of signage around Braintree town has been undertaken by ECC. The Council will continue to work with ECC to implement the findings of that review and to ensure that parking is well signposted for those travelling to the town.

3.12 Vehicle Technology Led Demand

In November 2020, the Government announced a commitment to end the sale of new petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 and a requirement that all new cars and vans be fully zero emission by 2035.

The transition to electric vehicles has accelerated in recent years, with 2021 seeing the biggest annual increase in the number of registrations in the UK – up 74% on 2020. (*Next Green Car.Com*) Figures supplied by industry body, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders show that in 2022, over 200,000 electric cars were registered – 3 times the number of diesel cars.

The government is working closely with industry and local government to expand and grow a network of EV chargepoints to include new commercial EV charging infrastructure for residents, from faster on-street chargepoints to larger petrol

station-style charging hubs. On-street provision is a matter for Essex County Council as Highway Authority, but the Council is adapting its off-street parking infrastructure to support the growth in electric vehicles by providing charging points in its car parks and will continue to do so as demand grows.

4. CHARGING REGIME

- 4.1 Off-Street:** The current charging regime for off-street parking is based on the premise that those who use the facilities pay for the service. Traditionally it draws a balance between providing affordable parking to customers, supporting the economic vitality of our town centres (whilst recognising their economic strength) and generating income to maintain the infrastructure. The tariffs are designed to accommodate both short-stay parking (e.g. for shoppers/visitors), and long stay parking (e.g. for commuters/workers) at locations most appropriate to need.

In setting parking tariffs, the Council seeks to:-

- Ensure they compare favourably with neighbouring councils and national trends.
- Offer flexible tariff options to reflect demand e.g. seasonal and hybrid working.
- Maintain FREE parking on public/bank holidays.
- Ensure that any concessionary charges fairly reflect the value they provide compared to the prevailing tariff.
- Make available temporary parking permits at the discretion of the Head of Operations (*e.g. to support community events*).
- Review the parking tariff annually to ensure that it delivers a fair return on our investments whilst also supporting the vitality of our towns and local businesses.
- Support people with disabilities by offering free parking to blue badge holders in designated parking bays.

- 4.2 On-street:** There are currently no on-street parking charges in the Braintree District other than those relating to 'Residents-only' parking schemes. However, led by Government policy, the car industry is making a transition away from petrol/diesel vehicles to reduce levels of particulates and nitrogen dioxide emissions in order to improve air quality and people's health and this may result in on-street electric vehicle charging facilities being introduced. In addition to the London Low Emission Zone charging system, some London boroughs are developing hierarchical parking tariffs for the most polluting vehicles. It is recommended that a watching brief is maintained on policy and operational progress, should this be implemented nationally across all local authorities.

5. PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Both on and off-street parking enforcement is undertaken by the NEPP and will be carried out in accordance with the Parking Partnership Enforcement Policy. This provides a framework for effective parking management and seeks to put the County's policy and strategic aims into a local context that meets the needs of all road users across North Essex. The policy encompasses the core principles of fairness, transparency and consistency.

The Parking Partnership Enforcement Policy should be read in conjunction with the other enforcement related documents that can be found using the link below.

<http://www1.parkingpartnership.org/north/policies>

6. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS/TEMPORARY TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

6.1 Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO): A TRO is a legal document that formalises the creation of a parking restriction. The County Council also has powers to implement TROs on safety grounds. The NEPP receives a large number of requests for new restrictions as well as requests to review or amend current restrictions.

As a member of the NEPP, BDC considers applications made for TROs in the District by inviting comments and statements of support or rejection from:

- Ward Members
- District Council Members on the Local Highway Panel
- Cabinet Portfolio Holder (representing BDC at the NEPP Joint Committee).

This consultation provides a steer for our final recommendations for the TRO Applications at the NEPP Joint Committee meetings.

The amount of funding available to the NEPP for new schemes is limited and so applications must meet specific criteria in order to stand a chance of being approved by the Joint Committee. All applications must show that there is a genuine safety, congestion or social need and be accompanied by evidence of support from a local ward member(s), county councillor and the relevant town/parish council. Approval of any scheme is subject to funding and the outcome of a statutory period of consultation.

The Traffic Regulation Orders General Policy 2016 and flow chart set out the process for dealing with TROs and can be viewed using the links below.

<http://www1.parkingpartnership.org/north/uploads/policies/tro-policy-review-2016-policy.pdf>

- 6.2 Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs)** are administered and managed by this Council and are implemented when road closures are required - for example for a street party, carnival or other community event. There is an administration charge for this service owing to the length of time it takes to process applications which is made direct to the District Council. However, the charge is waived in respect of events/ ceremonies that are commemorated or celebrated by the nation.

7. RESIDENTS' PARKING

Residents-only on-street permit schemes are designed to protect the parking provisions of residents in areas where commuter parking is an issue or in locations that are close to town centres. Each permit operates during times that are location specific and will apply on a bank holiday unless signage states otherwise.

A maximum of two annual permits can be purchased per household, with visitor and carer permits available at additional cost. Permits are available via the virtual system called MiPermit.

The process for considering applications for residents-only parking schemes is the same as that for other TROs (see 6 above) and a minimum of 75% support is required from other residents living in the street (or streets if these are zoned) before approval can be granted.

8. BDC PAY & DISPLAY CAR PARKS



Extract from Off
Street Parking Places

SUMMARY OF HOW THE COUNCIL MANAGES PARKING

PS1: Overall management

The overall parking stock will be managed efficiently and effectively through the implementation of appropriate supply, maintenance, charging and enforcement measures to help achieve relevant local objectives.

PS2: Managing the Council's parking stock

The Council will manage its parking stock in accordance with the principles below and will periodically review the mix, number and usage of parking spaces (both on and off-street) to ensure they continue to meet Local Transport Plan objectives and reflect local circumstances.

Off-street public parking:

- Short-stay parking (up to 3 hours) will be prioritised on sites within an acceptable walking distance of shopping and commercial centres to ensure adequate accessibility.
- Longer-stay parking will be prioritised on sites further away from shopping and commercial centres.
- Long-stay commuter parking will be reduced where good sustainable transport alternatives exist.

On-street parking:

- Short-stay parking (max. two hours) will be given priority at available on-street parking locations in or near shopping or commercial centres.
- Adequate provision will be made for the delivery of goods and for public service and emergency vehicles.
- Provision for Blue Badge holders will be made in line with recognised national standards (as a minimum).
- On residential roads, priority will be given to meeting residents' parking needs.

PS3: Parking charges

Parking charges will be set taking account of the following factors:

- The strength of the local economy.
- The utilisation of existing parking spaces.
- Traffic conditions on the local highway network.
- The availability of sustainable transport modes.
- Parking charges in neighbouring areas.
- The convenience and quality of parking locations.

- Local environmental conditions.
- The requirement to provide an efficient Council parking service.
- Relevant LTP objectives and targets, including support for Council transport services.

PS4: Private non-residential parking standards

The provision of parking associated with new private non-residential development will be limited to maximum parking standards (except for disabled parking spaces). These maximum standards will be reduced to reflect local circumstances and the relative accessibility by sustainable transport modes in accordance with an accessibility framework.

The actual parking provision for developments will be negotiated between the Council and developers taking account of a range of issues including the mix of land uses, ancillary uses, scale of development, approach to design and opportunities for sharing parking.

PS5: Managing publicly available private non-residential parking

There will be a presumption that any planning application which includes provision for publicly available private non-residential parking will be required to provide an accompanying car park management plan.

PS6: Residential parking standards

The provision of car parking associated with well-designed new residential developments will be determined in accordance with an approach which takes account of dwelling size and the appropriate mix of parking types (e.g. unallocated, on-street, visitor, etc.) and is published in the Essex Parking Standards document.

A set of minimum parking standards for residential development (based on allocated parking) has been developed to provide a basis for this approach. In determining the appropriate mix of parking types, the presumption will be that unallocated visitor parking will be included in the majority of new residential developments.

Reduced residential parking requirements will be considered in the following circumstances:-

- Where the site is well served by a range of public transport options.
- Where parking demand is likely to be low.
- Where any parking overspill can be controlled.

PS7: Parking enforcement

The North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) will enforce parking restrictions effectively and efficiently under its civil parking enforcement regime.

PS8: Residents-only parking

In those residential areas which suffer from the significant effects of on-street commuter parking and/or shopper parking, the Council (via the NEPP) will, subject to available resources, investigate and where appropriate introduce residents' parking zones and/or timed restrictions in consultation with local residents and businesses.

PS9: Visitor attraction parking

The Council will work with visitor attractions to manage the demand for parking.

The availability of coach parking and set-down/pick-up spaces will be periodically evaluated considering the needs of coach operators and passengers, other road users, residents and local businesses.

PS10: Park and Ride

Should Park and Ride facilities be provided within the District by the Highways Authority, the Council will review parking provision and charges.

PS11: Parking at railway stations

Increased parking provision near railway stations will only be considered if it is included as part of a station travel plan.

PS12: Improving access and use

The Council will promote convenient access to parking facilities in the Braintree District by ensuring that:

- Parking for disabled motorists (blue badge holders) is provided in line with recognised national guidance (as a minimum).
- Where appropriate (e.g. at supermarkets and retail centres) provision is made for 'parent and child' spaces.

- Parking facilities are clearly signed and that good levels of information on the location and availability of parking are provided.
- Parking facilities are 'safer by design'.
- Facilities for service vehicles or those delivering goods are, as far as possible, segregated to avoid conflict and their use as overflow car parking areas.

10. PARKING STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN 2023 to 2027

OBJECTIVE 1: Provide high quality, clean, safe and secure parking facilities		
Ref.	Action	By When
1.	Carry out a regular programme of cleaning of all car parks including signage and removal of litter, weeds and detritus.	Monthly Ongoing
2.	Undertake a programme of inspection and repair at all car parks to include lighting, signage, bay markings, potholes, etc.	Monthly Ongoing
3.	Redecorate George Yard Multi-storey Car Park.	2024/25

OBJECTIVE 2: Make adequate and appropriate provision for car parking in the Braintree District		
Ref.	Action	When
4.	Maintain an overview of parking provision in consultation with key stakeholders.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 3: Accommodate the parking needs of vulnerable groups		
Ref.	Action	By When
5.	Ensure that any new bays created for blue badge holders comply with current guidance.	Ongoing
6.	Carry out effective consultation relating to any new parking facilities.	Ongoing
7.	Maintain the parking concession for the Tabor Centre buses at Causeway House.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 4: Support the vitality of our towns and local businesses		
Ref.	Action	By When
8.	Consider measures to ease parking congestion on the industrial estates where a problem is identified.	Ongoing
9.	From a planning perspective, ensure that any new industrial developments are designed to reflect the parking needs of businesses to ensure a more sustainable way of parking provision that restricts on-street parking.	Ongoing
10.	Introduce a flexible parking ticket option to reflect seasonal and hybrid working.	2023/24

OBJECTIVE 5: Have in place a high-quality enforcement regime to control inconsiderate on-street parking

Ref.	Action	By When
11.	Work with North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to maintain the free flow of traffic across the District, referring on any identified problems for more focused enforcement.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 6: Set competitive charges that generate a fair return for Council Tax payers

Ref.	Action	By When
12.	Update the off-street parking tariff including the provision of free parking for blue badge holders and review the tariff annually.	1 June 2023 & ongoing

OBJECTIVE 7: Influence local transport issues and support sustainable transport

Ref.	Action	By When
13.	Work with Essex County Council on new transport strategies for the District.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 8: Provide adequate advertisement of our car parks

Ref.	Action	By When
14.	Liaise with town centre stakeholders and Town Councils to promote the Council's car parks when advertising local events.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 9: Ensure the effective use and management of the Council's car parks

Ref.	Action	By When
15.	Ensure a good turnover of parking spaces through effective enforcement of the maximum permitted periods of stay and other parking restrictions.	Ongoing
16.	Maximise opportunities for advertising space at selected car parks.	Ongoing

OBJECTIVE 10: Take account of innovation in payment mechanisms and new vehicle technology when considering any improvements to the service.

Ref.	Action	By When
17.	Work with the private sector to develop proposals to secure grant funding for the installation of rapid EV charging facilities across the Council's public car parks.	2023/24
18.	Evaluate options for the future provision of electric charging points – both on and off-street.	Ongoing
19.	Introduce Cashless Parking in all the Council's Pay & Display car parks including replacement of ticket machines.	2023/25

Report Title: Street Sweepings Arisings Framework Contract	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13 th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/70
Report Presented by: Councillor Richard van Dulken, Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation	
Enquiries to: James Sinclair, Commercial Manager james.sinclair@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for Braintree District Council (the Council) to award a four year Street Sweepings Arising Framework for a four-year period, and to call off from the same for the collection or receipt and reprocessing of street sweepings arisings.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To award a framework agreement with the ability to be used by regional councils with a maximum value of £5,000,000.
- 2.2 To award a call off contract under this framework for the Council at a cost of £56.87 per tonne fixed for four years for the estimated volume of 1700 tonnes per annum at a cost of £96,679, with a total estimated value including 1+1 year extension of £580,074 to Dunmow Group.
- 2.3 To note that the above call off contract includes circa 600 tonnes of Uttlesford District Council waste which will be recharged to Uttlesford at £34,122 + handling charge.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 This framework agreement is for the collection, treatment and disposal or receipt and reprocessing of street sweepings from the districts and boroughs who participate in the framework.
- 3.2 Street sweepings are defined as materials such as sand, salt, leaves, broken glass, small pieces of metal, and other litter and debris removed in order to improve the appearance and safety of public roadways and to prevent these materials from being washed into storm sewers and surface waters.
- 3.3 Street sweepings are not as clean as virgin earth materials and must be handled with a certain degree of care. Street sweepings usually contain low levels of chemical compounds associated with storm water runoff.

- 3.4 The Council currently has a contract in place through which the street sweeping arising is collected and processed, and this is due to expire on 31 March 2023.
- 3.5 Following consultation with other councils across the region and in line with the previous contract, it was agreed that the procurement would be a Regional Framework Agreement available to all Essex public sector bodies. This framework was split into seven lots, with lot 7 allowing for all authorities to procure together:
- Lot 1 - Basildon District Council
 - Lot 2 - Braintree District Council
 - Lot 3 - Brentwood Borough Council
 - Lot 4 - Castle Point Borough Council
 - Lot 5 - Chelmsford City Council
 - Lot 6 - Epping Forest District Council
 - Lot 7 - Essex Region Framework
- 3.6 Customers who utilised the previous frameworks were satisfied with this way of working and therefore decided to adopt this approach once again. Each lot (if awarded) was to be awarded to a single vendor but the intention of the six initial Councils was to call off the requirements for Lots 1-6 under Lot 7 rather than the individual Lots.
- 3.7 Further authorities within the eastern region will be able to call off from the regional framework at a later date, for which the Council will receive a rebate of 1.5% of the supplier's gross total invoices.
- 3.8 Three tenders were received, two tenders for Lots 1-6 and one tender for Lot 7, which were evaluated on a 60% quality, 40% cost basis. As set out below:

	Winning Bidder	Alternate Bidder 1	Alternate Bidder 2
Lot 1	NA	78.8%	81%
Lot 2	NA	77.8%	81%
Lot 3	NA	85.80%	81%
Lot 4	NA	71.3%	81%
Lot 5	NA	85.8%	81%
Lot 6	NA	66.8%	81%
Lot 7	86%	NA	NA

- 3.9 The tenderer for Lot 7 achieved the highest overall score across all Lots proving that it is the Most Economically Advantageous Tender based on a combination of price and quality.
- 3.10 The provisional award date is scheduled for 10th March 2023, subject to financial assessment and governance approval. Following a standstill period the contract will be finally awarded and commence on the 1st April 2023
- 3.11 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play;
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.
- 3.12 This contract will help ensure the districts roads are well maintained and safe, whilst also ensuring the district continues to be kept clean and tidy.
- 3.13 Whilst costs will not be reduced through this contract, given current inflationary pressures, the collaborative procurement approach was intended to attract the best possible pricing, so reducing the potential cost to taxpayers.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with the Council's Operations team in creating this framework and the call off. Consultation has also taken place with operational colleagues across the region to confirm participation and shape this shared procurement.
- 4.2 Updates have been provided to the Cabinet Member, Corporate Director, Head of Governance and S151 Officer throughout the process.

5. Options

- 5.1 **Option 1 - Award the framework agreement and a call off by the Council under lot 7 of the framework agreement (Recommended).** This will ensure a compliant contract is in place for the collection and disposal of street sweepings across all partnering local authorities, so mitigating the risk of challenge. This contract helps the Council to deliver against its climate change strategy with the reprocessing of street sweepings instead of these needing to go to landfill. It is also the most cost-effective option.
- 5.2 **Option 2 — Present the Waste to Essex County Council (ECC).** Street arisings are classified as 'household waste' the same as for other waste collected from domestic households. With this option ECC would direct the Council where to tip the waste, with BDC bearing the cost of transporting it to that location and any initial waste transfer station costs if not taken direct from route. If the directed location was landfill and not a recycling processor

then the Council would lose the recycling credit (£79.19 per tonne in 23/24) and adversely impact upon the Council's recycling percentage.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 On approval a final award will take place with the contract commencing on 1st April 2023

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The tendered cost per tonne is £56.87 therefore the value of the contract for the estimated volume of 1700 tonnes per annum is £96,679, with a total estimated value including the optional 1+1 year extension of £580,074. This includes Uttlesford volume of 600 tonnes per annum which will be recharged at £34,122 per annum + handling charge.
- 7.2 The 2023/24 budget for the Council tonnage is £51.89 per tonne (the current cost). The tender cost of £56.87 per tonne is an increase of £4.98 per tonne which has a £5,480 budgetary impact based on an estimated 1,100 tonnes per annum. Whilst the Council continues to provide a service to Uttlesford the additional unbudgeted income from the handling charge will mitigate the increased contract costs to the Council.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 In conducting this procurement exercise the Council has satisfied its requirements under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and its own Procurement Procedure rules.
- 8.2 It is a requirement under that contract that the Supplier shall treat, re-process and dispose of arisings collected and/or delivered in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 There are no other implications from this decision

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. List of Appendices

11.1 Not applicable

12. Background Papers

12.1 Not applicable

Report Title: A Domestic Garden Waste Service	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 13th March 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/01
Report Presented by: Cllr. Richard van Dulken, Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation	
Enquiries to: Paul Partridge, Head of Operations paul.partridge@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 In order for the Cabinet to make an informed decision about the options for consideration of a subscription based Household Garden Waste Service, it is necessary to carry out further investigatory work. This report sets out the nature of that work and provides a timeline through which Cabinet is expected to be in a position to consider the matter in full for decision.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agrees that the Council will formally approach Essex County Council to commence a review of the change to the Council's Waste Service Delivery Plan as required under the terms of the Waste Inter Authority Agreement (WIAA).

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The collection of garden waste is a discretionary service for which the Council may make a reasonable charge under the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012. For many years, the Council has provided a non-chargeable garden waste service.
- 3.2 The operating budget for garden waste in 2023/24 is estimated to be £683k and this level of expenditure is no longer sustainable or affordable. In common with other local authorities, the Council, having regard to the projected funding shortfall in the Medium Term Financial Forecast, is having to explore options available to it to ensure that the budget can be balanced in future years. This includes the consideration of a range of commercial options, including a subscription-based garden waste collection service.

- 3.3 The Council is not alone in considering its options for this service. Some 232 of 326 Councils nationwide, over 70%, currently charge for garden waste collections as a non-essential, opt-in service. Across Essex, 7 of the 14 councils already charge for garden waste. Two Essex councils (Colchester City Council and Basildon Borough Council) have recently agreed to introduce a charge during 2023 and 2024, three are unable to charge as they currently collect mixed food and garden waste and only two (Chelmsford City Council and Braintree District Council) have chosen not to charge at this time.
- 3.4 The Council has undertaken significant work to consider all available options and has undertaken a detailed benchmarking exercise across other Essex & Suffolk Authorities.
- 3.5 In 2009/10, the Council entered into a Waste Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) with Essex County Council. This is a formal legal document which provides a clear and accountable framework under which the Council and other Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) and ECC, as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA), work together to deliver their waste objectives.
- 3.6 As an integral part of the IAA, each WCA has a unique Waste Service Delivery Plan (SDP) that sets out their respective waste collection arrangements (tonnages, recycling performance, etc.). The IAA includes statutory payments made by ECC to WCAs in the form of Recycling and Compost Credits and also for tipping outside of WCA boundaries. It also includes ongoing revenue payments to WCAs for the provision of a separate weekly food waste collection service.
- 3.7 It is a requirement under the IAA that any changes to SDPs require WCAs to submit a formal Ad-hoc Review to ECC. This automatically triggers a review, in conjunction with the WCA, of the existing and proposed changes to service delivery including performance and all associated payments. Consequently, the outcome of the Review could change the financial contributions the Council receives from ECC. It would therefore be prudent to formally commence the Ad-hoc Review process in order to fully understand the overall impact a proposal to introduce a subscription-based service would have and how this might impact the revenue the Council receives through the IAA.
- 3.8 The recommendations set out in this report will help support the following corporate objectives:-
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play.
 - A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services.
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Council may choose not to undertake this review at this time. However, it is important that the Council meets all the requirements of the IAA and continues to support its partnership working with ECC and other local authorities. Furthermore, the Council's budget position requires savings to be found, including opportunities to increase income to cover the costs of discretionary services such as this.
- 4.2 The recommended option is to fully complete and submit the Adhoc Review as required under the WIAA. This will ensure that this is completed and aligns with any future decision taken by Cabinet concerning the introducing of a subscription-based service.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The current net operating budget for the existing garden waste service is estimated to be £683k. There are plans under the Environment Act 2021 to reform the arrangements for Recycling Credits, however, the Council is awaiting further details as part of its response to the consultation on the Consistency in Household Waste Collections and it is not yet clear how this might affect future income. ECC administers recycling credits and tipping away payments, and there is a requirement under the IAA for a review to take place which will consider future payments made by ECC in accordance with any change in service delivery
- 5.2 Any work undertaken as part of the adhoc review required of the IAA will be met from existing budgets.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 It is important that the Council fully complies with its obligations under the IAA. The proposals set out in this report will ensure that the Council meets those requirements and will ensure that the Council continues to work in partnership with other WCA's.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
 - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act.
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on people with a particular characteristic.

8. List of Appendices

- 8.1 None

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 None