

CABINET AGENDA

Tuesday, 6th December 2022 at 7.15pm

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

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 wishing to participate are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by midday on the second working day before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee meeting is due to be held 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). Public Question Time speakers may participate in person or virtually. Speaker preference must be indicated upon registration.

The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register for Public Question Time if they are received after the registration deadline.

The public may ask questions on any matter listed on the Agenda for this meeting. All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be read within the 3 minutes allotted for each question/statement.

The Chairman of the Committee has discretion to extend the time allocated for public question time and to amend the order in which questions/statements are presented to the Committee.

Public Attendance at Meetings:

Public attendance is welcomed, but is subject to restrictions due to the Council's arrangements for keeping Causeway House Covid secure and visitors safe.

Public attendance is limited and will be on a first come first served basis with priority given to Public Registered Speakers. In order to maintain safe distances, the Council may have to refuse entry to members of the public. The public may not be able to sit in the Council Chamber, but will be able to observe the meeting from a public gallery through a large screen.

Alternatively, the Council meetings are webcast and are available via the Council's YouTube Channel and can be viewed by the public as a live broadcast, or as a recording following the meeting.

Public speakers and public attendees are required to attend on their own, and where possible only one representative of any community group, family household or Company should attend. Members of the public intending to come to Causeway House to observe a meeting are recommended to watch the meeting via the webcast, or to contact the Governance and Members Team to reserve a seat within the public gallery.

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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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Mobile Phones:

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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 of Cabinet - 28th November 2022	
	The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 28th November 2022 will be approved at the next meeting of Cabinet.	
4	Public Question Time	
	(See paragraph above)	
5	OVERALL STRATEGY	
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9 HOUSING, ASSETS AND SKILLS

9a Horizon 120 – Option Agreement

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This report has a confidential appendix which contains exempt information falling with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Any discussion on the contents of the confidential appendix will require Cabinet to move into private session and exclude the press and the public from that part of the meetings.

9b To Grant an Easement at Springwood Drive, Braintree

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This report has a confidential appendix which contains exempt information falling within Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Any discussion on the contents of the confidential appendix will require Cabinet to resolve to move into private session and exclude the public and the press from that part of the meeting.

10 Exclusion of the Public and Press

To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of any Items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

PRIVATE SESSION

There are no private reports for this meeting of Cabinet. Cabinet may resolve to move into private session to discuss the contents of the confidential appendices to the public reports listed below:

9a - Horizon 120 – Option Agreement

9b - To Grant an Easement at Springwood Drive, Braintree

Report Title: IDP and Capital Programme Board	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 th December 2022	For: Information
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/53
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director (Suzanne.bennett@braintree.gov.uk)	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Following an internal review, recommendations have been made to the Leader of the Council, which have been implemented, regarding a refreshed Investment and Development Programme (IDP) Board and establishment of a Capital Programme Board. These Boards were established as Working Groups under the Leader's authority as set out in section 6.6 of the Constitution.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide information on these Boards to Cabinet and provide the draft Terms of Reference for each of the Boards.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note that:
 - 2.1.1 the IDP Board terms of reference have been refreshed; and
 - 2.1.2 a Capital Programme Board has been established.
- 2.2 The membership of both Boards and details on their role and responsibilities can be found in the draft Terms of Reference, at Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The IDP was launched in April 2021 as a response to the growing financial pressures facing Braintree District Council (the Council). There were a number of activities underway across the Council to address the, what was then a future, budget gap and the establishment of the Programme ensured that all activity was captured and afforded a standardised approach.
- 3.2 At that time a Board for the IDP was created. This was a Members' Board that acted in an advisory capacity and no constitutional powers of decision

making were delegated to the group. The Board was put into place to provide oversight, advice and challenge to the Programme.

- 3.3 The IDP had a wide-ranging remit that covered all activity that would potential contribute to addressing the financial pressures, both revenue and capital and was overseeing the delivery of some capital projects in the capital programme but not all.
- 3.4 Since that time the financial pressures on the Council have increased, and so has learning related to the effective running of a capital programme. Many of the original ideas that were put forward by the organisation as part of the £1.6m Challenge have either been pursued and implemented or investigated and discovered not to be suitable to take forward at this time.
- 3.5 As such it was an opportune time to review the Programme and refresh the approach. Following a review by the Corporate Director for Support Services, it was recommended to the Leader that a separate Board be established for the oversight of all capital projects within the Council's Capital Programme. This would include projects that do not directly contribute to addressing the budget pressure to ensure that a disciplined and standardised approach to the Capital Programme is maintained. This Board will be known as the Capital Programme Board (CPB).
- 3.6 It was agreed the IDP would be refreshed with a focus on projects and processes that will contribute to delivering a balanced budget and a more robust financial standing. As part of this refresh, to ensure equal distribution of work and to prevent duplication, the membership of the IDP Board was updated.
- 3.7 The IDP will play a key role in addressing the structural gap in the budget as detailed to Cabinet as part of the November budget report. Activities that will be form part of the IDP include:
- The review of Commercial activities and actions identified as part of that review
 - Asset Management Review and actions identified
 - Various service reviews and zero based budgeted pilot
 - Investigations into possibilities for shared services Essex and other partnership working across local authorities in Essex
- 3.8 The Terms of Reference for the two Member Boards can be found at Appendix A and Appendix B. Updates on the IPD will be provided as part of the Quarterly Performance Report to Full Council to ensure that all Members have full visibility of the Programme. This will commence from financial year 2023/24. Reporting on the capital programme will continue as is through financial updates to Cabinet and Full Council.
- 3.9 Both Member Boards will be supported by Officers and the resourcing of this administrative support can be provided from current budget and resourcing allocations. The establishment of Project Management Office (PMO) has been made and this resource will support the wider project management

across the organisation. Any additional resources for this work are being considered through the budget setting process.

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

- A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services;
- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

3.11 The refresh of the IPD ensures that we are addressing the budget pressures in this and future years with renewed vigour. Given the widespread issues across the sector, it is of paramount importance that officers are working closely with Members on many fronts to develop the organisation so that it can deliver for residents.

3.12 The establishment of a Capital Programme Board will ensure that good project and programme management is embedded in the organisation. It will share best practice across those officers who are delivering the capital projects and provide oversight and challenge to drive improvement across the board.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Boards have been established and will be meeting to discuss the draft Terms of Reference. Arrangements will be put into place to ensure that reporting on the IDP is included in the Quarterly Performance Reports from next financial year.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The IDP Board and Capital Programme Board will be supported within current resource. There is currently a budget bid being considered as part of the annual budget process for the establishment of a Capital Programme Office.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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/will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8. List of Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Draft Terms of Reference for the Investment and Development Programme Board

8.2 Appendix B: Draft Terms of Reference for the Capital Programme Board

Investment and Development Programme Board – Draft Terms of Reference

1. Role and Purpose

The Investment and Development Programme Board (IDPB) is an advisory Board consisting of Cabinet Members that provides strategic direction, leadership and challenge to establish new routes to delivering a balanced budget for the authority. The Board will focus on the delivery of new revenue income and savings projects to help close any budget deficits identified within the annual MTFs process.

2. Term

The IDPB will be formally established following the meeting of Cabinet on 6 December 2022 and continues until Cabinet agrees to disband the Board.

3. Membership

The IDPB is a Member Board supported by Officers. The Members making up the Board are:

- Cllr Tom Cunningham (Chair)
- Cllr Richard van Dulken
- Cllr Gabrielle Spray

Other members of Cabinet may be invited to attend by the Chair, and the Leader of the Council has an open invitation and will be provided with all agendas, minutes and other appropriate documentation relating to the IDPB.

A group of Officers will service the IDPB and attend meetings:

- Dominic Collins – Corporate Director (Officer Lead)
- Suzanne Bennet – Corporate Director
- Cherie Root – Corporate Director
- Phil Myers – S151
- Paul Quin – Interim Asset Manager
- Paul Partridge – Head of Operations

Other Officers will be invited to attend as appropriate. The CEO will have an open invitation to attend and will be provided with all agendas, minutes and other appropriate documentation relating to the IDPB.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The IDPB is an advisory Board and therefore decision making powers are not devolved from Cabinet and all decisions as designated under the Constitution will be required to be executed as per the Constitution. The IDPB will work closely with the Capital Programme Board, with information flows between the two Boards enabled by senior officers.

For some major projects individual Boards may be established to oversee delivery from concept. These projects will follow the mandated project gateway process but approvals through stages will be made by the specific Board rather than the IDPB.

An Officer group to support the Board will be established. This group will exist to ensure that challenge is made at an officer level and will work with the Project Management Office to provide documentation for the IDPB.

The main responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

- To establish new financial routes to delivering a balanced MTFS, focussing on any resolving any core budget deficit, through:
 - Generation of additional revenue income
 - Delivery of financial efficiencies
 - Exploring new service delivery models.
- To identify inter and intra service projects that require revenue, capital, capacity or other resource investment to deliver a revenue income or saving.
- To explore projects through a series of workstreams (number and themes to be determined) that include examination the following areas:
 - Commercialisation of the authorities activities
 - Traded services
 - Shared services (in partnership with other public sector organisations)
 - Alternative service delivery models
 - Council wide contract and procurement efficiencies
 - BDC operational service reviews
 - Asset and property management
 - Other areas identified through the IDPB and supporting officer group
- To monitor the performance of benefits realisation for specific projects and income streams.
- Receive and consider 'lessons learned' reports and make recommendations for changes and improvements in future processes as a result.

5. Meetings

The IDPB will meet once every two months as standard. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as appropriate. Reports and supporting documentation will be circulated at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

Capital Programme Board – Draft Terms of Reference

1. Role and Purpose

The Capital Programme Board (CPB) is an advisory Board consisting of Cabinet Members that provides strategic direction, leadership and challenge to ensure the effective development and delivery of the Capital Programme in line with the Council's strategies and priorities. The Board will also advise Braintree District Council on the Capital Strategy.

2. Term

The CPB will be formally established following the meeting of Cabinet on 6 December 2022 and continues until Cabinet agrees to disband the Board.

3. Membership

The CPB is a Member Board supported by Officers. The Members making up the Board are:

- Cllr Frankie Ricci (Chair)
- Cllr John Mckee
- Cllr Kevin Bowers

Other members of Cabinet may be invited to attend by the Chair, and the Leader of the Council has an open invitation and will be provided with all agendas, minutes and other appropriate documentation relating to the CPB.

A group of Officers will service the CPB and attend meetings:

- Suzanne Bennett – Corporate Director (Officer Lead)
- Phil Myers – S151
- Dominic Collins – Corporate Director
- Aidan Kelly – Interim Head of Strategic Investment

Other Officers will be invited to attend as appropriate. The CEO will have an open invitation to attend and will be provided with all agendas, minutes and other appropriate documentation relating to the CPB.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The CPB is an advisory Board and therefore decision making powers are not devolved from Cabinet and all decisions as designated under the Constitution will be required to be executed as per the Constitution. The CPB will work closely with the Investment and Development Programme Board with information flows between the two Boards enabled by senior officers.

For some major projects individual Boards may be established to oversee delivery from concept. These projects will follow the mandated gate process but approvals through stages will be made by the specific Board rather than the CPB.

An Officer group to support the Board will be established. This group will exist to ensure that challenge is made at an officer level and will work with the Project Management Office to provide documentation for the CPB.

The main responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

- Oversee the gateway process for the Capital Programme, including approval through gates (any formal decisions related to funding/addition to the Capital Programme will need to be referred to Cabinet/Council in accordance with the Constitution in addition to the gate process)
- Oversee the change control process across the capital programme
- Receive regular reports from programmes and projects to scrutinise performance in terms of progress, scope, risks, issues, changes and benefit realisation against approved business cases
- Receive and consider 'lessons learned' reports and make recommendations for changes and improvements in processes as a result
- Assure that projects in the Capital Programme have full stakeholder engagement and complement strategies across the organisation

5. Meetings

The CPB will meet once every two months as standard. Additional meetings may be called by the Chair as appropriate. Reports and supporting documentation will be circulated at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

Report Title: Halstead Community Grants Fund	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 th December 2022	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/55
Report Presented by: Councillor Frankie Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities	
Enquiries to: Caroline Elias-Stephenson, Head of Housing & Communities	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement from Cabinet to establish a capital grant funding scheme utilising the budget allocated for investment in the Halstead Community.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve a capital grant funding scheme of £600,000 for the benefit of the Halstead Community.
- 2.2 To approve the decision-making process for a capital grant funding scheme.
- 2.3 To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Communities to approve the criteria against which the applications will be determined.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 At the Full Council meeting held on 15 February 2010 a decision was taken to approve an allocation of £800,000 as a contribution towards a community centre in Halstead.
- 3.2 Section 106 money was also allocated as a contribution to support the community centre in Halstead, and this money will remain held by the Council to support any future project for a community centre in Halstead for as long as the agreement allows. However, if this project does not come forward in order to use this Section 106 money it may be necessary to renegotiate with the developer to alter its use. If developers do not wish to renegotiate then it may be necessary to hand the money back to developers.
- 3.3 Since the Council's decision in February 2010 there has been partial allocation of the £800,000 to various initiatives in the Halstead area totalling £163,890.

- 3.4 This fund has now been held for 11 years and as of 1 April 2022 the mechanisms for allocation of this funding changed, with a view to opening the funds to other projects that could benefit the Halstead community through development of a capital asset.
- 3.5 In order to support future projects funded from this allocation they would need to satisfy the Council's policy on capitalisation of expenditure. Any projects would have to meet the test of creating and improving an asset that will provide service benefit for more than one year and be expenditure of at least £10k.
- 3.6 In order to distribute the fund, the Council is proposing that a Fund is launched and is open to all Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) groups to apply. Grants would be for a minimum of £10,000. The allocation decision will sit with Cabinet Member for Communities on receipt of an application and supporting business case, to determine successful applicants. This decision would be taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council and any other community group as appropriate.
- 3.7 To ensure grant applications submitted to the Halstead Community Fund are allocated appropriately, a systematic approach will take place within the Communities team to assess submissions. The grant application appraisal process will be made up of two parts:
- Part 1: Due Diligence
 - Part 2: Criteria Scoring

Scoring criteria will be agreed by the Cabinet Member for Communities ahead of the fund going live.

- 3.8 The expectation is that this fund will go live on 9 January 2023 and will run for a period of 6 weeks during which time people can bid and will be allocated funding until the funding is exhausted. If there are no suitable applications or funding remains in place, the Council will launch a second round of funding applications .
- 3.9 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
 - Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported.
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

4. Options

Option 1

- 4.1 To agree the recommended option to launch the fund to which allocations are made via an application process.

Option 2

- 4.2 To not agree to launch the fund. The disadvantage of this is it will not create a provision which will enrich the local Halstead community as already agreed for this fund.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There is provision remaining within the Capital Programme for expenditure in Halstead that is sufficient to fund a capital grant funding scheme of £600,000.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 All funding awarded will be subject to a grant agreement, which will capture the terms upon which the Grant is provided and the details of the project to be delivered with the funding. This will be signed by the Council and the relevant VSC.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 All Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations applying will be required to provide evidence of relevant insurances, policies, and governance.

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 None.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 None.

Report Title: Digital Strategy	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 th December 2022	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/52
Report Presented by: Councillor John McKee, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation	
Enquiries to: Paul Reid, ICT & Facilities Manager paul.reid@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To agree the strategy to support the Council to harness the use of digital technology and services to improve public services, improve access and connectivity and improve the Councils place for its communities and businesses.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the Digital Strategy 2022-2026 as set out in Appendix A

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Since the development of the last digital strategy (2017-2021), the world and the digital landscape have changed significantly. Digital technology was crucial during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that Council services were able to keep running, particularly in relation to the way the Council communicated, worked and support its customers.
- 3.2 An increased reliance on technology means that the Council need to continue to develop its resilience and ensure that it protects itself from potential cyber attacks. The Council also need to take a role in promoting cyber security across the district to help everyone have the confidence to use technology safely.
- 3.3 The purpose of the Digital Strategy is to harness the use of digital technology and services to improve public services, improve access and connectivity, and improve the Councils place for its communities and businesses. Continuing to improve digital services is key to ensure that public services are easily accessible, cost effective and inclusive.

- 3.4 The last two years have shown the power that digital technology has to transform the way that individuals and businesses live and shop, the way that the businesses operate and how people communicate with each other. This district benefitted from being able to use digital technology during an unprecedented time, and the residents and businesses of Braintree have looked to use digital technology to adapt and keep things going. The UK is making significant progress in rolling out wireless connectivity, with 92% of the UK landmass currently covered by a good 4G signal from at least one operator. Braintree district has a Superfast and fibre coverage of 96.9%, and the Council are working with Superfast Essex, the broadband improvement programme run by Essex County Council, to improve this figure to a forecasted 99% by the end of 2023.
- 3.5 The Strategy also considers how the Council engages with its residents. Over the past two years the Council has seen increased visits to its website from 723k annually in 2016/2016 to 2.8m annually in 2021/22. Similarly there has been a 156% increase in the number of online transactions since 2017. As a Council we have also changed the way it operates since the last digital strategy, for example remote connections have increased from only 3 in 2017 to 135 in 2022, there has been a move to using laptops rather than desktops to help with agile and flexible working and officers have embraced new systems to enable efficient communication, with on average 3.1k internal Teams calls taking place per month.
- 3.6 This strategy sets out how the Council will meet the digital challenges of the future and make the best use of technology to deliver better outcomes. This strategy continues with themes to respond to different needs.
- (a) **Digital Council** - Embrace the opportunity for transforming through technology, and to continuously improve the way the Council work to meet the demands, challenges and expectations of our workforce and our customers. The Strategy sets out that the Council will embrace the opportunity for transformation and continuous improvement through 6 key themes and identifies 7 ways in which the Council will achieve this.
- (b) **Digital Customer** - Seek to use technology to improve access to our services and ensure that they are usable for a wide range of customers with differing needs whilst adopting a responsive and proactive digital first approach. The priority is to provide excellent services to customers, which will be achieved through 5 key themes.
- (c) **Digital Place** - Support improvements in digital infrastructure and the promotion of digital skills opportunities whilst enabling and encouraging digital innovation.
- 3.7 The recommendation to agree the Digital Strategy 2022-2026 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;
- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;
- A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services;
- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

3.8 Continuing to improve digital services is key to ensure that public services are easily accessible, cost effective and inclusive. This strategy aims to develop and improve the Councils digital capability to reduce the cost of services, improve customer satisfaction with services and reduce inequality in access to those services. Digital services make it much easier for the Councils customers to self-serve, supporting the Council to manage demand on essential services.

3.9 To deliver the Strategy, the Council will need to work in partnership with residents, businesses and other local authorities, as well as community and voluntary sector organisations. The Council will also look to benchmark the Councils digital services against peers to ensure that it continues to provide high quality, value for money services to both internal and external customers.

4. Consultation

4.1 Customer feedback from our website and comments made by staff have been used to develop this strategy. The underlying theme of this feedback is that many of the Councils customers want to be able transact and engage with the Council digitally, whilst our staff want to use digital channels and technology. A few examples of comments made are detailed below that have helped to develop the content of this strategy

- “I have been trying to register for council tax, as I just moved into the district, but I am unable to do this online”
- “I have realised that you are sending invoices for my pitch fees at the Discovery Centre to my old address. I tried to update my details online but cant find a way so had to email”
- “Who is my councillor please? Your website does not recognise postcodes from the new Redrow development off Rayne Road”
- “My son has now moved away having left university so needs to be removed from the Braintree electoral roll. How can I do this online please?”

- “We have started to have lots of Teams meetings with Developers that is very helpful”
- “Multiple phone systems do not always work well together and we should only have one system”

4.2 There has also been consultation with other local authorities and the Essex Digital Partnership during the development of the strategy. Feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive of the strategy but a couple of questions of note as below were specifically asked:

- A comment was made stating that a 4 year strategy was bold given how quickly things can change; however it was also recognised that a strategy needs time to be delivered and the content of Braintree’s digital strategy does not limit its longevity.
- A question was asked if Braintree are looking to you use our estate footprint in new ways or reducing the use through the strategy; The Digital Strategy is seen as an enabler of change and will very much be at the forefront of how and where the Council does business in the future, but is not seen as the primary driver for this.

4.3 Priorities and projects have been shared with partners to identify where projects could be delivered more effectively collaboratively.

5. Options

5.1 There is an option to not update and replace the digital strategy. This would mean that there is not an agreed direction for digital services and would potentially lead to resources being less well directed and spent.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Resources in teams across the Council and partners will manage the delivery of the overall strategy and actions and projects will be developed and agreed through the Council’s Annual and Business planning process and will be monitored monthly by management board and relevant portfolio holders.

6.2 There are not any additional financial implications as a direct result of this strategy.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are not any legal implications or statutory provisions relevant to this strategy.

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.

Report Title: Second Quarter Performance Report 2022/23	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 th December 2022	For: To Note
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/15
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 second quarter (July 2022 to September 2022).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet to note the performance of the Council for the second quarter (July 2022 to September 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 second quarter, a further seven projects are now complete bringing the total completed to 17. A further 43 projects are on track and progressing well although some have been through the appropriate change management process to amend the end date due to being re-prioritised or re-scoped as necessary to accommodate new and competing demands on the Council. Four projects have an amber status mainly due to delays in processes. Full details are provided in the report.
- 3.3 Targets have not been set for all our performance indicators this year due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the need to revisit baseline targets which will be taking place over the next six months. For the targets that remain, nine performance indicators have met or exceed target, one performance indicator has missed target by less than 5% and three performance indicators have missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to recycling rates (>5%), the percentage of land that falls below the cleanliness standards (>5%), average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%) and the percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within timescale (<5%).

- 3.4 Once again, the Council is stepping up to a new challenge providing support to residents through the cost-of-living crisis. The Council is working in partnership on schemes to help keep people warm, save energy and feed themselves and their families whilst signposting to additional information and organisations that can offer further support. The Council recognises the impact on services and is mindful that performance will be affected as demand in some areas increases and with far more support required over the coming months.
- 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 Q2 is a positive variance of £126k. This compares to the adverse variance projected at Q1 of £721k, which triggered implementation of a Recovery Plan that required all managers to review their service areas to identify opportunities for increased income, savings, and deferral of expenditure wherever possible. The Recovery Plans, which generated a net £589k, was the main factor in the improvement now reported at Q2. Other changes include a downward revision to the estimated impact of the National Employer's pay offer for 2022 (£47k). Further net improvement (£211k) across services has been projected, the main changes being an increase in investment income (£125k) and a higher level of incentive reward under the Council Tax Sharing Agreement (£110k).
- 3.7 The updated projections will be reviewed to ensure that any ongoing items, if not already, are reflected in the 2023/24 budget planning proposals.
- 3.8 The projected change in General Fund unallocated balance is currently a net addition of £536k giving an estimated balance at 31 March 2023 of £6.6m.
- 3.9 Actual spend on the capital programme was £4.6m, of which £2.9m was on the Plaza, with £0.6m 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 1st February 2023.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The report provides an update as to the financial position as at the end of the September 2022 covering the revenue and capital outturn for this period.

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 – Second 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>

Second Quarter Performance Management Report

1st July 2022 to 30th September 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 second 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 second quarter

The following table provides updates for the end of the second 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	5	7	1	0	0
Supporting our Communities	3	13	0	0	1
Promoting Prosperity	2	7	2	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	3	10	0	0	0
TOTAL	17	43	4	0	1

KEY:




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

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

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

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	2	0	0	1
Enhancing our Environment	2	0	2	0
Supporting our Communities	0	0	1	3
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	3
Delivering and Innovating	5	1	0	2
TOTAL	9	1	3	9

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 second quarter, a further seven projects are now complete bringing the total completed to 17. A further 43 projects are on track and progressing well although some have been through the appropriate change management process to amend the end date due to being re-prioritised or re-scoped as necessary to accommodate new and competing demands on the Council. Four projects have an amber status mainly due to delays in processes. Full details are provided in the report.

Targets have not been set for all our performance indicators this year due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and the need to revisit baseline targets which will be taking place over the next six months. For the targets that remain, nine performance indicators have met or exceed target, one performance indicator has missed target by less than 5% and three performance indicators have missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to recycling rates (>5%), the percentage of land that falls below the cleanliness standards (>5%), the average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%) and the percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within timescale (<5%).



Once again, the Council is stepping up to a new challenge providing support to residents through the cost-of-living crisis. The council is working in partnership on schemes to help keep people warm, save energy and feed themselves and their families whilst signposting to additional information and organisations that can offer further support. The Council recognises the impact on services and is mindful that performance will be affected as demand in some areas increases and with far more support required over the coming months.

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 to our high street businesses. Plans are underway for Christmas events including the Christmas light switch on in November. New directional wayfinding signs have been installed in Braintree town centre to	March 2023	

celebrate Braintree's history and help visitors navigate through the town centre.		
Deliver physical improvements to the town centres of Witham and Halstead		
Stakeholders have approved the designs for the improvements to the town centres which include the refurbishment of street furniture and street lighting, new cycle parking, road signage, as well as replacement or maintenance of litter bins, benches and bollards. The works will now be going out to tender in the third quarter.	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		
The Housing Research and Development Team have been continuing with the research required and the evidence base to inform the priorities of the new Housing Strategy. Consultation with stakeholders will take place in October and a draft strategy should be ready in November with public consultation taking place in December.	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 highway schemes for the A12, A120 and A131 Chelmsford Bypass		
A development consent order has been submitted to the Department for Transport in August 2022 in respect of the A12 widening scheme. Surveys and ground investigations to provide technical information (ahead of the next phase of more details scheme design) continue by National Highways along this stretch of the A12 and will continue in October with night-time road closures in place to carry out the works. In respect of the A120 upgrade, we are awaiting further details from National Highways on the current position of the project.	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		
The cycle video launched in conjunction with National Bike week in June was used again for Bike to Work week in August. The council has also supported three local cycling organisations who have now received cycling grants up the value of £12k. The recommendations from scrutiny reviews of the Cycling Strategy and into cycling and walking in the Braintree district have been undertaken will be presented to Cabinet in October 2022.	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%. Superfast Essex and Gigaclear	March 2023	

have been running campaigns to increase uptake and to raise awareness of 5G.		
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 now been pushed back to December 2022. This is to allow adequate time for the necessary process requirements to complete within the NHS to exchange contracts	December 2022	






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. A report will be taken to Management Board in the third quarter.	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 launched in August with local media releases and promotion in Council newsletters. the slogan 'It's for driving on, not littering on' highlighted the fixed penalty fines for anyone caught throwing litter from their	March 2023	

vehicle and local businesses, KFC and McDonalds supported the campaign by displaying banners with the message 'it's a takeaway not a throwaway'. The campaign will run for six weeks.		
The 'Let's get it right' campaign is being finalised and aims to reduce contamination in the recycling waste streams collected by educating and encouraging residents to recycle the right things. The campaign will be launched in October in conjunction with Recycle Week which has been rescheduled to October following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.	March 2023	
A 'beat the heat' campaign was launched during the heatwave to give advice to residents and communities on how to stay safe in hot weather. The Councils Contact magazine shared inspiring stories of local residents and businesses doing their bit to raise awareness of climate change as well as sharing tips to be more environmentally friendly and save money	March 2023	
Carry out drainage works at Braintree cemetery to eliminate flooding and increase burial capacity		
A topographical survey was carried out in July and final plans were submitted to the Environment Agency. The approval of the designs by the Environment Agency were delayed which has had a knock-on effect to the procurement process. Tender documents have been completed with a view to going out to tender in the third quarter. The end date of the project has been amended accordingly.	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 due to go live in September. Due to the death of her late Majesty the Queen, consultation will now be launched at the beginning of October. Online consultation forms have been tested with promotion arranged via social media and through community engagement events. The end date of the project has been pushed back to December to allow time for the consultation results to be analysed.	December 2022	
Create a garden of remembrance at Bocking cemetery providing a peaceful environment for families to visit		
The contract for this project had to be re-tendered due to the withdrawal of the previous contractor. The new tender was published in August and due to costs coming back higher than the available budget, the council is currently exploring the option of using S106 contributions to fund the budget gap. The end date of the project has been revised to the end of December 2022.	December 2022	

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 updated will now be 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		

<p>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.</p>	<p>December 2021</p>	
<p>Complete our trial of anti-litter signage and continue to deter people from littering along highway verges</p>		
<p>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.</p>	<p>November 2021</p>	



CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

An internal lead officer Climate Change Delivery Board has been established with the purpose of monitoring delivery of the 73 actions in the Climate Action Plan. The actions in the Climate Action Plan are classified under seven themes and progress on these themes is outlined below:

Resources

Work continues regarding establishing a Sustainable Procurement Policy within the Council. Water butts have been ordered for the Council's cemeteries and will be installed in Quarter 3. Officers are Investigating options around the re-use of rainwater run off at Cordon's Farm. A Climate Change staff training program is being created. A full review of the waste management service is being progressed although this is dependent on the secondary legislation due from Environment Act 2021. Numerous campaigns have been run supporting residents with energy efficiency, food reuse, shopping local many of which also targets the current Cost of Living crisis. External Climate focusing partnerships have been developed further. Continued recycling messaging has been shared across social media platforms.

Energy Conservation

The Council has 0.6MW of solar on its estate generating 392,385kW hours in 2021-22. The Council estate in 2020-1 used 1,717,153kWh of electricity. The Council is in the process of renewing its energy contracts and we are reviewing inclusion of a green tariff as part of this process. Capital bids have been submitted for the purchase of solar panels at Springwood Drive Industrial Estate as well as the replacement of current lighting at all Leisure Centres to LED lighting.

Built Environment

The Plaza and the iConstruct buildings have now opened and act as flagship sites for the promotion of sustainable development. A Sustainable Planning Checklist has been written and is awaiting approval. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) on sustainability and carbon reduction, including waste management, biodiversity gain, encouraging developers to exceed targets and build sustainable, resilient and efficient new homes is underway and on track for completion by March 2023.

Transport

Electric Vehicle charging points have been installed at The Plaza. There are now 54 charging units the majority of which are fast chargers across Council Car Parks. The Council have created a partnership with Gridserve UK and continue to work with BP Pulse to investigate locations for installation of rapid charging units. The Council's Sustainability Team continue to signpost residents to Essex County Council's on-street charging referral page. Superfast Broadband forecasts have risen. The Council continue to promote and support active travel including cycling and walking and the new DigiGo service has been promoted widely. An internal Renewable Fuel Vehicle Replacement working group has been established and is investigating options around lowering the Council's fleet emissions.

Business and the Green Economy

The Council have again engaged businesses within the district to take part in a solar auction to provide support with installing solar packs on premises. We have continued to promote LoCase and FAIR schemes across the district. Nine businesses have been supported to achieve a successful LoCase grant. Support has been given to Essex County Council to develop their Green Business Accreditation Award. A survey was sent to local businesses to gauge an understanding of how the Council can support them further with advice and signposting. A new "Green Business" feature has been agreed for launch in Quarter three which will be included in fortnightly business newsletters.

Natural Environment

The Council continue to follow a "single cut" policy in certain areas of the district. The Council have received funding from the Changing Futures Programme to create a Braintree Community Garden for adults with multiple complex disadvantages/needs. Potential partnerships have also been identified for the further development of rewilding and tree planting across the district. A baseline accounting tool has been created which will allow the Council to map and carbon calculate planting.

Adapting to Climate Change



The Corporate Risk Register is up to date and the partnership with ERF remains constant. Throughout August, there was continuous messaging for heatwave management and fire mitigation to inform and support residents. There were also messages on water saving and risk management during droughts. At the end of August, flood risk warnings and resident advice against flooding was shared. A severe weather plan is in place. Internal 'Rest Centre' training is being undertaken in November to support the community if required.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES











Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Replace the artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club		
The contract and spend to replace the artificial grass pitch at Braintree Sports and Health Club was agreed at Cabinet in July. Works commenced in September and due to supply chain issues in respect of the goals and dugouts, completion is now expected to be in October and the end date of the project has been amended to reflect this.	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.	March 2023	
Revitalise our Community Transport scheme and increase the number of volunteers		
The service currently has 20 volunteer drivers shared between the social car scheme and minibus hire scheme. In the second quarter of the year, the Community Transport team provided 6,530 journeys. Demand for the service post pandemic is starting to increase. The Community Transport service have been working with Community 360 to promote volunteer driving opportunities at various events across the district.	March 2023	
Deliver the Braintree District Volunteer Awards to recognise the contribution volunteers make in our district		
The Volunteer awards took place on the 11 th August at the I-Construct Innovation Hub. This year there was an additional award to recognise the covid response made by volunteers. Live social media posts announced winners as their awards were presented. The annual awards are now in their sixth year and continue to successfully recognise and reward individuals and groups who make a positive difference in their community and in inspiring others.	August 2022	
Continue to work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans		
The Kelvedon Neighbourhood plan was formally adopted at a meeting of Full Council in July 2022. This brings the total number of neighbourhood plans adopted in the district to six with eight others being progressed including the Feering Neighbourhood Plan which is subject to a referendum in the third quarter. A	March 2023	

Neighbourhood area for Witham was also approved in September.		
Set up a young people's panel to encourage more young people to have their say on things that matter to them		
Contact has been made with a local youth group and engagement sessions will be set up following the October half term.	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 numerous organised walks (which average 200 walkers each month), fitness classes for people with health conditions and the over 60's, seated exercise classes, dance lessons and weight management sessions. Funding has been applied for through Active Essex to offer a large group walk on 4th November at Markshall Estate in Coggeshall, to be held during Stress Awareness week. Transport will be included for those who need it and a free hot drink. A community Garden at the Tabor Centre in Weavers Park is being designed. The first meeting of the working group will take place in October.	March 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Work with Community 360 and Active Essex to provide support to children and families who need it during school holiday periods through the provision of activity sessions		
We continue to work with Active Essex and Community 360 to provide activities and a nutritious meal through the school holiday periods. The summer holiday sites saw 82% of children return to an activAte club. During the summer, 11 clubs were provided by ten organisations providing support to 644 children and young people	March 2023	
Continue to work with Community 360 to promote volunteering opportunities and support the voluntary sector		
Community 360 now lead on the promotion, recruitment and allocation of volunteering across the district. Work has been ongoing with the Community Transport team to promote volunteering driving opportunities at various events across the district.	March 2023	
Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district		
The Braintree District Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum met in July to discuss the activities that took place during Loneliness Awareness Week in June which the Forum agreed were very successful. The All In Alliance held a drop in event in August at the United Reformed Church in Witham and a focus group at Witham library in September to explore ideas for activities aimed at 16 - 19 year olds to address social isolation with representation from Witham Town Council, United Reformed Church, Community360, Heads2Minds, Hold Fast Credit Union and United in Kind. Activity suggestions will be narrowed down by All In before taking forward any projects. The next meeting of the Braintree District Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum is scheduled for October	March 2023	
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.	March 2023	



Regular meetings with NACRO take place to monitor progress.		
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		
Essex Police's Strategic Vulnerability Centre, Crime and Public Protection Command organised a meeting in September promoted to all partner agencies by the Community Safety Partnership to provide an overview on the Child Exploitation Team and the proactive measures being put into place, how restorative justice could assist victims of crime and to provide a better understanding on the use of out of court disposal options and the proactive orders available.	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 Mid Essex Alliance provided a data set which alongside the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment data portal will enable the Council to develop a local health profile. The Livewell Hub in Manor Street was officially opened and we will be exploring the potential community use for this. The Council has provided support to Colne Valley Primary Care Network to promote and expand their Low Carb project encouraging members of their community to lead a low carb lifestyle.	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. The cardiac rehab sessions held at Braintree Sports and Health Club and Witham Leisure Centre have increased their session times to deal with an increase in demand. Active Essex have recruited a Community Engagement Co-ordinator and a Sports and Community Development Officer to ensure activities are promoted and to lead on projects to encourage people to take part in sport to lead a healthier lifestyle.	March 2023	
Engage with school age children and young adults through careers, jobs and apprenticeship fairs to inspire young people to raise their aspirations		
An apprenticeship fair took place in September at Chelmsford City Racecourse for year 11 students to meet a range of employers and to hear about apprenticeship opportunities. A further jobs fair will take place in March and work will begin on this in the third quarter. Officers from the Council have met with ACL (Adult Courses and Learning) to discuss outreach programmes for rural areas. Projects to support skills have been included as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund bid submitted in August.	March 2023	

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. At the Cabinet meeting in July, they approved that the Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure remained under the ownership and stewardship of the Council and to agree terms, with Marshgate Developments, for the grant of improved access rights to and from an adjoining 9 acre plot. The developer has now requested a planning pre-app.	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 therefore the scheme design is being reviewed.	March 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		
The consultants have completed their research project which has been provided to the Council to enable a draft strategy to be prepared based on the findings. Key priorities are continuing to be tested with members and businesses before taking	March 2023	

the draft new plan to Cabinet in November.		
Deliver campaigns to promote Braintree District as a place to invest in, live in and visit		
There continues to be a number of campaigns to promote the district including take up of the facilities at the Plaza, the new garden and area behind the Town Hall, training and funding opportunities to support businesses, promotion of the street markets, Bocking Windmill and parks as places to visit together with the summer events guide. A summer tourism video was shared on social media to bring in more out of district visitors. The Councils Marketing and Communications team have also supported smaller businesses throughout the summer by sharing details of their events.	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 206 people resulting in 172 people accessing training and support. To date 31 people have secured employment through the programme. The Councils Community Engagement Officer attended the Witham Jobs fair in September to promote the scheme resulting in a further eleven referrals.	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. There is further work ongoing with partners to promote the digital skills development scheme.	March 2023	
Continue to develop the business support offer for the construction sector as part of the I-construct innovation centre		
A letter from Cllr Cunningham was sent to approximately 400 Springwood Industrial Estate businesses to encourage them to register for the I-Construct programme which provides grants and a membership network for all businesses who serve the construction and built environment sector. The Haven Gateway Partnership also hosted a stand at the opening of the Plaza in September to further promote the offer of I-Construct.	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. The Council submitted an investment plan stating how any allocation of monies from the Shared Prosperity Fund will be spent including how they will support business to start, grow and expand. The Council is awaiting the outcome of this.	March 2023	
Ensure residents have access to the skills programmes and education they need to access employment opportunities including in new and expanding sectors		
The Council is currently waiting on the outcome of the submission to the shared prosperity fund which is expected in October to better understand how this will be utilised for skills and education before creating a skills plan.	March 2023	

DELIVERING AND INNOVATING






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.		
There are a number of projects being progressed under the Investment and Development programme of works. The opening of the Plaza will secure income from office lettings and events and a review of all traded services will help to understand opportunities to increase income. The approach to our Investment and Development Programme will be reviewed with new terms of reference. Monthly senior officer and member meetings continue to review and track progress of the programme.	March 2023	▶
Refresh our Digital Strategy and action plan to address future demand and improve the way we use technology to deliver services		
There are a number of priorities in our previous strategy which are still relevant. They have been reviewed and updated to reflect current and future needs and the revised Digital Strategy will be presented to Cabinet in the third quarter.	December 2022	▶
Encourage residents to transact with us on line by developing our website to allow customers to make bookings, track requests and sign up to receive council tax bills electronically		
The Plaza Meeting Rooms and Hatchery spaces online booking process is now live. A number of online forms for waste processes have been reviewed and updated to ensure they can feed into the new waste management system going live in October. Further online forms will be reviewed once the system is live. The end date of this project has been amended to reflect the ongoing work around the development of the online forms planned for the remainder of the year.	March 2023	▶
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		
A number of community events have been held across the district in the second quarter including a Livewell event, Police open day, All-in event, Community Market Place event where information and feedback from residents has been captured for the 'Love where you live' survey as well as providing information about local services, activities and support. Additional community events for our Ukrainian guests and sponsors have been announced and will run monthly until the end of the year. These events will now include English conversational language lessons.	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 is now in post and is providing support to colleagues within the Housing Service. They are also establishing links with others in similar roles in other Authorities and looking into DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation to enable the council to respond to domestic abuse situations more effectively.	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		
Fusion continue to see an increase in participation levels with all restrictions now lifted and will be looking to set targets again for 2023/24. Works to upgrade the gym facilities at all four centres across the district will start in October 2022	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		
As part of the project to review the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, we have agreed the baseline data for our waste management service and six collection methodology options. External consultants are currently modelling the options to assess the impact on our waste collection service.	March 2023	
Look at how the Greater Essex system will work together for the benefit of our residents in response to Levelling Up		
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 and Braintree District Council will be working in partnership with the County to deliver improvement schemes. In addition to the work with Essex County Council, following the launch of the Shared Prosperity Fund in April 2022, the Council submitted in August, its own investment plan for our £1.36million share of the government's Shared Prosperity Fund to support communities and businesses over the next three years. The plan is expected to be approved in the autumn to enable work to start on the proposals for year one.	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			37		
Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district	95%	95%			n/a	n/a	
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	148	569			540		<i>The breakdown between full and outline permissions are as follows: Full - 153 Outline - 416</i>
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT							
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.04%	50.41%			60%		<i>Figures are awaiting validation by Essex County Council. The residual waste tonnage collected in the second quarter was down by 243 tonnes, with dry mixed recycling increased by 82 tonnes compared to the previous quarter. The excessive hot dry period throughout the summer impacted on the amount of garden waste collected, with a reduction of 643 tonnes compared to the first quarter of the year. As expected, the lower garden waste tonnage is a trend reported by most Council's across the Essex Waste Partnership. This illustrates the seasonality and regular changes that can occur during the annual growing season.</i>
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	107kgs	103kgs			117kgs		
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a	7%			6%		<i>Recorded three times a year – July, November and March. Main issues with littering have been on the trunk road (A12) where we continue to see high deposits around slip road locations. The Council are liaising with National Highways to arrange works to remove the litter however, there is a 12-week lead time for organising traffic management on slip roads and other roadworks schemes are currently taking precedence.</i>
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (168)	100% (197)			100%		
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						

Performance Indicator	2022/23						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
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			90 days		<i>In the second quarter, the service received 70 new grant referrals (8 of which were critical) and approved 32 cases (4 of which were critical). Critical cases approved in the quarter were dealt with on average in 20 days, with the quickest of those completed in 3 days. The remaining caseload at the end of the second quarter is 107. It remains the case that builder's quotes are taking longer to turn around due to the ongoing high demands in the industry and the current difficulties with the supply of materials. Additional approved contractors who work to an appropriate standard are in the process of being added to the approved builder's list. The Team are continuing to receive a high number of complex needs cases some of which involve seeking planning permission and working with multiple partner organisations before final approval can be achieved. The team progresses these complex cases whilst managing the ongoing workload of substantial and critical applications. The reluctance of the elderly and vulnerable to let people into their homes following the pandemic to allow for assessments of works continues to improve.</i>
Participation levels across all our sports centres	167,599	179,405			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			n/a	n/a	
Number of homelessness cases prevented	60	61			n/a	n/a	
PROMOTING PROSPERITY							
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.5%	2.6%			n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups across the district	239	234			n/a	n/a	
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	116	67			n/a	n/a	
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING							
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service	73%	73%			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	
Centre							
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	97.83%	97.7%			97%		
Number of people transacting with us online	41,016	30,730			n/a	n/a	
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	18.3 days	15.23 days			20 days		
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	10.93 days	4.45 days			6 days		
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	95.83%	88.20%			90%		<i>Represents 142 out of 161 stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescales. There has been an increase in the number of planning complaints received in the second quarter requiring additional time to provide a response. Complainants have been kept informed of progress.</i>
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.01%	57.4%			57.5%		<i>Marginally off target. Collection is still holding up and comparable with last year and benchmarks positively against other Essex billing authorities. There is a risk that as the cost-of-living continues to impact households this could impact future collection performance</i>
Collection rate for Business Rates	31.26%	56.9%			51.6%		

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the second 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)	(39)	(49)	(206)
Not Justified	61 (82)	65 (68)	(49)	(60)	(259)
Partially Justified	27 (26)	15 (46)	(7)	(18)	(97)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	(0)	(1)	(1)
Total	128 (159)	167 (185)	(91)	(128)	(563)

Comments

The number of complaints received in the second quarter has increased. The increases are mainly in the Operations and Planning Services.

The majority of complaints relate to the Operations service, in particular, complaints around missed waste collections and bins not being returned to the collection point. Staff shortages of refuse and recycling staff at the beginning of the second quarter impacted on the number of missed collections. Messages were put on our website and social media platforms apologising for the delays and for customers to leave their bins out for collection.

The second quarter has also seen an increase in the number of planning complaints received which are complex in their nature referring to particular planning decisions and processes. Additional time has been required to provide comprehensive responses and ensure all areas of the complaints are addressed.

In the second quarter of 2022/23, of the 167 complaints received:

- 161 are stage one complaints
- 4 are stage two complaints
- 2 are stage three complaints

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the second quarter of 2022/23, the LGO received one new complaint in respect of the councils consultation on an outline and reserve matters planning application.

In the second quarter, the ombudsman also issued three final decision notices. For two decisions, the LGO declined to investigate the complaint due to their being insufficient or no evidence of fault to warrant an investigation. For the third decision, a complaint against the Planning service was not upheld by the LGO as they did not find any evidence in their investigations of fault by the council causing injustice.

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			-	-
Total staff FTE	440.71	439.23			- 1.48	-
Level of employee turnover	2.87%	2.67%			- 0.2	-
Number of leavers	14	13			- 1	-
Number of starters	9	13			+ 4	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.61 days	1.37 days			- 0.24 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	79.01%	68.38%			N/A Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	2400	1,041			- 1,359	-
Number of delegates	106	539			+ 433	-
Number of apprentices **	18	20			+ 2	-

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)	(9)	(15)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (6)	5 (6)	(8)	(11)	<i>Main areas are slips and trips. One person was hit by a car.</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (2)	0 (1)	(1)	(0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (0)	0 (0)	(0)	(4)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	37 (0)	35 (10)	(22)	(26)	<i>Lost days account for the employee hit by a car.</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	3 (2)	2 (1)	(1)	(1)	
Number of near miss incidents	1 (0)	1 (0)	(0)	(2)	<i>A vehicle reversed into a mower</i>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	1 (1)	(3)	(3)	
Number of claims settled	4 (1)	0 (0)	(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 Q2 is a positive variance of £126k. This compares to the adverse variance projected at Q1 of £721k, which triggered implementation of a Recovery Plan that required all managers to review their service areas to identify opportunities for increased income, savings, and deferral of expenditure wherever possible. The Recovery Plans, which generated a net £589k, was the main factor in the improvement now reported at Q2. Other changes include a downward revision to the estimated impact of the National Employer's pay offer for 2022 (£47k). Further net improvement (£211k) across services has been projected, the main changes being an increase in investment income (£125k) and a higher level of incentive reward under the Council Tax Sharing Agreement (£110k).

The updated projections will be reviewed to ensure that any ongoing items, if not already, are reflected in the 2023/24 budget planning proposals.

The projected change in General Fund unallocated balance is currently a net addition of £536k giving an estimated balance at 31 March 2023 of £6.6m.

Actual spend on the capital programme was £4.6m, of which £2.9m was on the Plaza, with £0.6m 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 Q2.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Q2 Forecast Spend £'000	Q2 Forecast Variance £'000	Previous Quarter's Variance £'000	Q2 RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,262)	(1,742)	520	434	R
Community & Leisure	682	691	9	22	A
Corporate Management Plan	1,635	1,610	(25)	31	G
Economic Development	223	223	0	9	G
Environment	802	827	25	(11)	A
Finance	1,302	807	(495)	(286)	G
Governance	1,262	1,203	(59)	25	G
Housing Services	812	791	(21)	6	G
Human Resources	855	820	(35)	(3)	G
ICT & Facilities	1,850	1,836	(14)	9	G
Marketing & Communications	605	638	33	5	A
Operations	6,491	6,469	(22)	125	G
Strategic Investment	20	20	0	0	G
Sustainable Development	1,277	1,142	(135)	114	G
Service Total	15,554	15,335	(219)	480	G
Corporate Financing	987	780	(207)	(59)	G
Efficiency	(300)	0	300	300	
Net Total	16,241	16,115	(126)	721	G

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

Key assumptions reflected in the above:

- Staff Pay Award – Q2 projections reflect an updated forecast of the impact of the latest National Employers offer of a flat rate £1,925 per FTE. This would increase pay costs by £724k over that provided in the approved budget.
- Staffing projections are based on known changes at the end of Q2 and it is likely that further changes will impact subsequent reviews.

The table below breakdowns the forecast variance:

Business Plan Service	Forecast £'000	Staffing £'000	Pay Award £'000	Other Expenditure £'000	Gross Income £'000
Asset Management	520	93	7	73	347
Community & Leisure	9	(45)	30	(21)	45
Corporate Management Plan	(25)	(65)	12	18	10
Economic Development	0	(8)	8	0	0
Environment	25	134	46	5	(160)
Finance	(495)	(171)	76	89	(489)
Governance	(59)	(50)	30	(35)	(4)
Housing Services	(21)	(47)	44	58	(76)
Human Resources	(35)	(61)	32	(6)	0
ICT & Facilities	(14)	1	30	(45)	0
Marketing & Communications	33	21	16	16	(20)
Operations	(22)	(107)	325	453	(693)
Strategic Investment	0	0	0	0	0
Sustainable Development	(135)	(224)	68	40	(19)
Service Total	(219)	(529)	724	645	(1,059)
Corporate Financing	(207)	0	0	(9)	(198)
Efficiency	300	300	0	0	0
Net Total	(126)	(229)	724	636	(1,257)

Commentary on Main Service Variances reported at Q2

Asset Management

- Net overspends on staffing due to interim arrangements and the need for additional resources to deal with the transition of strategic projects to operational assets (£93k)
- Loss of rent (£134k) and service charges (£157k) due to areas of Causeway House being vacant, partly offset by operating cost savings and short-term business rate relief (£28k). It is currently assumed that the lettable office space will remain vacant for the remainder of the year.
- A combination of increased operating costs at I-Construct (£66k) mainly due to energy costs; unrecovered service charges at H120 (£22k) whilst some sites are under development or still subject to land sales; and shortfall in rental income (£38k) at Victoria Square as rental agreements are yet to be completed on the pharmacy and retail units. As all these sites are in early stage of operation, there is still a high degree of uncertainty over spending requirements and, where relevant, income that will be achievable.
- Shortfall on income achieved from commercial and other property rent reviews compared to the target assumed in the budget, and rent voids (£51k)

Environment

- Building Control additional agency staff costs net of savings on permanent vacant posts (£174k) which are being incurred due to difficulties in recruitment combined with an increase in service demand, partially offset by increased income (£106k).

Finance

- Staffing related savings from a combination of service efficiencies, vacancies, and appointments at lower scale points (£117k) which offsets the additional cost of the pay award +£76k; and cost recovery through New Burdens funding provided for administering the Energy Rebate Scheme and Covid related grants (£53k).
- 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 (£500k)

Operations

- Staffing underspends due to vacancies within the service (£107k).
- Increased vehicle operating costs due to the market price of diesel (£156k); and spot hire and maintenance of an aging fleet (£131k).
- Provision of wheelie bins and kitchen caddies for new properties and lifecycle replacements (£60k).
- Increase in income from mixed dry recycling material net of higher processing and haulage costs (£691k). This is due to a higher average basket price for material assumed for the year at £113 per tonne against a budgeted £43. The Council has been advised that market prices have peaked and are expected to reduce when reset at the next quarter.
- Recycling and other sacks contract – increased costs following procurement (£56k)
- Saving on contract for In-Cab Technology (£35k)
- Higher glass recycling income (£72k) (price/ tonnage) and Bulky Waste collections (£34k)
- 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 (£201k).

Sustainable Development

- Majority of the staffing underspend (£224k) due to vacancies within the service including new enforcement roles/ landscape services. Some posts are being held vacant as part of the in-year Recovery Plan to meet the higher service cost of the proposed pay offer +£68k.
- Whilst income is projected to be overachieved (£19k) this masks a wide variation with a shortfall in income from Planning Applications and Pre-Applications (£190k), offset by increased income from Planning Performance Agreement (£195k) and other recoveries (£14k).

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax Sharing Agreement – share-back from preceptors based on local tax collection performance at the end of Q2 is higher than budget (£190k).

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.

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. Options for funding this shortfall are being assessed in terms of the balance available in the Feasibility Reserve or utilising unallocated New Homes Bonus.

Capital Programme

Current capital programme totals £18m of which £11.2m is profiled into 2022/23:

	Profiled Spend 2022/23 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 2 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 2 % of Profile
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	879	167	19%
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	4,341	2,891	67%
Manor Street regeneration	734	653	89%
I-Construct Innovation Centre	140	26	19%
Maltings Lane Community Facility	170	9	5%
Town Centre improvements	268	17	6%
Industrial estate improvements	60	2	3%
Property planned maintenance	674	-	0%
Information technology systems & equipment	1,239	47	4%
Play areas, parks and open spaces	573	150	26%
Cemetery improvements	5	-	0%
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	100	5	5%
Operational equipment	131	13	10%
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	313	2	1%
Climate change initiatives	67	-	0%
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,056	382	36%
Capital salaries	476	233	49%
Total	11,226	4,597	41%

Changes to programme since last report

- The profiled spend in 22/23 has been reduced by £800k from that reported at Q1 with this expenditure now anticipated in 23/24.

Programme risks

- Manor Street regeneration – final account to be confirmed.
- I-Construct – awaiting final cost which is required to confirm the final claim for European Funding.
- The Plaza – final account to be confirmed
- Inflationary cost and impact on tendered prices
- Capital receipts: residential site sales and Right-to-Buy impacted by economic slowdown

Capital resources generated

- Sale of serviced land plots at Horizon 120 (£3.9m)
- Interim payments (£363k) from Eastlight in respect of the apartments at Victoria Square.
- Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – number of completed sales 6 generating c£966k. The second quarter saw a marked reduction with only one sale completed. The pipeline of sales has also reduced with 22 reported in progress; however, it is uncertain how many of these will proceed to completion given the recent sharp rise in interest rates. VAT shelter receipts were £214k at the end of Q2.
- Better Care Funding received £1.056m which is used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Changing Places Fund £120k ringfenced to construct new disabled toilets within Halstead Leisure Centre and Witham Town Council.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity to the end September		Amount Invested at end of the quarter
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£56.8m	£109.5m	£100.1m	£66.2m
Average amount invested for the period			£67.0m
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

Interest and dividends earned to the end of the quarter totalled £739k, which is equivalent to an annualised rate of return of 2.20%:

Investments	Average Amount Invested	Interest & Dividends Earned	Annualised Return %
Long-Term Pooled Funds	£19.0m	£464k	4.87%
Short-Term	£47.6m	£275k	1.14%
Total	£66.6m	£739k	2.20%

Dividend income from long-term pooled funds will vary quarter on quarter and therefore the annualised return will be expected to reduce over subsequent quarters.

The projected investment income for the year is £1.3m, which is £500k better than budget. The MTFS assumes an improvement 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 £19.8m, representing an unrealised gain of £0.8m over the amount originally invested. The sharp fall in market values at the end of September resulted in the valuations reducing by £1.6m from that reported at the end of Q1.

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 £16m
- Short Term Fixed Deposits (2x£3m) £6m
- Lloyds current account £1.2m

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:

Balance at 1 April 2022	£'000
	6,056
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(89)
Funding for one-off investment	(324)
Pension Fund triennial payment – repayment	823
Projected outturn variance at Q2	126
Estimated Balance at 31 March 2023	6,592

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. The amount to be applied has been reduced by £47k reflecting a current projected underspend on the Plaza in the year.
- 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 Q2 is an overall positive variance of £126k.

Report Title: Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6th December 2022	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/36
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 revised Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028, following the expiration of the Plan for Growth 2017-2022, and collation of a refreshed evidence base.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet to approve the Draft Braintree District Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028, as set out in Appendix A, for consultation.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Following the successful delivery of Braintree District Council's (the Council) ambitious Plan for Growth 2017-2022, the global economy has transformed with greater demand than ever 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 It was imperative that the Plan for Growth 2017-2022 was re-examined for a revised vision and priorities, as macroeconomic impacts have significantly changed national and local policy, influencing the needs of the District's residents and businesses to an extent where service delivery reviews are required.

- 3.4 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 (the Council) to research the current 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, 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. The survey highlighted the current and future needs of the business community and provided trend analysis into businesses who are still impacted by COVID-19 and how this and other macro-economic impacts will impose a negative trajectory for business growth soon. These results have therefore highlighted areas that the Economic Growth Strategy should focus on.
- 3.5 The evidence baseline highlighted a plethora of changes to the economy of the District with an array of themes that require investment and focus. With 155,200 people living within the District, a 6% growth in population since last reported in 2011, an aging population within the district requires intervention. This means that whilst there are low levels of unemployment, the Council need to ensure those of working age in the District have the skills and qualifications to fill local jobs and to increase productivity. The Braintree District's economy produces £3.26 billion per annum and accounts for 9% of economic production across Essex, suggesting strong economic influence. The 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.
- 3.6 The challenges that the Braintree 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 the Council offer residents and businesses within the District. Nonetheless, there is a major opportunity arising from three 'new' innovation assets in the Braintree District – I-Construct, Horizon 120 & The 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 develop clusters of activity around them.
- 3.7 This revised economic intelligence has therefore 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 Braintree District as the place for businesses to start up, innovate and grow.

3.8 The vision and core priorities are therefore:

Vision

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

Priorities

1. Infrastructure and Connectivity

The Council will 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, resulting in a district and neighbouring areas that are market ready, desirable, and fit to do business in.

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.

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.

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.

3.9 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;

3.10 The Economic Growth Strategy will deliver the above Corporate Objective through a 5-year action plan focusing on core economic growth needs for the District.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Three consultation workshops were delivered, inviting businesses and stakeholders to feedback on core issues within the district economy. In addition, a 500-business response survey was conducted to inform the revised evidence base.

5. Options

- 5.1 Option 1 is to approve the Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028, for consultation as set out in Appendix 1 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 as a result 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 If the draft strategy is agreed at Cabinet, it will be subject to a one-month consultation with business starting in December. This will be publicised via the Councils social media channels, website and via the Councils business email newsletter, as well as offering individual conversations with the Councils key businesses. The feedback from those consultations will be considered and where appropriate changes will be made to the strategy
- 6.2 An action plan for year 1 will then be developed and published, with yearly action plans developed thereafter for the remainder of the Plan period.
- 6.3 The final Strategy will be returned to Cabinet for formal approval in February.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications within this report.
- 7.2 The sources of funding to the Council to deliver 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.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 As 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 The Strategy's vision has sustainability and climate change as one of its golden threads running throughout the document. As such as well as improvement to the business environment which would expect the strategy to have a positive impact on the natural environment.

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. One of the Strategy's core priorities is 'Inclusive People and Skills', which will deliver inclusivity and equality across the district, for residents and businesses to benefit from support for a higher quality of life and prosperity opportunities.

11. List of Appendices

- 11.1 The draft Braintree Economic Plan 2023 – 2027

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 Braintree Plan for Growth



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 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, 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.

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 (6%), 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 productivity. 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 is 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.



Mayland House, 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
<p>The Council will 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, resulting in a district and neighbouring areas that are market ready, desirable, and fit to do business in.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

To deliver the priorities and goals of this Economic 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.

This strategy will be delivered through annual action plans, reporting to the elected Members quarterly with performance indicators, to manage risk for successful project delivery with tangible outcomes.

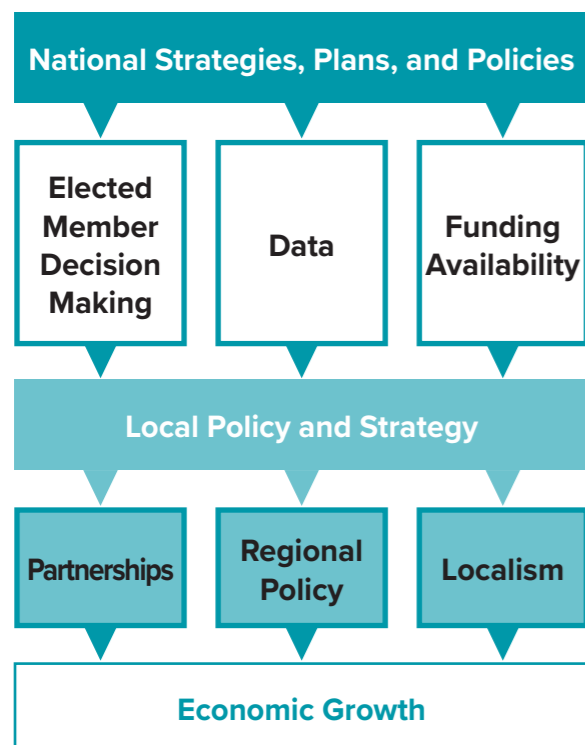
The evidence base used to inform this strategy can be found at www.braintree.gov.uk/homepage/282/economic-plan-research-project



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, agencies and actors 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 geography.

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 Southeast 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 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 at the Council adopts 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, 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.

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 is 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 constructure and infrastructure sectors but also linked and 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	
	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	—
Working Age Population	-	96,900	—
Economic Activity Rate	87.8%	87.2%	▼ 0.6%
Employment Rate	85.1%	86.2%	▲ 1.1%
Claimant Count Rate	1.1%	2.6%	▼ 1.5%
Median weekly Gross Pay (Employee – Workplace Based)	£423	£443	▲ 4.7%
Median weekly Gross Pay (Employed – Residence Based)	£510	£518	▲ 1.6%
% of Working Age Population with NVQ4+ Qualifications	31%	25%	▼ 6%
% of Working Age Population with No Qualifications	7%	7%	— 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, and schools and residents to raise awareness of initiatives such as Multiply to upskill 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, Braintree

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.

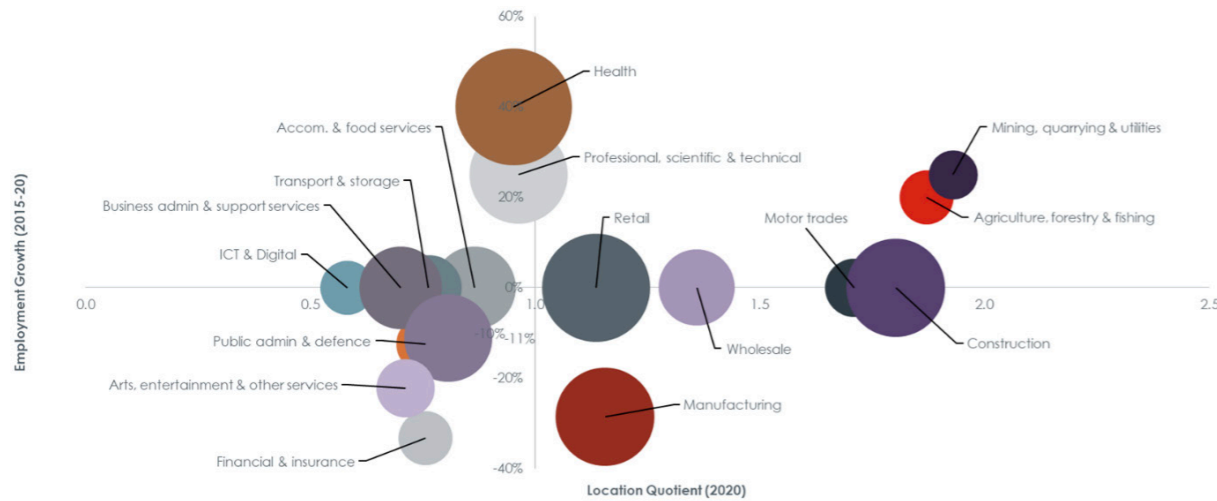
The Council will work with partners, including Essex County Council to address these issues.



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.

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 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.

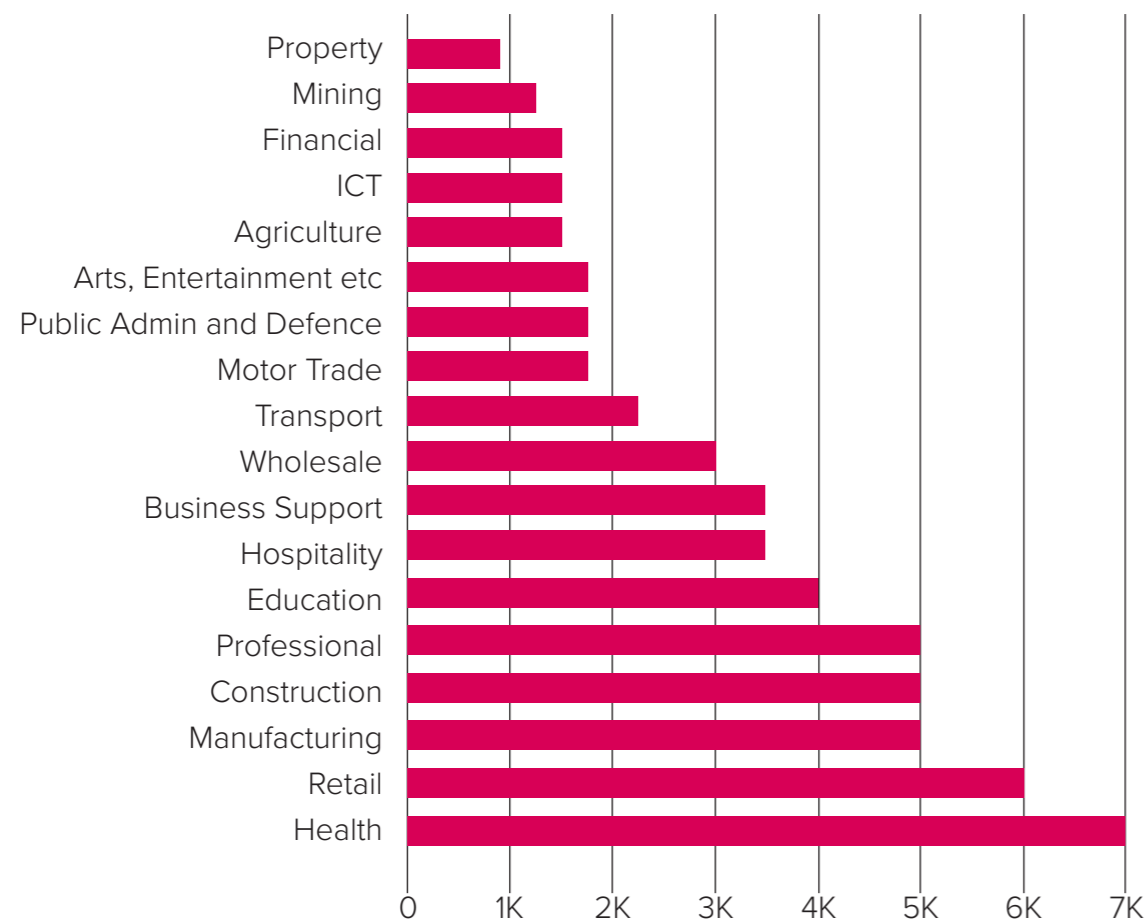
The local rural economy is an important component of the overall economy, with the agricultural sector having a relatively strong concentration of activity compared to the national level.

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 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, resulting 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 and infrastructure 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 C> cluster

- Supporting businesses to adopt energy and resource efficient practices, nurture local supply chains and improve the natural environment in which they operate

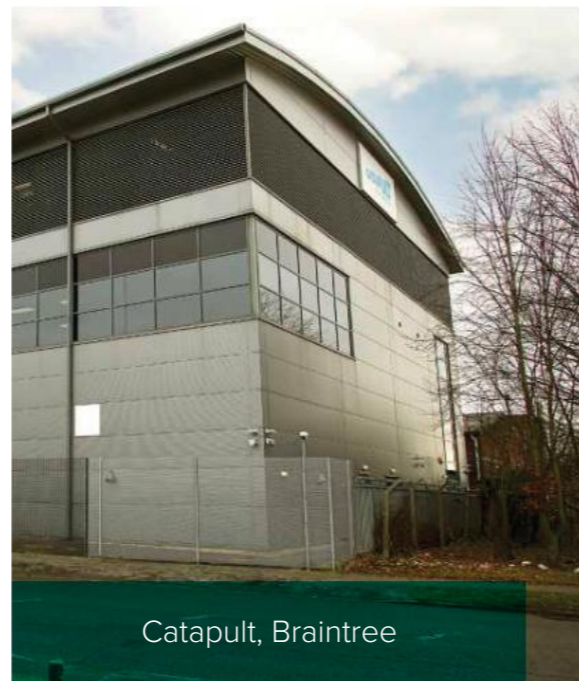
3. Inclusive People and Skills

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 our employees and 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 environmentally efficient practices across all businesses
- Developing and nurture 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 of £XXX 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

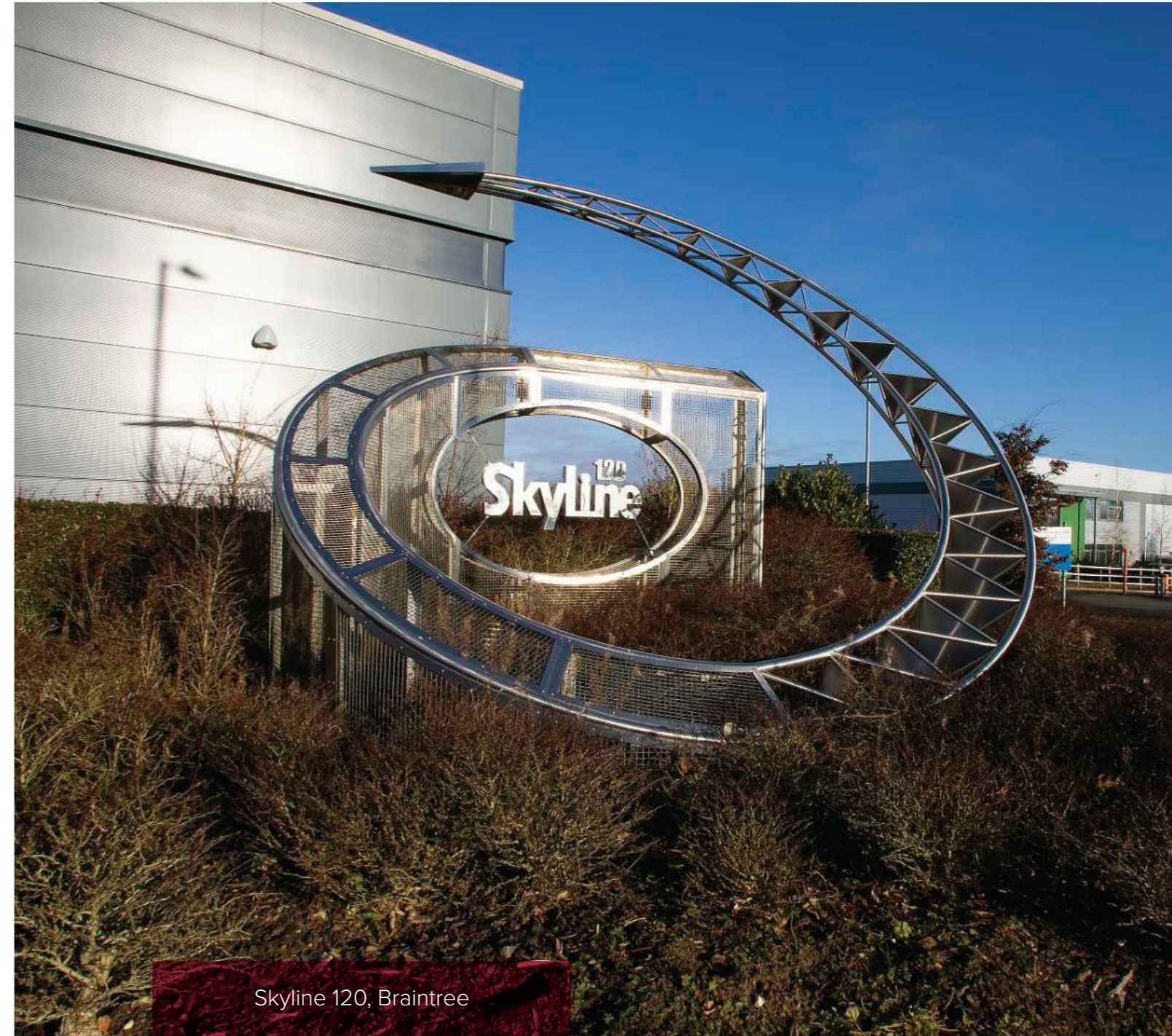
- NEEB
- Essex County Council
- Education and Skills Board
- Job Centre
- HMRC

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



Skyline 120, Braintree

Report Title: Horizon 120 – Option Agreement	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 December 2022	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/37
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills	
Enquiries to: Dominic Collins, Corporate Director (Growth) dominic.collins@braintree.gov.uk Aidan Kelly, Interim Head of Strategic Investment aidan.kelly@braintree.gov.uk	

Confidential Appendix

This report has a confidential appendix which is not for publication as it includes exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider options for the delivery of Braintree District Council's (the Council) land Option Agreement on land to the western boundary of, and contiguous with, the Horizon 120 Business & Innovation Park, Great Notley, Braintree, Essex (the Horizon 120 site).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees that the Council enter into an interim Exclusivity Agreement of 12 months with Horizon (Braintree) Ltd (HBL), to consider an agreement to assign its Option Agreement to HBL (a Marshgate Development company).
- 2.2 Subject to satisfactory terms being agreed and satisfactory due diligence being completed with HBL regarding the assignment of the Councils Option Agreement, Cabinet agrees to the assignment of the Option Agreement, on the current terms, to Horizon (Braintree) Ltd (a Marshgate Development company).
- 2.3 Cabinet agrees to delegates authority to the Corporate Director (Growth), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation, to finalise the terms of the Exclusivity Agreement and to enter into any subsequent Deed of Assignment contract with HBL.

3. Summary of Issues

Background to Horizon 120

- 3.1 Prior to 2018, the Horizon 120 site consisted of 65 gross acres of potential employment land known as the Great Notley Employment site and was controlled, via an option agreement, by Countryside Developments, who were in the process of developing the Skyline 120 employment site, on the northern boundary of the Great Notley Country Park.
- 3.2 The Horizon 120 site represented the largest opportunity in the District to contribute towards meeting the Council's objectives around employment growth, however the site was not brought to market for over ten years and, in 2018, Countryside Developments allowed its option agreement to lapse.
- 3.3 Given the lack of any prospect of the site being brought forward for development by the private sector, the Council decided to acquire the Horizon 120 site and bring it forward for development itself. The Council therefore acquired the site on 23rd December 2018. In completing the purchase, the Council also gained the benefit of a pre-emption agreement (i.e. a right of first refusal) to purchase the separate 26.5 acre plot of land to the south west of the Horizon 120 site, should it wish to do so, as illustrated in the below map.



- 3.4 On the 3 June 2020, as part of the agreement to facilitate the development of the Gridserve electric forecourt development (that subsequently progressed on land abutting south east to the Horizon 120 site) the pre-emption agreement was replaced by an Option Agreement between the

Council and the landowner. This new Option Agreement gave the Council the right to purchase the additional 26.5 acre plot for a period of 15 years from the date of the agreement, provided that the Council sought and secured planning permission for commercial development and brought that development forward. The Option Agreement includes the normal provision for the purchaser to recover costs and to purchase at a discount to market value.

Options for delivering against the Option Agreement

- 3.5 Since purchasing the main Horizon 120 site in 2018, the Council has adopted its first Local Development Order (offering simplified planning permission arrangements in order to facilitate the development of the site), delivered the full facilitative site infrastructure across the site (including roads, services and drainage) and has granted an option to HBL permitting them to purchase net developable areas of the current Horizon 120 site at market value, in order to deliver them to the market.
- 3.6 The investment and collaboration with HBL has resulted in a significant level of development across the current Horizon 120 site, seeing the site being 70% developed within four years of acquisition. The response to the continued marketing campaign for Horizon 120, being led by HBL, is demonstrating continued demand for new commercial buildings of the type currently being offered at the Horizon 120 site and illustrates the opportunity, therefore, to further enhance employment opportunities in the District through continued and new development in the area.
- 3.7 Whilst the development of the Horizon 120 site has been successful at delivering considerable employment land and jobs in the District, the Council has determined that it is not currently in the same financial position to progress with development of the land under the Option Agreement, as it was for the main site in 2018. This financial position is unlikely to change in the current and future MTFS periods. The Council has therefore considered options to deliver against its commitment in its Options Agreement to bring forward the 26.5 acre site in a way that sees the land developed at little or no financial cost to the Council. The Council has also considered how it could also secure a financial return for its Option Agreement in support of delivering a balanced MTFS for the Council.
- 3.8 Given that HBL has delivered so strongly against the ambition of Horizon 120, it was considered practicable to explore whether HBL would be willing to seek the transfer of the Options Agreement in order that it might bring the land forward for development. In order to ensure best value for the Council, the Council commissioned its asset valuers, NPS, to test the validity of such an arrangement and whether it would offer the Council best value against other options. Their resulting recommendation offered comfort that the transfer of the Option Agreement to HBL, founded on open market valuations, would offer best value to the Council.

- 3.9 In order to ascertain whether the 26.5 acre plot is suitable for development and to ascertain its own appetite to seek a transfer of the Councils Option Agreement, it is suggested that HBL be offered an exclusivity period of 12 months in order to conduct the necessary land surveys and other associated works to establish the likelihood of achieving planning permission on the land before entering into final negotiations for the transfer of the Option Agreement and associated financial benefit to the Council.
- 3.10 In offering a route to the potential development of the 26.5 acre site adjacent to the current Horizon 120 site, 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 prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Officers have sought advice, from NPS, the Council's asset valuation practice, on the efficacy and best value considerations of transferring the Option Agreement to HBL. NPS considered the Option Agreement and the various options available to the Council, ranging from "Do Nothing" to exercising the Option Agreement and undertaking the development at its own cost and risk.
- 4.2 After consideration of the various options, the NPS report supports the option to progress with transferring the Options Agreement to HBL.

5. Options

- 5.1 The Council could decide to do nothing. This would put the Council at risk of breaching the terms of its Option Agreement, which commits the Council to progress with securing planning permission and promote the site for development within 15 years of it being signed. This would represent a lost opportunity to secure development of the site and its associated economic growth and job creation potential within the District.
- 5.2 The Council could choose to continue to not action the Option Agreement at this time but decide to action it at a later date. This would put the Council at risk of breaching the terms of the Option Agreement, as detailed above, if it were not able to action it at a future date. It would also risk losing the current development momentum of the Horizon 120 site to promote the delivery of the 26.5 acre site, particularly at a time when cost price inflation and potential changing market conditions could impact on the viability of development and as the UK economy enters a widely predicted and anticipated economic recession which could impact on the attractiveness of the site in future years.
- 5.3 The Council could exercise the Option Agreement itself and seek planning permission. This would require considerable expenditure, on planning

promotion costs, which would be abortive if unsuccessful. Transferring the option to HBL means that they will take that planning risk instead.

- 5.4 If planning permission were sought and secured by the Council, the Council could undertake development of the 26.5 site in a comparable manner to the main Horizon 120 site. This would however require significant investment by the Council, both in terms of capital outlay to purchase the site and the delivery of the site infrastructure (as it has done with the Horizon 120 site) as well as considerable revenue costs for project management and delivery of the project and considerable capacity within the Council across various service teams. This investment would carry considerable risk, particularly given the current economic and property market conditions. It is also considered that the Council lacks the necessary internal expertise and capacity for this option at this time.
- 5.5 The Council could assign the option to an alternative developer. However, based upon the proposed agreement with HBL, there is no potential advantage to this.
- 5.6 Assign the option, as recommended, to HBL. This option will apply specialist and proven expertise in the commercial property market to bring forward the delivery of further considerable employment land for the District. It is recognised that the Council has neither the necessary expertise nor capacity in-house to develop the land and also has no longer got the financial capacity to afford the considerable capital and revenue costs of bringing the land forward, either through securing planning permission or delivering the required infrastructure and plot developments.
- 5.7 The recommendation of transferring the Options Agreement to HBL would also see HBL bear all planning promotion costs at risk and without any requirement or request for investment from the Council. Similarly, if or when planning permission is secured, the cost of purchase, infrastructure and development would be entirely met by HBL.
- 5.8 Subject to the final deal done with HBL, subsequent to the completion of due diligence during the exclusivity period, the transfer of the Options Agreement to HBL will secure a financial payment to the Council in return for the transfer as set out in the Confidential Appendix.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations detailed in this report will limit the Council's financial obligation to meeting its own legal costs, for the assignment of the Options Agreement.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the recommended assignment of the Options Agreement will be on the current terms and will specifically preserve the Council's right to benefit from the agreed value. The agreement of the proposed Deed of Assignment between the Council and HBL will, as per the recommendation, be delegated to the Corporate Director of Growth in consultation with the

Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 In considering all options available to it, the Council has secured external legal advice and input from a range of specialist consultants. On the basis of the advice received, the Council would not be restricted in taking forward the recommendations set out in this report. Further information is set out within the Confidential Appendix.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 This recommendation has no further implications

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 has not been completed in this matter. The Council only has an option over the land, and therefore any assessment, would be necessary at the point the Council sought to purchase the land, and brought forward a project for its development.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Confidential appendix

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 NPS report and advice concerning this recommendation

Report Title: To Grant an Easement at Springwood Drive, Braintree	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 6 th December 2022	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2022/59
Report Presented by: Councillor K Bowers, Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills	
Enquiries to: Paul Quin, Interim Asset Manager, paul.quin@braintree.gov.uk	

Confidential Appendix

This report has a confidential appendix which is not for publication as it includes exempt information falling within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to grant an easement over Braintree District Council's (the Council) land at Springwood Drive, Braintree, Essex, as identified in the Confidential Appendix.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the grant of an easement across the Council's Land in favour of Charterhouse Property Group (the Developer) to enable them to develop new industrial/warehouse units on the land to the rear.
- 2.2 To authorise the entering into all such contractual arrangements necessary for the granting of the easement and bringing into effect any necessary changes to those leases already in existence and to affect the transfer of the additional land to the Council.
- 2.3 To agree that the Council accepts the freehold transfer of the additional land together with the transaction fee in the sum set out in the Confidential Appendix.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council owns land located on the Springwood Drive Industrial Estate in Braintree.

- 3.2 The Council has been approached by a Developer, who have an option over the land to the rear of the Council's Land (Developer's Land). That land has potential, subject to planning, for development for employment purposes incorporating industrial and warehouse units. However, in order to facilitate such development, the developer requires access to the site across the Council's Land. Details of the proposed access is set out in the Confidential Appendix.
- 3.3 Terms have been agreed with the Developer subject to contract and formal Council approval, for access to be granted by way of an easement in return for a cash payment to a value commensurate with the identified value of the benefit being granted.
- 3.4 The new access route will be constructed at the Developer's cost and arrangements will be made for the costs of future maintenance and repairs to it to be shared between the occupiers of the newly developed units and the Council in fair proportion. Whilst precise costs are not possible to forecast at this time, the standard of road to be laid should be suitable for minimum 10 years' wear and in anticipation of future maintenance thereafter, costs to the Council will represent a small percentage in comparison to the traffic serving the new industrial park extending to an estimated 16 acres. Hence, it is not anticipated that a capital budget will be necessary to meet such expenses.
- 3.5 Until the detail of the new development is established through planning, it is not possible to quantify precisely what the repair and maintenance costs will represent to the Council, however with circa 16 acres being developed, the Council would estimate that somewhere in the region of 300,000 sq ft is likely to be constructed. This will mean that the Developer will be the majority user of the stretch of access road. Contributions will be based upon a "reasonable proportion" of maintenance costs, as set out above.
- 3.6 The Developer will submit a formal planning application for the proposed development. Assuming this is successful, upon grant of permission, an independent valuer will prepare an RICS Red Book valuation to identify the consented land value.
- 3.7 In the event that the Developer fails to achieve planning for this scheme, the easement will not be completed, and no physical changes will be made to the Council's Land.
- 3.8 The Developer will indemnify the Council against reasonable abortive legal and surveyors' costs throughout the process in case they fail to obtain planning, or do not proceed with the scheme for any other reason.
- 3.9 The Developer will be required to submit full Risk Assessments and Method Statements relative to the construction of the new access way through the Council Land. The programme of works is to be agreed with the Council prior to implementation to ensure minimum disruption to existing users of the Council Land.

- 3.10 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- > A sustainable environment and a great location to live and work
 - > A well connected and growing district with greater employment opportunities
 - > A stronger capital/asset base will be created with which to provide a secure footing to preserve the Council's low Council Tax initiatives.

4. Options

Do Nothing

- 4.1 If the Council were to do nothing, the opportunity for the added employment land would be unlikely to come to fruition, as there are no other realistic options for access to the land at the rear of the Councils Land. This would therefore deny the opportunity to attract more employers to the district, with the resultant lack of further employment prospects, business rates revenues and economic growth. Neither would the Council benefit from any payment.

Seek an alternative access point

- 4.2 No other options within the Council's control are known to exist for alternative solutions. Whereas the developer could consider utilising alternative points or acquisition of other properties for demolition to make access, the Councils Land is their preferred option. If they were to pursue other options, the Council would not benefit from any payment.

Request the handover of new industrial/warehouse units in lieu of payment

- 4.3 This option has been carefully considered however it would involve intricate contractual documentation to define timings, specifications, transfer of titles, application of VAT and SDLT. Such contractual documentation would substantially add to each party's costs and would further complicate the developer's funding arrangements. This option is not regarded as favourable by either party for the reasons outlined.

Accept payment in cash

- 4.4 The Council could alternatively accept a cash payment in exchange for this access. The advantage of this solution is that it is a straightforward payment in exchange for the granting of an easement. It would be conditional upon the grant of planning consent for the developer's scheme but would become payable immediately such consent is formalised. By accepting a cash payment, the Council will have full control over the way it wishes to future invest that money. This is therefore the recommended option.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council's legal fees will be underwritten by the Developer in the event of the transaction failing to come to fruition.
- 5.2 Provided the easement goes ahead, costs will be covered by the Developer. Otherwise, the Council will have to bear them. However, there will be significant benefit in creating a potentially unencumbered area of land that

could lend itself to future development, or otherwise provide essential access at a later date.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council will enter into a commitment to grant an easement allowing the developer access over the Councils Land upon grant of planning relative to the proposed Development Land.
- 6.2 By granting the easement, the Developer will be permitted to grant access over the Council Land for the benefit of their tenants or purchasers in perpetuity.
- 6.3 The Council will be in receipt of the freehold interest in the land being transferred by the Developer within this agreement. All warranties and collateral warranties applicable will also be assigned to the Council.
- 6.4 The Developer will be permitted to run such services as may be necessary underneath the new accessway, to serve the new development from Springwood Drive. Future responsibility for repair and maintenance of such services together with making good will be with the Developer and their successors in title.

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 Confidential Appendix.