

CABINET AGENDA

Monday, 25th September 2023 at 7.15pm

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

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

Leader of the Council

Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader
Deputy Cabinet Member to the Leader

Councillor G Butland
Councillor B Taylor
Councillor R van Dulken

**Transformation, Performance and
Delivery**

Resources and Performance
Transformation, the Environment and
Customer Services
Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor K Bowers
Councillor T Cunningham (Deputy Leader)

Councillor P Schwier

Connecting People, Places and Prosperity

Economic Growth and Inward Investment
Planning and Infrastructure
Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor F Ricci
Councillor G Spray
Councillor J Coleridge

Supporting Communities

Housing, Health and Wellbeing
Stronger Communities
Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor L Bowers-Flint
Councillor M Cunningham
Councillor C Dervish

Invitees: Councillors J Beavis, L Jefferis and J Pell 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 MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

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

Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Leader has discretion to extend the time allocated to registered speakers and to amend the order in which they may speak.

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Documents

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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 may send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION		Page
1	Apologies for Absence	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	To declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice where necessary before the meeting.	
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 10th July 2023 (copy previously circulated).	
4	Public Question Time	
	Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time. Please see the agenda notes for guidance.	
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14 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

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15 HR Policy Decision

Report Title: Housing Benefit Assurance Procurement	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/46
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Phil Myers, Head of Finance (phil.myers@braintree.gov.uk)	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To agree the procurement and spend on a contract for a Reporting Accountant to provide Housing Benefit Subsidy Assurance.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the estimated expenditure to be incurred on a contract for the provision of Housing Benefit Subsidy assurance up to a contract value of £250,000.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer:
- (a) to enter into a contract for the provision of a Reporting Accountant up to a total of five-years commencing from the financial year 2023-24.
 - (b) the ability to extend by agreement the work required by the Reporting Accountant to include any outstanding Housing Benefit subsidy assurance reviews that relate to financial years prior to 2023-24; and
 - (c) to appoint a Reporting Accountant to undertake the Housing Benefit Subsidy assurance in the event that a supplier is not able to be appointed as a result of the joint procurement.
- 2.3 To delegate to the Section 151 Officer to agree any annual variation to the fees and charges incurred arising due to a change in scope of work required by the Department for Works and Pensions including where additional testing is required by the Reporting Accountant.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Braintree District Council (the Council) is responsible for the administration and payment of around £23m of Housing Benefit (HB). This activity is undertaken for the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) who provide subsidy to the Council which effectively covers around 98.5% of this cost.
- 3.2 The Council is required to appoint a Reporting Accountant to perform Specific Test Requirements set out in the DWP's HB Assurance Process (HBAP) modules in force for a particular financial year. On completion of these Specific Test Requirements, Reporting Accountants are required to report their findings to the Council and DWP.
- 3.3 There are standardised engagement terms that apply as set out in the DWP HBAP which form a tri-partite engagement between DWP, the Council and the Reporting Accountant. These terms are not able to be changed by the Council.
- 3.4 Prior to the introduction of the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, that was set up to undertake national procurement and appointment of external auditors for opted-in bodies, the HB assurance work was undertaken as part of the duties of the incumbent external auditor.
- 3.5 The PSAA contracts are only awarded for the statutory local audits required under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and does not include the HB assurance. Local authorities are therefore required to make separate arrangements for this work.
- 3.6 Following the PSAA appointment of BDO LLP (BDO) as the Council's external auditor for the financial years 2018-19 to 2022-23, the Council made arrangements for the HB assurance work to be undertaken by BDO. Under that arrangement reviews have been completed and reported for the financial years 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021. The review of 2021-22 has been delayed as result of the wider backlog in the completion of audits. The 2022-23 review would normally have been scheduled; however, similarly affected by the delays.
- 3.7 As the PSAA audit appointment for BDO finishes after the 2022-23 financial year it is necessary to put in place arrangements for the period from 2023-24. The Council is currently party to a joint procurement, led by Basildon District Council, for the Reporting Accountant services required for the HB subsidy assurance which is currently anticipated to have a preferred supplier identified by late September/ early October. It will be essential that the Council is able to confirm contractual arrangements as soon as possible afterwards. Whilst the lead authority has provided a timetable there is a risk that this could be delayed and therefore it would be prudent to have in place the appropriate delegations so as to provide DWP with the assurance that a Reporting Accountant is in place.
- 3.8 Cabinet is requested to agree a delegation that would allow the Council to vary the scope of works to cover earlier years should it become apparent

that BDO are unable to complete these reviews in a timely manner. This variation may need to be agreed separate to the main contract.

- 3.9 Whilst an estimated fee level can be made, actual fees for undertaking the HB assurance are normally determined based on the volume of testing that the Reporting Accountant is required to undertake. This will be planned based on the immediate prior year review and findings, but also could be impacted by the results of initial testing undertaken for the relevant year. On this basis the actual fees for each year of review could vary and, therefore, it is appropriate that delegation is given the Section 151 Officer to agree final fees with the Reporting Accountant. Following conclusion of a review, a report would be made to the Governance and Audit Committee setting out the findings and level of fees to be charged based on the work necessarily completed.
- 3.10 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver its Corporate Objectives of being a high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services as it puts in place a process to secure the necessary HB assurance required by DWP including a joint procurement for the relevant services.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Cabinet to agree to the delegations set out in the Recommendations which would allow a pragmatic approach to be adopted to ensuring that the HB assurance is in place to satisfy DWP requirements. This is the preferred option.
- 4.2 The Cabinet could amend or not agree to the delegations. If the delegations are not agreed and decisions need to be taken by future meetings of the Cabinet this could jeopardise having in place as soon as possible the HB assurance arrangements required by DWP.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The cost of providing the HB assurance required by DWP is met from the Housing Benefit budget. The actual level of fees may vary depending on the extent of work required by the Reporting Accountant which will vary year-on-year depending on the outcome of previous reviews and in-year findings that may require further extended testing or input from the Reporting Accountant. Fee levels may equally reduce if a review finds that the error rate has been reduced leading to less testing required at the subsequent year's review.
- 5.2 For the purposes of the recommended decisions the estimated value of the contract for the services of a Reporting Accountant are £250,000 over a five-year period.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council is required to appoint a Reporting Accountant by the 1 March prior to the commencement of the financial year. However, like many other

local authorities, the delay in local audits has also impacted the processes around HB assurance reviews. As required, the Council has notified the DWP of the delay in making arrangements for 2023-24 and continues to keep them updated on the progress of the joint procurement.

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 proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

8. List of Appendices

- 8.1 None

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 HBAP Module 1: DWP Reporting Framework Instruction for the financial year ending March 2024 (applicable to England only)

Agenda Item: 6

Report Title: New Artificial Grass pitches in Braintree and Witham	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/40
Report Presented by: Councillor Gabrielle Spray portfolio holder for Planning and Infrastructure, and Councillor Mary Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities	
Enquiries to: Neil Jones, Lead Principal Planning Officer S106 Agreements neil.jones@braintree.gov.uk / Joby Humm, Leisure, Venues & Heritage Manager joby.humm@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval to progress a scheme to spend financial contributions collected from developers through Section 106 agreements (S106) on a project to provide four new 3G Artificial Training Pitches (ATPs) in Braintree and Witham.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees:
- i. That the financial contributions from the seven S106 agreements specified in this report are used to contribute towards the cost of providing four new 3G ATPs, with two new pitches being provided in Braintree and two new pitches in Witham.
 - ii. That one of the new ATPs will be provided on land owned by Braintree District Council (the Council) at the Witham Sports Ground, Spinks Lane, Witham.
 - iii. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Operational, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing and the Corporate Director, Economic Growth, to agree with the Football Foundation and Essex County Football Association any alternative site(s) at which new pitches could be provided, in the event that of any of the four listed sites are not able to come forward, having regard to the availability of s.106 funding. Where the alternative land is owned by the Council, this decision shall be taken by the Corporate Director, Economic Growth, in accordance with the provisions set out above.

- iv. That the Corporate Director, Economic Growth have delegated authority to agree on behalf of the Council to a Deed of Variation to S106 agreement(s) identified in this report in Witham, with the effect to modify the existing S106 agreements and to allow the location of the new 3G ATP to be amended, if necessary.
- v. That the Corporate Director, Operational have delegated authority to:
 1. Enter into any necessary agreements with the Football Foundation pursuant to the grant funding for the new ATP at the Witham Sports Ground.
 2. Authorise the payment of invoices for the construction of the Spinks Lane 3G ATP and the proportionate draw down of the contributions in the specified S106 agreements to the three Academies towards the payment for the 3G ATP installation.
 3. Agree with the Football Foundation a set of monitor and evaluation outcomes which the Council will commit to deliver through its management of the ATP at the Witham Sports Ground.
 4. Agree a contract variation with the Council's Leisure Services provider to manage the new ATP at the Witham Sports Ground.
 5. Appoint an Officer of the Council to attend a Steering Group which will monitor the effective operation and management of the new ATP at the Witham Sports Ground.

3. Summary of Issues

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework requires that local planning authorities have planning policies which seek to ensure communities have access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity. Through policies in the Braintree District Local Plan and Braintree District Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document the Council has secured financial contributions from developers which are to be used to improve Outdoor Sports facilities.

3.2 A number of factors have contributed to a growing need for additional ATPs. These factors include:

- Several studies have identified that demand for ATP use is outstripping supply resulting in both adult and youth football clubs being unable to access facilities for training and affiliated matches.
- Increasing pressure on grass football pitches due to increased demand.
- Climate change and changing weather patterns leading to grass football pitches being unavailable for longer periods and increased issues with pitch quality.
- Public consultation raising concerns about the quality of ATPs that are available in the District.
- Growing popularity of casual small, sided football – both recreational and leagues.

- The Football Association (FA) is strongly promoting the provision of Third Generation (3G) surfaces for both training and now also for match play- the latter especially for junior/mini-soccer age groups.
- 3.3 The Braintree Open Space Study was produced in 2016, and considered all aspects of open space, sport, and outdoor recreation provision within the district. Public consultation was undertaken at that time, through the Citizen's Panel and Household Surveys and in respect of ATPs the results identified that many respondents felt there was an overall shortfall of artificial turf pitches, and that 38% of respondents felt that the quality of ATPs in the District was poor or worse.
 - 3.4 Further consultation was undertaken with stakeholders, including local football clubs, to develop the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (2017). This strategy identified an immediate need for three new full-size ATPs and recommended a further two ATPs to meet increased demand arising from planned new developments.
 - 3.5 In addition to the Council's Open Space Study, Officers regularly meet with representatives of National Sports Governing Bodies to review the provision of sports facilities in the district. These discussions include meetings with the Essex County Football Association (Essex County FA). The Essex County FA are working in the county to deliver The National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS). The NFFS sets out the national ambition to transform England's grassroots game over the next ten years through the delivery of thousands of new pitches and investing in the improvement of existing grass pitches and off-pitch facilities across the country.
 - 3.6 As part of the National Football Facilities Strategy, each local authority in England has a bespoke Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP). In December 2018 the Braintree Local Football Facility Plan (LFFP) was published by the Football Foundation and the Football Association. The LFFP was published following consultation with a range of local stakeholders and set out a strategic, ten-year priority plan for investment in football facilities within the district.
 - 3.7 Based on the number of clubs operating within the District the Braintree LFFP identified demand for five full size ATPs in the District to supplement the two existing pitches located at the Braintree Sports and Health Club (Tabor Academy site) and Hedingham School. The consultation undertaken when developing the Braintree LFFP identified a number of key issues with current ATP provision. Across the District sports clubs reported a lack of availability of 3G ATPs, including in Braintree where demand far outstripping supply and that the geographical spread of existing facilities was uneven with provisional gaps in the south and east of Braintree and particularly around the town of Witham.
 - 3.8 Since the LFFP was published, in June 2021, a new full-size ATP has been provided at the Halstead Leisure Centre, using a combination of grant funding from the Football Foundation and S106 contributions from the Council.

- 3.9 In light of the above factors and following discussion with the Essex County FA, the Council has been securing financial contributions which can be used to help provide additional 3G ATPs in Braintree and Witham. Officers have also worked to identify opportunities to attract additional funding to add to the Section 106 contributions, including discussions with the Football Foundation. (The Football Foundation is a charity funded by The Football Association, the Premier League and Sport England (on behalf of Government) to deliver the NFFS). The Regional Development Manager for the Football Foundation has agreed in principle to support the provision of four new ATPs – two in Witham and two in Braintree, based on the significant amount of Section 106 contributions the Council has secured for this purpose. The provision of four new ATPs would significantly improve the availability and quality of the artificial turf pitches for football, meeting the District's modelled football demand for ATPs identified in the LFFP.
- 3.10 Grant funding from the Football Foundation is conditional on a local contribution towards the project cost. In this case the local contribution would be from money secured through S106 agreements, topped up by contributions from the three Academy Trusts and local football clubs and any associated community/health organisations and groups who will benefit from the pitches. A specialist project bid consultant has been appointed by the Council to help coordinate and manage the funding bids and to help the academies and local clubs raise money and access grant funding to support the application. The bid consultant will play a key role in drawing up the four applications and securing the Football Foundation funding to allow the four pitches to be delivered. Because of this the Council has agreed to use £19,950 (+ VAT) from the five outdoor sport S106 contributions that the Council already hold to pay the bid consultant's fee.
- 3.11 The Council has collected or secured seven financial contributions through S106 agreements and Cabinet approval is required to use these specific contributions to contribute towards the project costs to provide four new floodlit 3G ATPs in Braintree and Witham.
- 3.12 The Council is already in receipt of £1,093,335.33 which has been secured through five separate S106 agreements. The details of the five contributions are set out in Appendix A.
- 3.13 Two further contributions have been secured in S106 agreements, but the payments have not been received yet as the trigger points in the agreements have not been reached. The precise amount that will be received will not be known until the payment is due and indexation has been applied to the contribution to allow for inflation. The contribution listed in Appendix A was calculated applying indexation to April 2023 and is given for information only.
- 3.14 The Rayne Fisheries agreement requires that the payment will be made prior to the occupation of the 5th dwelling on the development. It is currently anticipated that the contribution could be received around the first quarter of

2024. Officers visited the site recently and the development is well advanced. A sales home is open, and ten dwellings were substantially complete so there are good grounds to believe that at least 5 dwellings will be occupied by the end of the year.

- 3.15 The Conrad Road agreement requires that payment of the outdoor sport contribution is made prior to the occupation of more than 15 dwellings on the development. Officers believe that the contribution will fall due for payment within the next couple of months. The majority of the new homes on the site are already erected and many are completed and ready for occupation which gives a high degree of confidence that the contribution will be received within the timeframe specified.
- 3.16 Whilst Officers anticipate the contributions being received in the coming months due to the advanced stage of the developments there is no guarantee that this will be the case. For example, whilst it is unlikely, it is possible that a developer may cease trading, and this would slow or stop occupation of new homes. The Football Foundation are aware that the contributions cannot be guaranteed until the monies are received by the Council from the developer. If the contribution(s) are not received by the time that the second round of applications are submitted to the Football Foundation, then the contribution(s) from the development(s) would not be included in that application.
- 3.17 The Council have already committed to spending £19,950 from the S106 contributions already held to pay for an external consultant to act as a bid co-ordinator. A further £107,514.74 (based on current indexation) is secured in two agreements which should be received by the Council in the coming months. Approval is sought to use the monies from the seven agreements as set out above. The actual amount of money to be used will be determined by the indexation calculation for the two contributions which are yet to be paid. Based on current indexation the Council would be providing S106 monies from seven agreements which would provide in total over £1,180,900.07 of S106 funding to the project. These contributions would be in addition to the £19,950 already committed to fund the consultant bid co-ordinator.
- 3.18 It is envisaged that the two new pitches in Braintree will be located at the Alec Hunter Academy and Notley High School, and two new pitches in Witham, at the New Rickstones Academy and the Council owned Witham Sports Ground, Spinks Lane. The management at the schools and the three Academy Trusts involved are all supportive of these facilities being provided on the Academy sites. All the sites benefit from being secure, and the pitches would be situated where they can be easily managed. The sites have also been selected for their geographic distribution.
- 3.19 The Football Facilities Plan advocated the provision of full-sized adult pitches (100m x 64m) but to maximise benefits, whilst controlling costs, the Football Foundation is now funding pitches which are slightly smaller at 91m x 55m. The pitch size is large enough to still accommodate a wide range of training needs and competitive games by all junior age groups up to Under 16's. Adults would still be able to use the pitch for competitions, but it would be the

smallest size pitch that competitive adult football can be played under the FA rules.

- 3.20 The cost of providing the pitches will vary according to site specific factors and the exact cost of providing the four new 3G ATPs will not be known until detailed design work is completed; planning permission obtained; and procurement completed but the investment by the Football Foundation in the project is expected to be in excess of £2 million.
- 3.21 No additional capital investment is required from the Council to fund the initial delivery of the four 3G ATPs – the only funds that are required to fund the construction of the four pitches are those which have been secured through S106 agreements to provide improved Outdoor Sport facilities. As set out elsewhere in this report it should be noted that the Council will need to make provision within the MTFS for future capital investment in the new Spinks Lane pitch, as the Council will be committed to replacing the carpet on an on-going basis.
- 3.22 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play.
 - A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure.
 - 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.
- 3.23 The project will deliver four new ATPs which will significantly improve outdoor sports facilities for both existing and new residents living in Braintree, Witham, and the surrounding areas. The pitches will not only improve the sports facilities available at four of the districts secondary schools but will also provide junior and adult football (and potentially rugby) teams in the community with improved access to floodlit, all-weather pitches which can be used throughout the year and into the evenings. The artificial turf pitches will also help to meet increasing demand arising from new housing developments and reduce reliance on grass pitches. The Steering Group will be tasked through monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the grant conditions set by the Football Foundation are met and this will ensure all the pitches will have:
- i) a consistent and fair pricing policy at all facilities
 - ii) a diverse programme, ensuring that all the local community can access the facilities for health, recreation, and competitive football.
 - iii) specific target groups such as Women's and Girls, disability and BME groups can have specific sessions.

- 3.24 By working with partners, the Council are able to use the S106 contributions to leverage a larger investment to improve the districts sports facilities through the funding from the Football Foundation. The Football Foundation funding will be conditional on the ATP owners / operators committing to promote accessibility and inclusivity.
- 3.25 Distributing the facilities across the four sites means that the facilities will be closer to different communities and spread the management and on-going maintenance costs, rather than the Council trying to provide all the facilities on Council owned land.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 As set out above, the Council's Open Spaces Study and Playing Pitch Strategy and the Local Football Facilities Plan have all been underpinned by consultation with a wide range of partners and stakeholders as well as the wider public. One of the outcomes of that consultation was that there are issues with the geographic distribution; the availability; and the quality of ATPs in the District.
- 4.2 In addition to the Football Foundation and Essex County FA, Officers of the Council have discussed the proposals for new ATPs at meetings with representatives of Sport England, Active Essex, and the other national governing bodies of sport. The feedback received was positive. The representative of England Hockey was pleased that the new pitches were in addition to existing artificial pitches used for hockey at Witham Sports Ground and Braintree Hockey Club. The representative of the Rugby Football Union agreed that subject to the correct specification the pitches could provide valuable all-weather training facilities for rugby clubs.
- 4.3 Officers of the Council have also met representatives of the New Rickstones Academy; Alec Hunter; and Notley High School with representatives of the Football Foundation and Essex County FA, and all have confirmed their enthusiasm and support, recognising that the pitches will provide both great sports facilities for use by students in curricular time, but also the wider community that they serve. An open evening event has also been held by Essex County FA and the Football Foundation where representatives of local football clubs were invited to publicise the proposals and seek further support for the project. The meeting was well attended and the feedback from the club representatives attending was very positive.
- 4.4 Planning permission will be required for each new ATP. When a planning application is submitted the Council will publicise and consult on the application in the usual manner which will allow local residents and interested parties to comment on the proposals.
- 4.5 Internal consultation will be achieved through an Officer working group with the appropriate finance, legal, Planning and Grounds maintenance officers in attendance.

5. Options

Option 1 – The Recommended Option - Approve the use of S106 funds to contribute towards new 3G ATPs at Notley High School; Alec Hunter Academy; New Rickstones Academy and Witham Sports Ground, Spinks Lane

- 5.1 One of the agreements specifies that the contribution can only be spent on a new 3G ATP at Spinks Lane. The spend purposes in the other six agreements are less specific.
- 5.2 A brief summary of the options in Braintree and Witham are set out below in bold and Officer comment provided after in *italics*.

Braintree town

- 5.3 Two agreements specify that the respective contributions can be spent either at the John Ray Sports Ground, or to provide a new 3G artificial pitch within the town of Braintree. Officers have considered the potential to improve the John Ray Sports Ground but on-going concerns over management and governance lead Officers to believe that S106 contributions should not be allocated here until those issues are resolved. The provision of new 3G ATPs elsewhere in the town is considered more beneficial.
- 5.4 A further two agreements specify that the contribution can only be spent on providing a new 3G artificial training pitch within Braintree. The contributions could be spent at any site within Braintree so a decision needs to be taken over where the two new ATPs should be located. Officers consider that the Alec Hunter and Notley Academy sites provide good locations. Both school sites are reasonably secure; already have car parking and changing facilities; and will provide a good geographic distribution across the town along with the existing pitch at Braintree Health and Fitness in the north of the town.

Witham town

- 5.5 One agreement state that the contribution can be spent at on sports pitch improvements at The Rickstones Sports Field and / or b) the Witham Sports Ground Spinks Lane. Part of the contribution has already been spent at the Rickstones Sports Field providing new movable football goals and nets. The Council's Operations Team has no further works planned to improve the ground. Using the contribution to provide additional 3G ATP facilities in the town will potentially benefit the clubs who use the Rickstones Sports Field with improved access to all-weather training and match play facilities throughout the year.
- 5.6 The other agreement states that the contribution must be used on the provision of outdoor sports facilities in the vicinity of the Site. This contribution comes from a development that is located on Conrad Road, as is the New Rickstones Academy, where it is proposed will be where one of the 3G ATPs will be provided. Officers have met the Academy Head who was very

enthusiastic about being able to provide a new facility for the local community and the opportunities to provide wider social benefits. Using the contribution towards this facility would provide a new outdoor sport facility near the development. The contribution will also help leverage in external funding to the area in a way that Officers believe would not be possible with any other sport / facility.

5.7 It is estimated that the outdoor sport contribution from the Conrad Road development will be in excess of £177,000 when it is received. It is proposed that £55,000 of this contribution is allocated towards the 3G ATP at the New Rickstones Academy. It is proposed that the balance of the contribution will be used by the Council towards further improvements to outdoor sports facilities in the town.

5.8 Approval is being sought to use the seven specified S106 contributions to provide four new 3G ATP in Braintree and Witham for the reasons set out above.

Option 2 – Approve the use of S106 contributions to provide new 3G ATPs at three Secondary Schools sites in Braintree and Witham.

5.9 A decision could be taken to approve the use of the S106 contributions to provide ATPs on the three school sites but not to proceed with a new 3G ATP at the Witham Sports Ground site. It is possible that an alternative site could be located within the town but at the current time there have been no further sites or partners identified and there would be no certainty that the fourth pitch could be provided.

5.10 Not proceeding with the pitch at the Witham Sports Ground would also mean that there would be a risk that the Council may not be able to spend one of the secured contributions. The S106 agreement for the Lodge Farm development states that the contribution of £305,819.53 can only be used towards the provision of a new 3G ATP at Spinks Lane. Whilst it may be possible to agree a Deed of Variation with the developer to spend the contribution for another purpose this would be dependent on the landowner's agreement and there is a significant risk that this might not be forthcoming. If the landowner did agree the Council would incur the legal costs of preparing and completing a new legal agreement.

Option 3 – Do nothing.

5.11 The Council could decide not to support the provision of new 3G ATPs, but this would mean three of contributions that have been secured could not be used and would need to be returned to the landowner / developer who paid them to the Council. Returning these S106 contributions would be likely to result in none of the 3G ATPs being provided, and result in the District losing the funding from the Football Foundation and partners. This would increase pressure on existing sports facilities and would be likely to mean that some clubs would need to travel out of town, or out of district to access facilities or in some cases teams could be unable to access ATPs for training or

competition purposes. This would result in reduced sporting opportunities for residents. The Council would also need to return the contributions with interest for the time that the Council has held the contribution. Returning the contributions would also result in adverse publicity for the Council, with residents being critical of the failure to deliver facilities which were intended to mitigate the impact of population growth in the towns.

- 5.12 The four other outdoor sport contributions could be spent providing other sports facilities or improvements, but these would inevitably be smaller projects as this amount of Football Foundation grant funding would no longer be available. It would also mean spending money at the John Ray Sport Ground where there are current issues around management which means that there could be a reduced or limited public benefit from the investment of the S106 contribution.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 If the recommendations are approved the Council will need to write to the Football Foundation to confirm the availability of the S106 funding and agreement for one of the four ATPs to be located at the Witham Sports Ground.
- 6.2 The Council's appointed bid consultant will work with partners to identify funding opportunities and work with partners to develop the Football Foundation funding application. The Football Foundation do not specify a minimum amount that the local partners (the schools and local football teams) have to invest in the project. Their requirement is that each application for funding demonstrate that the local partners have exhausted all funding contributions towards the project. There is a risk that one or more of the ATPs may not be able to proceed if the Football Foundation are not persuaded that the local partners are making an adequate financial contribution to the project. If the Football Foundation refuse to fund a project the reasons for that decision would need to be reviewed. It is also possible that one of the Academy's may chose not to proceed with the project. Depending on the circumstances, it may be possible to refine the application and reapply to the Football Foundation or identify an alternative site which would potentially be acceptable. It is recommended that delegated authority be given to agree with the Football Foundation and Essex County Football Association any alternative site(s) at which new pitches could be provided, in the event that this is necessary.
- 6.3 Whilst the Football Foundation has already undertaken some preliminary technical site assessments further detailed design work will need to follow and planning permission obtained. As the majority of the funding is being provided by the Football Foundation the contracts to design and install all four ATP pitches will be procured through the Football Foundation procurement framework.
- 6.4 The Football Foundation will appoint contractors from their framework of six specialist contractors, following a tender exercise, to begin detailed design

work at the four sites. The appointed contractors will also be responsible for submitting applications for planning permission. At the three school sites it has been agreed that the school / Academy will be responsible for funding the cost of the planning application, including associated specialist reports. This will form part of the school's contribution towards the cost of providing the pitch. The Council will need to agree to pay the costs associated with a planning application for the proposed pitch at Spinks Lane. The cost of this work varies from site to site but is typically around £10,000-£15,000. Subject to Members agreement it is proposed that this cost is paid out of the Section 106 contributions identified in this report, on the basis that progressing the detailed design and the cost of obtaining planning permission are necessary costs if the 3G ATP is to be provided at Spinks Lane. These planning and design costs would be incurred prior to the Football Foundation approving the scheme funding. It is acknowledged that there is a risk that the Football Foundation Board / Panel could refuse the application to fund the scheme and the Council would have incurred abortive costs for the design and planning related costs. The contribution of £305,819.53 from the Lodge Farm development can only be spent towards the provision of a new 3G ATP at Spinks Lane. As the agreement only allows the contribution to be spent on these purposes it is considered reasonable that circa £10,000-£15,000 of the Section 106 money can be spent on professional fees towards the delivery of that scheme. It is considered appropriate that the expenditure of this Section 106 contribution would not need to reimburse by the Council's own reserves if the Football Foundation refused to fund the 3G ATP at Spinks Lane.

- 6.5 On completion of the design, funding, and planning permission work the funding application can be submitted to the Football Foundation for approval. Whilst currently no problems are foreseen at any of the four sites there is a small risk that one or more of the identified project sites may not be able to proceed if there is a technical design issue, or a failure to secure planning permission or sufficient local funding. If it was not possible to proceed at one or more of the sites, then either another site would need to be found (which would delay the delivery of all four planned ATPs) or there is a risk that it may not be possible to deliver all four new ATPs.
- 6.6 Whilst the Football Foundations regional development team supports the proposals for four new ATPs, final approval of the funding will be needed from the Football Foundation panel or Football Foundation Board level. Subject to funding approval the appointed contractors will enter into contracts with the owner of each site (the District Council at Spinks Lane and the Academies at the school sites). Each site owner will then become responsible for the delivery of their pitch and the appointed contractors will proceed to install the new pitches. This contractual arrangement follows the Football Foundations usual process where they become the project funder and the landowner takes the lead on delivery through an NEC3 contract with the awarded contractors from the Football Foundation framework tender exercise. Members will recall this is the process that the Council followed with the Football Foundation recently when the existing ATP at the Halstead Leisure Centre was upgraded.

- 6.7 The Football Foundation will require that the Academy Trusts and Council to commit to the project and enter into appropriate legal agreements controlling the use of the facilities. The Council will also require that the Academy Trusts and Schools enter into a legally binding community use agreement to ensure that the S106 contributions continue to benefit the community.
- 6.8 To manage the workload it is proposed that the funding applications will be split up, with the applications for the New Rickstones Academy and the Alec Hunter Academy being progressed first. Delivery of the ATPs will be managed by the owner of each site. To provide Members with an indicative timeframe it is currently envisaged that the first two funding applications will be submitted to the Football Foundation in April 2024, with a decision expected by July 2024. If the application is successful, it is anticipated that the contractors would be on-site early 2025. The applications for the Witham Sports Ground and Notley High School would be submitted in a subsequent funding round and would be likely to be 3-6 months later than the first two applications. Each site / application will be assessed individually by the Football Foundation, albeit that the Football Foundation applications will also reference the overall project and the Council's commitment to providing S106 funding towards all four pitches.
- 6.9 If Members approve the use of the specified S106 contributions for this project, Officers will discuss with the bid co-ordinator and representatives of the Football Foundation how best to allocate the seven contributions towards the four applications to the Football Foundation. In Braintree the four identified agreements can be divided relatively evenly between the two Braintree projects. In Witham the two largest S106 contributions cannot be split between the two Witham pitches under the terms of the current agreements. Whilst it may not be necessary Officers recommend that delegated authority is given to approve a Deed of Variation to an existing agreement if this is necessary to support the Football Foundation applications.
- 6.10 It is also recommended that delegated authority be granted to release monies to pay for the Spinks Lane pitch and for the proportionate drawdown of the S106 contributions identified in this report to the Academies as payments fall due for the pitches being installed on their sites.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 With regards to F expenditure approval is only being sought to use financial contributions that the Council currently hold, or will hold, from seven specified S106 agreements. Because of the level of capital expenditure, the project will need to be included within the Councils Capital Investment Programme for 2024-2025. The Cabinet are being asked to approve in principle the use of the S106 contributions. Approval as part of the Councils Capital Investment Programme will be subject to approval by Full Council as part of the capital budget process.
- 7.2 Three of the proposed ATPs will be situated within school sites. The Academy Trusts will own the facilities and will be responsible for managing bookings

and will receive the income generated from hiring the pitch out. The Trusts will also be responsible for the on-going management and maintenance of the facilities, including the replacement of the carpet as required to maintain a suitable quality of playing surface – typically after 10-12 years.

- 7.3 Officers have discussed with the Football Foundation and Essex County FA whether there would be a risk that the facilities could become a liability for the Council in the event that any of the Academy Trusts did not maintain the facility or continue to provide public access.
- 7.4 There would be no default legal obligation on the Council to intervene and assume responsibility for any of the facilities on Academy sites in the event of problems. The Football Foundation funding model builds in multiple safeguards to avoid problems arising. Successful Football Foundation funding applications need to demonstrate that the facility will be financially sustainable. Funding is conditional on the applicant signing a contract with the Foundation which amongst other things requires that the facilities will be subject to on-going monitoring and evaluation to make sure that the funding outcomes are being delivered and the conditions being met. The conditions include:
- That all revenues generated by the new ATP, net of contributions made into an annual sinking fund, are ring-fenced into a football development fund held by the Applicant.
 - The football development fund and sinking fund shall be reviewed on an annual basis by a Steering Group that will be established to oversee the management of the facility. The Steering Group can include representatives of the Essex County FA and the Council.
 - Applicants would be required to present annual accounts relating to facility income and sinking funds to the Foundation.
 - The 3G pitch is maintained to a specified standard for the duration of the 21-year clawback period.
- 7.5 If one of the Academies were to fail to fulfil their contractual obligations then they could be required to repay the Football Foundation grant. In addition, because the Council is providing S106 contributions Officers will require the Academies enter into Community Use Agreements with the Council which will require that the community use continues beyond the clawback period of 21 years that the Football Foundation requires.
- 7.6 The proposed pitch at Spinks Lane will be owned by the Council and managed day to day by the Leisure contractor.
- 7.7 Based on current hire charges the new pitch would generate in the region of £4,000 per month on average across each year taking into consideration close season. Bookings would be managed by Fusion Lifestyle (or any future operator) and the income would go to them in the first instance and is then accrued through contractual variation to the management fee Fusion Lifestyle or future Leisure operator pay the Council. The outgoing costs for

maintenance and staffing are budgeted by Fusion Lifestyle (or any future operator) through the contractual set up.

- 7.8 A capital allocation will need to be considered through the Council's MTFs (Mid Term Financial Strategy) for capital projects as the pitch would require re-carpeting in approximately 10-12 years. To give a very broad indication, based on a recent tender exercise by the Council, the cost of re-carpeting a 3G ATP is £260,000. The Council will be required to maintain the pitch on the FA pitch register for 21 years and this will dictate the timescale for recarpeting and maintenance. It is recommended delegated authority be given to allow further negotiation with the leisure contract operator over the precise nature of the management and maintenance of the Spinks Lane pitch and the outcome will inform how the Council manage the on-going capital expenditure to recarpet the pitch.
- 7.9 Officers have made it clear to the Football Foundation that the Council can only commit the specified S106 contributions to the project construction. If costs increase or there are additional unexpected costs, that these risks would need to be met by the Football Foundation or other external grants and contributions.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 In progressing with the project, the Council will enter into an agreement of the legal charge/restriction, on part of the Witham Sports Ground as required by the Football Foundation when grants of over £100,000 are awarded.
- 8.2 Each of the sites will be required to obtain the necessary planning permission for the works to be undertaken. The contractor appointed by the Football Foundation for each site will be responsible for submitting the planning application for each pitch. The funding is conditional on this being achieved.
- 8.3 The Council will also need to enter into the Football Foundations grant agreement for monitor and evaluation of the Pitch at Witham Sports Ground.
- 8.4 The Council will ensure Community Use agreements are in place with the three associated academies to protect the investment of S106 funding, and will ensure all necessary agreements and variations are executed in order for the project to progress.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 The key risks to the Council for the Witham Sports Ground Pitch of the project are:
- i) Adhering to the processes and timescales within the Football Foundation framework and alignment to any requirements linked to S106 funding.
 - ii) Identifying sufficient partnership funding to enable the project to be progressed to application stage with the Football Foundation.

- iv) Ongoing delivery of targeted programmes must meet outcomes of the football development plan agreed with the Football Foundation.

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 have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. But Individual EAI's will be required at the appropriate stage of development for each pitch as part of the Steering Groups responsibilities and terms of reference to assess this.

11. List of Appendices

None.

12. Background Papers

- Open Spaces Supplementary Planning Document (2009)
- Braintree Open Space Study – Community and Stakeholder Consultation Summary (2016)
- Braintree District Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2017)
- Braintree Local Football Facility Plan (2018)
- Braintree District Local Plan 2033
- Section 106 Agreements:
 - Carier Business Park, East Street, Braintree (BDC Planning ref. 15/01366/OUT)
 - Land between London Road and East of Pods Brook Road, Braintree (15/01193/FUL)
 - Land north of Rayne Road, Braintree (17/01973/FUL)

- Northeast Witham Growth Location, in the Parish of Rivenhall (15/00799/FUL & 17/01092/FUL)
- Land north of Conrad Road, Witham (19/00026/FUL)
- Land at Rayne Fisheries, Rayne (18/00092/OUT)
- Land adjacent to Lodge Farm, Hatfield Road, Witham (15/00430/OUT & 20/01571/VAR)

Appendix A

a. Recieved Contributions

Development Site	Carier Business Park, East Street,	Land between London Road and East of Pods Brook Road, Braintree	Land north of Rayne Road, Braintree	Northeast Witham Growth Location, in the Parish of Rivenhall - Land at Forest Road	Land adjacent to Lodge Farm, Hatfield Road, Witham
Developer	Braintree Chelmer Housing Partnership	Countryside Properties	Redrow Homes	Bellway Homes	Redrow Homes
Planning Permission No:	15/01366/OUT	15/01193/FUL	17/01973/FUL	15/00799/FUL & 17/01092/FUL	15/00430/OUT & 20/01571/VAR
S.106 Contribution Received	£66,298.71	£234,991.91	£129,957.82	£356,267.36	£305,819.53.
Spend Purpose, as identified within the S.106 Agreement	Improvements at John Ray Sports Ground or provision of 3G artificial pitch within the town of Braintree.	Provision of 3G artificial training pitch within Braintree.	A new artificial training pitch in the town of Braintree and / or improvements to the grass pitches and facilities at the John Ray Sports Ground	Sports pitch improvements at a) The Rickstones Sports Field, off Dorothy Sayers Drive and / or b) the Bramston Sport Centre, Spinks Lane	Towards the provision of a new 3G ATP at Spinks Lane, Witham
Deadline for Spend of the contribution	31.10.2024	28.02.2027.	30.11.2025.	28.02.2033.	30.11.2032.

b. Secured Contributions

Development Site	Land at Rayne Fisheries, Rayne	Land north of Conrad Road, Witham
Developer	Mulberry Property Developments Limited &	Sanctuary Affordable Housing Limited

	Manor Oak Homes Ltd.	
Planning Permission No	18/00092/OUT	19/00026/FUL
S.106 Contribution Received	£52,514.74.	£177,519.75 (of which £55,000 is proposed to be used towards the 3G ATP project)
Spend Purpose, as identified within the S.106 Agreement	Provision of artificial sports pitches at locations within the town of Braintree.	Provision of outdoor sports facilities in the vicinity of the site.

Report Title: Accommodation Placements Policy	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/24
Report Presented by: Councillor Lynette Bowers-Flint, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing	
Enquiries to: Donna Goodchild, Housing Operations Manager donna.goodchild@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report presents the Accommodation Placements Policy and explains why out-of-area placements may be necessary and sets out the considerations which will be applied when placing homeless households in temporary accommodation outside the Braintree District or when helping a household to secure a home in the Private Rented Sector in another Local Authority area.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the Accommodation Placements Policy as set out in Appendix A.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires a local authority to provide interim accommodation to certain groups of households (those with a 'priority need') when they become homeless, whilst undertaking enquiries to establish whether there is any further duty owed. Where a local authority accepts that it has an on-going duty to accommodate a household until settled accommodation is secured, they will need to provide temporary accommodation.
- 3.2 Braintree District Council (the Council) has a limited supply of interim/temporary accommodation and, during times of increased homelessness pressures, may have to source additional accommodation outside the district. Local authorities may discharge their homelessness duties through an offer in the Private Rented Sector and, with the increasing gap between local market rents and local housing allowance (LHA) rates (the maximum level of help with rent that is payable), some households may need to seek accommodation further afield. There is a shortfall of at least

£200pcm between LHA rates in this district and the rents charged for rooms in HMOs and 1 bed properties, with larger shortfalls for family sized homes.

- 3.3 Section 208(1) to the Housing Act 1996, as amended, says that ‘so far as reasonably practicable a local housing authority shall in discharging their housing functions under this Part secure that accommodation is available for the occupation of the applicant in their district’. The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 includes the requirement that the local housing authority must take into account the location of the accommodation, and the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (as amended) sets out the factors to be considered when establishing the suitability of the location of accommodation. This now includes the following: **17.50** *Where it is not reasonably practicable to secure accommodation within district and an authority has secured accommodation outside their district, the housing authority is required to take into account the distance of that accommodation from the district of the authority. Where accommodation which is otherwise suitable and affordable is available nearer to the authority’s district than the accommodation which it has secured, the accommodation which it has secured is not likely to be suitable unless the applicant has specified a preference, or the accommodation has been offered in accordance with a published policy which provides for fair and reasonable allocation of accommodation that is or may become available to applicants.*
- 3.4 Since 2015 there have been a number of Court cases which have considered the suitability of out-of-area offers of accommodation and it has become increasingly apparent that the Council should adopt a policy, thereby providing guidance to officers, transparency about the decision-making process when out-of-area placements become necessary, and reducing the risk of legal challenge.
- 3.5 Use of B&Bs/Hotels and Nightly Let accommodation has increased over recent years due to a range of factors, including the ‘Everyone In’ approach during the Covid pandemic and the contractual arrangements between Essex County Council and Peabody, which provides 21 units of temporary accommodation for the Council. The Council’s temporary accommodation needs will form part of the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy review which is being conducted at present. Across Essex, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation out of the local housing authority’s own area increased from 210 at the end of September 2022 to 326 at the end of February 2023.
- 3.6 Households placed in temporary accommodation under a homelessness duty will, if eligible, receive support to pay rent from Housing Benefit, not Universal Credit. Where the temporary accommodation is in another district, Housing Benefit will be paid by the Council, not the local authority in which the household has been placed. A household which secures a private rented sector offer in another area will claim help with housing costs through Universal Credit.

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

- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;
- A high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services; and
- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

3.8 The Accommodation Placements Policy clarifies that out-of-area placements will only be considered when suitable accommodation cannot be sourced locally or if there are specific reasons why the household needs to re-locate and that, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, alternative accommodation within the district will be secured as soon as possible. The use of hotels is the most costly way of providing temporary accommodation; the use of other accommodation in an out-of-area location may offer cost savings and, for those households who may be unable/unlikely to secure the offer of a social housing tenancy and cannot afford local market rents, it may be their only option for securing settled accommodation.

4. Consultation

4.1 No consultation has been undertaken but officers have considered the placement policies of other local authorities, including LB Enfield and LB Tower Hamlets. The Council have made enquiries with nearby Essex Local Authority's (Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring & Uttlesford). Only Chelmsford currently has a policy in place. Chelmsford's policy is broadly in line with the policy proposed for the Braintree District, although they place applicants within priority bands for a local offer.

5. Options

5.1 The preferred option is to approve the proposed 'Accommodation Placements Policy'. Adoption of the policy will provide guidance to officers, transparency about the decision-making process when out-of-area placements become necessary and reduce the risk of legal challenge.

5.2 The alternative option is to do nothing. The risk in not having a policy is that the Council will be at greater risk of challenge if a household is placed out of area as there will be no agreed clear and consistent approach to making such decisions.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The housing service has a range of options and budget provision for providing solutions to the need for temporary accommodation. However, as this is a demand led service it is essential that close monitoring is maintained. The use of bed and breakfast type accommodation is creating

financial pressure on the Housing Benefit budget where government subsidy does not fully cover the cost of benefit paid.

- 6.2 The placement of households at risk of homelessness outside of the district due to supply issues will not necessarily incur additional costs over and above those that are being incurred where the placement is in district. There may be some ancillary cost that will be incurred, e.g., contributing towards travelling/ relocation expenses.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 This report sets out the legislative provisions that govern the accommodation of households in out of area placements. The Council is a Local Housing Authority and is required to meet all relevant statutory requirements and have regard to any applicable statutory guidance.
- 7.2 The Accommodation Placement Policy will ensure that the Council is able to meet its statutory obligations, ensuring that there is a clear and consistent approach in doing so.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 When placing a household in another local authority area, Councils are required to notify the receiving authority via a section 208 notification, providing the name of the applicant, the number and description of household members, the address of the accommodation, the date on which the accommodation was made available to the applicant and the duty under which it was secured.
- 8.2 Consideration of any safeguarding issues is included within the proposed policy and, where other agencies are involved with a household (e.g Social Care), they will be notified, should an out-of-area placement be necessary.

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; and
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual

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

- 9.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. The proposed policy requires officers to take a full range of factors into consideration.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A - Accommodation Placements Policy.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Chapter 17 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance.
- 11.2 Report of the decision in *Nzolameso v Westminster CC* [2015] UKSC 22, April 02, 2015.
- 11.3 LB Enfield Placements Policy.
- 11.4 LB Tower Hamlets Homelessness Accommodation Placements Policy.

Braintree District Council

Accommodation Placements Policy

Introduction

This document sets out Braintree District Council's policy for the placement of households in temporary and settled accommodation under a homelessness duty, both within and outside the district. Its primary use will be to guide placements in interim/temporary accommodation, but the same principles will apply for the use of Private Rented Sector offers.

It therefore covers:

- interim placements made under s188 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) while a relief duty is owed and homelessness enquires are undertaken,
- longer-term temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty under s193 HA1996 (as amended) and
- offers of accommodation made to bring any homelessness duty to an end.

Although it is the Council's aim to provide (or help to secure) accommodation within the district wherever possible, this isn't always achievable. The Council has a finite number of properties available to it for use as temporary accommodation and this, together with factors including contract changes at Essex County Council and ongoing benefit reforms, means that for some households, accommodation in the district may be either unavailable and/or unaffordable. As a result, there may be an increasing need to use accommodation outside the district: the Council therefore needs to have a policy in place to ensure that those households who have the greatest need to be in, or close to, a particular location are given priority for any properties.

In all circumstances where a Council places a household out-of-area in discharge of any homelessness duty, the receiving local authority must be notified by way of a section 208 notification: this is built into BDC's procedure. Should officers become aware that another Council has placed a household in the Braintree District and failed to send the requisite notification, appropriate steps will be taken to obtain the information and to seek assurances about timely receipt of any future notifications.

The Policy

This policy takes into account the statutory requirements on local authorities
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in respect of the suitability of accommodation, including the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012, and the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018. Consideration will be given as to whether the applicant can afford the accommodation without being deprived of essentials such as food, clothing, and utilities. Location of the accommodation may be a factor in these calculations.

Households with dependent children.

Wherever possible, the Council will avoid placing households with dependent children and/or a pregnant woman, in bed and breakfast accommodation. Where no other suitable accommodation exists and such placements are necessary, the Council will use every endeavour to move these households to more suitable self-contained accommodation within six weeks. A suitable property may be out of the district.

16 / 17-year-old young people

B&B accommodation is not considered suitable for single applicants aged 16/17 years and every effort will therefore be taken to secure access to supported accommodation for young people in this age group via the Essex Young People's Partnership.

Accommodation available in the district

If suitable accommodation is available in the Braintree District, applicants will be housed within the local area. However, when there is a lack of suitable accommodation in the district, out-of-area placements will be used to meet the Council's housing duties. Given the shortage of accommodation locally, bed and breakfast accommodation and non-self-contained, nightly paid accommodation outside of the district may be considered suitable for short-term, interim placements.

Affordability

An affordability assessment of the accommodation will be carried out by Braintree District Council, having due regard to s.17.46 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (v0.14). The Council may also consider the affordability of accommodation in deciding **where** to provide it: the decision regarding entitlement for support with rent and eligible charges will be taken by the appropriate agency (Housing Benefit Team or Department for Work & Pensions).

Size and standard of the property

Accommodation must provide adequate space and room standards for the household and be fit to inhabit; although accommodation that may not be suitable for a long period, may be suitable for a shorter one. The quality of

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decoration/furniture, the layout/type of accommodation, provision of parking and lack of access to a garden are unlikely to be an acceptable reason for a refusal.

When an out of area placement is made in a property for the first time, the Council will take steps to ensure that the property is of an appropriate standard. Where the property is not part of an established, reputable chain, eg Premier Inn, Travel Lodge, an enquiry will be made of the local authority Environmental Health Team within five working days of the placement being made to confirm suitability of the standard of the accommodation and the provider. Where necessary, a request will be made of the receiving authority that an inspection be carried out.

Certification will be obtained for EPC, gas, and electrical safety in PRS accommodation.

The reason for an out of area placement being made and the factors considered will be detailed in the Council's Placement Record.

Where the household has found their own accommodation or has expressed a preference to move to a distant area and agreed in writing that they are happy to move to accommodation which has not been independently inspected, checks will not be initiated by Braintree District Council.

Out of district placements

In an emergency, a homeless household may be placed in temporary accommodation in any location where there is availability on the day. If a property is deemed unsuitable for the longer term, the household will be given priority to be transferred to alternative temporary accommodation. An out-of-district placement may also be required in order to protect the household (eg in cases of gang-related violence or domestic abuse) and a move back to the district may not, then, be appropriate.

In determining whether a property outside the district is suitable in the longer term, the requirements set out in the legislation and statutory guidance need to be taken into account. As part of the assessment of needs and circumstances required by s189a HA1996, the Housing Options Officer will take into consideration the following factors when identifying temporary or settled accommodation (this does not guarantee that accommodation will be in the district):

- **Health and well-being factors**

The Council will consider health factors, such as the ability to climb stairs, any care and support provided by other statutory agencies and

May 2023

the need to access any specialist medical services in the Braintree District. If the applicant or a member of their immediate household is citing medical grounds that were not identified during the initial assessment, the applicant must submit medical evidence within 24 hours. The key test in determining the impact of medical issues is whether the condition renders the property offered unsuitable. Other well-being factors, such as the need for and availability of support from family members will also be considered. Generally, travel of up to an hour to deliver care or support would be considered reasonable, but individual circumstances will be taken into account.

- **Treatment**

Applicants with a severe and enduring health condition which requires intensive and specialist medical treatment.

- **Care Package**

Applicants who are in receipt of a significant package and range of healthcare support that cannot easily be transferred.

- **Mental Health Treatment**

Applicants with a severe and enduring mental health problem who are receiving psychiatric treatment and aftercare provided by community mental health services and with an established support network where a transfer of care would severely impact their well-being.

- **Children's Social Care**

Households with children registered on the Child Protection register, or families who have high social welfare needs who are linked into local health/social care services and where it is confirmed that a transfer to another area would have a significant impact on their welfare.

- **Carers**

Applicants who have a longstanding arrangement to provide care and support to another family member in the district, who is not part of the applicant's household and who would be likely to require significant statutory health and social support if the care ceased. Generally, travel of up to an hour to deliver care or support would be considered reasonable, but individual circumstances will be taken into account.

- **Special Educational Needs**

Households containing a child with special educational needs, who is receiving education or educational support in the Braintree District, where the Council is satisfied that a change would be detrimental to their well-being.

- **Proximity to schools and services**

Maintaining attendance at an existing school will not usually be considered a reason to refuse accommodation, although some priority will be given to special educational needs and students who are close

to taking public examinations, in determining priority for placements in the district. Proximity to schools, public transport links and primary care services will all be considered. Wherever practicable, households will be placed within 60 minutes' travelling distance of their school or college.

- **Employment**

The Council will consider the needs of applicants who are in paid employment to reach their usual place of work from the accommodation that is secured. A journey-to-work time of up to 90 minutes (each way) will be considered reasonable.

- **Households with pets**

The Council will be sensitive to the importance of pets to some applicants, with due regard to S17.67 Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018(v0.14). Unfortunately, it will not always be possible to make provisions for pets (except assistance dogs). Applicants may wish to arrange for pets to be looked after by friends or family.

- **Any special circumstances**

The Council will consider any other reasons put forward by the applicant and come to an overall view about whether an offer is suitable.

Where the Council decides that applicants housed under s188 HA1996 (as amended) are not owed the main homelessness duty, they will be asked to leave any interim accommodation provided, usually within a maximum of twenty-eight days of receiving a homelessness decision letter.

These are guidelines only and the individual circumstances of each case (including the length of time likely to be spent in the accommodation) must always be considered when determining the suitability of an offer.

In all circumstances where the Council places a household out-of-area in discharge of any homelessness duty, the receiving local authority will be notified by way of a section 208 notification.

Further information relating to:

- the right to review of decisions on suitability
- which applicants may be considered suitable for an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector

can be found in Appendix 1 to the Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy.

May 2023

Report Title: Approval of North Essex Economic Board Economic Strategy	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/35
Report Presented by: Councillor Frankie Ricci, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and inward Investment	
Enquiries to: Penny Calder, Programme Manager – North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) penny.calder@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the continued positive benefits of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) partnership and to seek approval of the refreshed strategy and delivery plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet continue to support Braintree district Council's (the Council's) involvement in the North Essex Economic Board.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the adoption of the refreshed North Essex Economic Board strategy and delivery plan for the economic benefit of the district.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 In 2019 Tendring, Colchester, Braintree, Uttlesford and Essex County Councils agreed to develop an economic strategy that would articulate the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the North Essex economic corridor. Initially inspired by the need to articulate a vision associated, but independent from, the North Essex Garden Communities.
- 3.2 The NEEB was formed to oversee the development of the strategy. The informal Board consists of Leader and Cabinet Member representatives from each local authority. An officer steering group formed to deliver the work.
- 3.3 Chelmsford and Maldon Councils joined NEEB in May 2020, now covering half of the second-tier authorities in Essex.
- 3.4 Towards the end of the 2020, NEEB partners agreed (after approval from the previous Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) to allocate 10% of their Additional Restrictions Grant funding to support a coordinated programme of business and skills support.

- 3.5 This collaboration yielded over £1.6m in jointly commissioned projects, plus additional financial commitment from Essex County Council.
- 3.6 The business support and skills programme produced the following benefits to the District up to end of March 2023:

Business Support Programmes	Numbers Supported
Business navigation sessions	103 businesses receiving 1:1 support
Pre/start-up support	31 business supported
Debt and finance	38 business supported/interventions
	44 jobs safeguarded/created
Import/export support	6 business supported
	6 businesses receiving training
Digital/ecommerce support	27 business supported

Skills Programmes*	Numbers Supported
Residents accessing training	12
Virtual job fairs held	3
Maldon employers attending skills events	10
Residents learning ESOL	12
Residents provided with equipment and connectivity	8

*two programmes continuing delivery until end 2023 at no extra cost

- 3.7 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has provided a new opportunity for collaboration. In July 2022, Strategy and Resources Committee agreed to commit 10% of the Council's revenue allocation for years two and three of UKSPF to develop collaborative interventions with NEEB.
- 3.8 The NEEB partners continue to work together and commissioned an updated North Essex economic strategy. This update reflects Maldon and Chelmsford Councils joining NEEB, the post-COVID landscape and current economic shocks.
- 3.9 Henham Strategy Ltd were appointed, via a thorough and a robust procurement process, to deliver the refreshed strategy and delivery plan. Extensive evidence gathering consisting of strategic analysis, data scrutiny and stakeholder workshops facilitated the development of the refreshed strategy and delivery plan. Officers from the partner authorities have been involved at every stage of this work to ensure parity in representation of need and opportunity.
- 3.10 The refreshed NEEB strategy and delivery plan (appendix documents) sets out the following:
- North Essex Vision '*A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity*'.

- The Economic Context
 - North Essex's Strategic Priorities
 - **Innovative businesses and skilled residents** - A resilient and outward-facing economy that builds on its incumbent strengths and is positioned to deliver economic opportunities for North Essex's residents and drive inward investment to support businesses within the region's critical growth sectors.
 - **A greener and high growth economy** - A forward-looking economy that utilises the diversity of its resources in a sustainable way that furthers North Essex's clean energy strengths, boosts growth, and promotes residents' prosperity through net zero commitments.
 - **A dynamic and connected region** - A well-connected and digitally linked region that provides residents with quick and reliable access to key services, encourages inward investment, and makes the most of ties to regional and international neighbours.
 - **Prosperous and inclusive communities** - A thriving and inclusive region where all residents and businesses have the opportunity to contribute and prosper, exemplifying the region as a great place to live, work and visit.
 - North Essex's Opportunities
 - North Essex's Two-Year Delivery Plan
 - North Essex's Ambitions
- 3.11 The NEEB Strategy work coincides with the wider devolution work undertaken by North Essex Leaders and Chief Execs. The North Essex Councils update paper to Members at tonight's Cabinet meeting highlights the importance of NEEB in the wider North Essex landscape.
- 3.12 The Council's Economic Growth Strategy 2023-2028 recently published supports the NEEB Strategic narrative. Both strategies priorities the need for resilient businesses, infrastructure and inclusive communities with a focus on a high growth green economy to support the 'net zero' agenda.
- 3.13 A series of officer workshops are planned during 2023 to develop specific actions to support the two-year delivery plan and ensure its success.
- 3.14 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play.

- A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure.
- A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities.
- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported.
- Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.

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

4. Options

4.1 The preferred option is for the Council to approve the adoption of the NEEB Strategy and Action Plan.

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

5. Next Steps

5.1 If the Strategy and Action Plan is approved, the Council will commence with the delivering the Strategy and Action Plan.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The source of funding to deliver the two-year action plan will be derived from existing Economic Development budgets, partnership opportunities and allocated budgets from central government such as the Shared Prosperity Fund.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 As the NEEB Action Plan will be delivering government grant funding as stipulated in section 6.1, there are legal obligations to provide statutory returns on the expenditure of the funding. The NEEB Programme Manager will be responsible for recording monthly KPI's/reporting for each district's economic development officer/SPF project officer.

8. Other Implications

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

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 North Essex Strategic Narrative
- 10.2 North Essex's Economic Baseline
- 10.3 Delivering North Essex

North Essex's Strategic Narrative



North Essex
Economic
Board



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The North Essex Vision

A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity.

The NEEB's 'Delivering for North Essex' plan has been underpinned by a robust and comprehensive review of the region's key opportunities and challenges, outlined within the local strategies and initiatives of the seven NEEB authorities and collated through extensive engagement with councillors, officers and key external stakeholders, including local businesses, HE and FE institutions, and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

'North Essex's Strategic Narrative' has been developed in partnership with Henham Strategy, with it providing greater detail on the opportunities and challenges we are seeking to action and address through our plans to deliver for North Essex. These opportunities and challenges are presented under the key strategic priority for which they apply.

Working together, we can leverage North Essex's core strengths...

Our innovative and thriving SME community and cutting edge HE and FE institutions, delivering good, local jobs

Our dynamic and competitive renewable energy generation strengths, driving net zero progression

Our unique strategic location linked to regional and international partners, supporting inward investment

Our proud urban, rural and coastal communities, focused on supporting prosperous residents and businesses

North Essex's Strategic Opportunities and Challenges

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

With North Essex's substantial SME community driving entrepreneurship and innovation; three highly successful Higher Education institutions leading cutting-edge research in areas including computer and data science; and thriving Further Education institutions delivering the technical skills and qualifications that form the backbone

of any resilient economy, now is an exciting time for the region as it looks to ensure its residents and businesses benefit from increased inward investment that helps establish the region's prosperity-enhancing growth sectors.

Innovative Businesses – Opportunities

North Essex is positioned to build on the high proportion of SMEs operating within the region, with a real opportunity to further develop incumbent strengths in the construction and real estate sectors. Alongside reinforcing existing strengths, progress within the region's key growth sectors can add to the region's innovative business landscape, building on the excellent work that has already been delivered to date.

Construction and Retrofit – Building on the region's incumbent construction strengths, Braintree has led work on delivering progress within the advanced construction sector through 'I-Construct'. Using European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding, this programme included the establishment of a 'Construction Innovation Hub' that has been used to support businesses in construction – and construction-related – sectors, nurture early-stage SMEs and facilitate the commercialisation of new ideas, technologies and research. This programme has supported 350 businesses, launched 150 new products and services, and created up to 130 jobs across the South East¹.

Clean Energy – Building on the region's renewable electricity generation strengths, Longfield Solar Farm is a proposal for a new solar energy and battery storage farm within Chelmsford and Braintree that will help meet the UK's need for low

carbon energy and achieve the 2050 net zero target. The plans around battery storage will help deliver efficiency, with the energy generated able to be stored during times of low demand and released when needed².

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering – Based in Chelmsford, the company Teledyne e2v is a technology manufacturer that develops specialised components and subsystems in the medical, science, aerospace, and defence sectors. Specifically, this company is looking to help drive the next generation of systems in signal chain semiconductor devices, full spectrum imaging, and high-power radio frequency solutions³.

Digital Tech – Building on the University of Essex's computer and data science strengths, Colchester launched the AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation in June 2022. This new centre will position Colchester as a global focus for all immersive innovation in the XR industry, and will form AIXR's base of international operations, institutionalising the technology for decades to come. This centre is open to all within the community who want to learn about XR, grow within XR, and connect with the most passionate people within the immersive world. (For background, XR is the umbrella term for all immersive technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality, Spatial Audio and Haptics/Senses)⁴.

¹I-Construct. Source: I-Construct

²Longfield Solar Farm. Source: Longfield Solar Farm

³Teledyne e2v. Source: Home | Teledyne e2v (teledyne-e2v.com)

⁴AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation. Source: AIXR Centre for Immersive Innovation to Open in Colchester UK - AIXR

Life Sciences – With its proximity to Cambridge and the Life Sciences ‘Golden Triangle’, Uttlesford is playing a leading role in the UK’s life sciences sector through the Chesterford Research Park. This research park offers advanced laboratory and office space set within 250 acres of idyllic parkland, with the modern, dynamic and flexible facilities ideal for biotechnology, pharmaceutical and technology R&D companies of all sizes⁵. Braintree’s Manufacturing Innovation Centre at CGT Catapult will also play a vital life sciences role, working in collaboration with the cell and gene therapy industry to accelerate manufacturing innovation for therapy developers, technology companies and service providers⁶.

These are but a few examples of the excellent and innovative work that is planned and underway within the region to support North Essex’s key growth sectors. The benefits of continuing to develop the region’s early progress in supporting its

North Essex Clean Energy Job Growth – LG Inform 2030 Forecasts

Area	Braintree	Chelmsford	Colchester	Maldon	Tendring	Uttlesford
Low Carbon Electricity	74	2,258	163	318	90	173
Low Carbon Heat	422	494	534	183	459	242
Alternative Fuels	95	192	135	41	54	39
Energy Efficient	386	452	488	168	420	221
Low Carbon Services	61	189	189	38	3	101
Low Emissions Vehicles and Infrastructure	216	253	220	80	129	112
Total	1,254	3,838	1,729	828	1,189	888

⁵ Chesterford Research Park. Source: Chesterford Research Park

⁶ Catapult Cell and Gene Therapy. CGT Catapult Braintree. Source: Braintree - Cell and Gene Therapy (catapult.org.uk)

⁷ LG Inform. Local green jobs – accelerating a sustainable economic recovery. Source: Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery in Braintree | LG Inform

key growth sectors is seen when looking at the potential impact these growth sectors could have in terms of jobs within the region.

Focusing on the ‘Clean Energy’ growth sector, LG Inform⁷ forecasts demonstrate the number of jobs the region is likely to benefit from as this sector continues to develop. As the table below demonstrates, the region is expected to see significant growth in the number of jobs within key Clean Energy areas, and it is vital the region continues to build on the excellent work already underway to support not only the Clean Energy growth sector, but also North Essex’s other key growth sectors.

North Essex Clean Energy Job Growth – LG Inform 2050 Forecasts

Area	Braintree	Chelmsford	Colchester	Maldon	Tendring	Uttlesford
Low Carbon Electricity	177	5,476	359	760	201	414
Low Carbon Heat	635	743	803	276	690	364
Alternative Fuels	140	315	220	66	88	60
Energy Efficient	407	477	515	177	443	233
Low Carbon Services	170	532	532	106	105	283
Low Emissions Vehicles and Infrastructure	376	488	396	14	25	199
Total	1,905	8,031	2,825	1,525	1,779	1,553

If the region is to make the most of the opportunities its growth sectors present, North Essex must ensure that businesses working within these sectors have the space and resources to scale up effectively and establish themselves within the region. There has already been some excellent work progressed in this space, whether that be through Tendring’s work delivering 24 new affordable business units in Jaywick Sands, or Braintree’s plans around the Horizon 120 business innovation and logistics park that will provide in excess of 750,000 square feet of hi-tech, industrial, office and logistics space. Phase One of Horizon 120 was completed in June 2022, with ‘The Plaza’ providing approximately 30,000 square feet of flexible SME workshop space where individual rooms – as well as conference and event spaces – are available for hire⁸.

Braintree’s Free Funding for Young Entrepreneurs

Braintree’s initiative to provide funding for young entrepreneurs is helping to stimulate business growth within the authority, helping to provide Braintree’s youngest and brightest business minds with the first step up required to establish a business. Alongside funding for their idea, this initiative provides 16-30 year olds with invaluable business plan training and presentational experience that helps them develop career enhancing skills. This initiative should be provided across North Essex to stimulate entrepreneurship, innovation and investment – three criteria critical to productive and proactive business growth.

⁸ Horizon120. Source: Horizon 120 Business Park, Braintree, Essex - Office, Logistics & Distribution, Hi-Tech, Light Industrial

Innovative Business – Challenges

If the region is to fully seize the opportunities within North Essex's incumbent strengths and realise the benefits of its key growth sectors, challenges will need to be overcome that are currently inhibiting the region's innovative businesses from making further economic progress.

Despite the progress being made in the delivery of new commercial sites, like those being delivered in Tendring and Braintree, there is much progress to be made. The lack of commercial sites compared to other areas around the country is one of the main reasons holding back the scale up of many of North Essex's innovative businesses. It is vital that the region continues to focus on ensuring businesses have the necessary commercial space to grow, positioning North Essex to benefit from the economic growth that comes with SMEs further establishing themselves within the region.

There is also a challenge in collating the existing initiatives that are underway within North Essex to support business growth and ensuring that key stakeholders are aware of what they are each doing to drive business growth in the region. There have been some excellent further examples of initiatives planned and underway to support business growth within the region including:

- The **Colchester Business Enterprise Agency's (Colbea)** business support delivered in partnership with Tendring, which is helping to catalyse business success within parts of Essex⁹.
- The partnership established between **CB Heating and EDF Energy** in Tendring to support the installation of heat pumps within the region, exemplifying effective local and national business partnerships¹⁰.
- The **University of Essex's 'Knowledge Gateway'**, a research and technology park on the Colchester Campus, providing a unique home for businesses to cultivate ideas, increase motivation, generate ambition and invigorate success. This is helping innovative SMEs establish themselves further, with peer-to-peer relationships established to facilitate business growth¹¹.
- The **South East LEP's (SELEP) Enterprise Adviser Network** which aims to pair senior business volunteers with schools and colleges to build employer engagement plans in order to create powerful, lasting connections between local businesses and the schools and colleges in their area. This is helping to demonstrate employment pathways for students, increasing motivation to progress and secure career enabling opportunities¹².

⁹ Colbea. Source: Office Space Colchester | Office Rental | Business Support (colbea.co.uk)

¹⁰ EDF investment partnership with heat pump installer CB heating, EDF, May 2022. Source: EDF investment partnership with heat pump installer CB Heating | EDF (edfenergy.com)

¹¹ Knowledge Gateway. University of Essex. Source: Knowledge Gateway | University of Essex

¹² Enterprise Advisor Network. SELEP. Source: Enterprise Advisor Network - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (southeastlep.com)

- The **Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan** that is providing an employer voice and perspective on the region's local skills needs, ensuring residents are developing skills that are most likely to help them secure good jobs of the future¹³.

The NEEB has a role to play in occupying an overarching viewpoint over initiatives being delivered, ensuring duplication of activity is avoided and best business growth practice promoted and scaled up to support further businesses across the North Essex region.

Skilled Residents – Opportunities

To support the ambitions of North Essex's innovative businesses, the region should work on building on its skills strengths, with successful, innovative businesses dependent upon a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

When considering North Essex's skills strengths, a clear place to start is the region's Higher Education institutions, with the region benefitting from the excellent research and training delivered by the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, and Writtle University College. All three Higher Education institutions have their specific strengths – the University of Essex has strong foundations in the computer/data science and hospitality sectors; Anglia Ruskin in

social work and sport science; and Writtle University College in animal and land-based sectors. These institutions play an important role in driving up skills within the region, with the University of Essex's 'Skills Fest' – an annual exhibition of the skills development opportunities available to students and staff of the university – an excellent example of the work put in to supporting skills development across the region.

It is essential that the region's Higher Education institutions continue to receive the support they need, given the R&D spend of the East of England's Higher Education institutions in 2019. As can be seen in the table below, the East of England ranked third – behind London and the South East – in terms of Higher Education R&D expenditure, investing £968 million in 2019. This suggests that the region's Higher Education institutions are playing a leading role in driving innovation and productivity improvements¹⁴. North Essex's three Higher Education institutions are central to this expenditure and should continue to be supported with these endeavours.

¹³ Local Skills Improvement Plan. Essex Chamber of Commerce. Source: Essex Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ltd

¹⁴ ONS. Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, by region, UK. (2019). Source: Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, by region, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Regional Higher Education R&D Expenditure – 2019 (£ millions)

London	South East	East of England	North West	Yorkshire and the Humber	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands	North East
2,196	1,361	968	733	610	474	470	353	251

The University of Essex

The University of Essex is a North Essex Higher Education strength, ranking first in the UK for its Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) which bring together the needs of businesses with the university's knowledge and expertise. This strength needs to be built upon, facilitating the spin out of businesses from the university's research. A sector where this is clearly possible is Computer Science, with the university ranking in the UK's top 10 for this subject and acting as host to the Institute for Analytics and Data Science as well as the UK Data Archive. This case study has been included to illustrate the potential of North Essex's Higher Education institutions. It is vital they partner with businesses and investors to drive innovation and business growth within North Essex.

Alongside North Essex's Higher Education institutions – and given the region's incumbent strengths within the construction sector – the region's Further Education offering is also critical to the region's long-term economic growth potential. In particular, there are several Further Education institutions that represent the region's strengths in this area:

- **The Colchester Institute** – Critical to this institute is its ambition to provide education, professional development and technical skills training to young people and adults across North Essex. Vocational learning is an integral part of all the courses offered by the institute and there are two main campuses in North Essex based in Colchester and Braintree. The Colchester site has recently delivered improvements to its main buildings, enabling the provision of new facilities that include Business, Accounting and Computing, Sport and Public Service and Health and Social Care facilities. The Braintree site has a speciality in Digital, Media and Engineering¹⁵.

¹⁵ The Colchester Institute. Source: Colchester Institute - Education & Training Courses in Essex

- **Chelmsford College** – Based across two campuses, Chelmsford College is a general Further Education college that offers a variety of courses, both vocational and professional courses. Like the Colchester Institute, Chelmsford College has undergone redevelopment in recent years which includes a brand new Electrical and Engineering block, a new Art, Design and Media Centre, as well as new welcome areas on both campuses, complete with internet cafes and landscaped areas for students to relax and socialise¹⁶.
- **Stansted Airport College** – With Stansted Airport based in Uttlesford, it is important to acknowledge the partnership the airport has established with Harlow College. Stansted Airport College is the first of its kind in the country, and offers a unique opportunity for those interested to get the first step up into a career within the aviation industry¹⁷.

The importance of these exemplar Further Education institutions is evidenced when reflecting on the diversity of skills attainment across the North Essex region. Some authorities are made up of a greater proportion of higher skilled workers and others a greater proportion of lower skilled workers, evidenced in the table below¹⁸. It is crucial that everyone within North Essex feels they have an opportunity to progress in their careers – irrespective of skills backgrounds – and the provision of Further Education courses is essential to this.

Skills Attainment (2021) – Lower and Higher Skilled Workers Divergence Across North Essex

District	NVQ Levels 1,2 and 3	NVQ Level 4
Braintree	47.2%	25.8%
Chelmsford	43.1%	33.9%
Colchester	44.6%	32.2%
Maldon	45.9%	25.4%
Tendring	43.8%	19.9%
Uttlesford	42.3%	36.6%

¹⁶ Chelmsford College. Source: Chelmsford College | Our College

¹⁷ Stansted Airport College. Source: Stansted Airport College - Home

¹⁸ ONS. Education: Highest level of qualification (Census 2021). Source: Highest level of qualification - Census Maps, ONS

Skilled Residents – Challenges

Whilst there are clear opportunities to support the upskilling of North Essex through collaboration with the region's Higher Education and Further Education institutions, there are several challenges that are front and centre when supporting economic growth within the region.

The first challenge is encouraging and facilitating opportunities for residents to participate within skill programmes delivered across the region. Despite the NEEB running some successful skills programmes – including those in partnership with the Shaw Trust – others have proven less successful in generating resident interest. Whilst part of the explanation for the lack of engagement with some recent NEEB delivered skills programmes could be the lack of regular and reliable transport links between the North Essex authorities, there could also be other reasons for this, including a lack of confidence amongst some residents to engage, as raised by the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Equally as important as delivering quality skills programmes, the NEEB and other stakeholders should carefully consider the audiences they are looking to reach, understanding how they can effectively facilitate resident engagement. As highlighted by the Essex LSIP, Essex employers find that employees lack skills across a range of issues, including soft skills, and often struggle with staying positive and aiming high. Ensuring North Essex's residents do not fall into these categories will be vital to delivering skilled residents within the region.

Another challenge, is the struggle retaining graduate talent from courses delivered within North Essex. Whilst many choose to study within North Essex – 51,425 students were enrolled at the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin and Writtle University College for the 2020/21 academic year¹⁹ – fewer choose to remain in North Essex following their studies. This is particularly seen within the University of Essex's Hospitality programmes, with many students moving to larger UK and global cities to apply their skills post-training. To mitigate this from happening, there is a need to better advertise North Essex as a great place to live and work. Further collaboration between the region's businesses and Higher/Further Education institutions is required to more effectively advertise the good jobs available within North Essex to students.

A final skills challenge relates to North Essex's UK positioning. For many in the region, one of the main attractions of living within North Essex is its close proximity to London. There are normally 147 trains per day travelling between Colchester and London, and the average journey time is 59 minutes²⁰. This relative ease of travelling to London means many in North Essex live within the region but work within the capital, leading to much of the region's talent contributing economic growth to other parts of the country. This 'out-commuting' phenomenon builds the case for action around promoting good jobs within the region, and facilitating inward investment to draw further good jobs to North Essex.

A Green and High Growth Economy

With North Essex's renewable energy strengths in offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power, alongside innovative partnerships being established between local and national businesses working to deliver net zero commitments, now is an opportune time to focus on promoting the importance of a green and high-growth North Essex economy. This includes facilitating the delivery of the green jobs and skills of the future and building further positivity behind the hand-in-hand relationship of the region's rural and coastal characteristics and its net zero potential.

Opportunities

The North Essex region is positioned to build upon infrastructure already in place that is supporting renewable electricity generation. The region is effectively utilising its urban, rural and coastal characteristics to benefit from greener energy sources. Colchester is leading the way with solar power generation, Maldon with onshore wind, and Tendring with offshore wind. With the number of green jobs expected to increase in the lead up to 2030 and 2050, it is important to ensure the region's renewable electricity generation opportunities result in not only improved environmental outcomes, but also better outcomes for residents through good, career progressing jobs within the region's ever developing green sectors.

The work planned to enhance North Essex's solar power capacity shows North Essex's green potential. Alongside the proposed Longfield Solar Farm in Chelmsford and Braintree, Maldon also has plans to boost its solar power capacity through the proposed Dengie Solar Park – a British Solar Renewables project that plans to build a new 78-acre solar park in the area²¹. These plans to boost solar power capacity are supported by the 'Solar Together' initiative led by Essex CC

¹⁹ HESA. Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2020/21 – Where students come from and go to study. Source: Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2020/21 - Where students come from and go to study | HESA

²⁰ Trainline. Trains from Colchester to London. Source: Trains Colchester to London from £10 | Greater Anglia Times & Cheap Tickets | Trainline (thetrainline.com)

²¹ British Solar Renewables. Source: BSR | About (britishrenewables.com)

which – in partnership with the region’s six district authorities – is supporting residents to group buy solar PV and battery storage systems to drive demand for this renewable energy source²².

Away from solar power, there are also opportunities for the region to build on the example set in Braintree around EV charging infrastructure. The GRIDSERVE Braintree EV Forecourt is an exemplar for other areas to follow and is the largest of its kind in Europe with 12 high power charges, 12 medium power charges, 6 low power chargers and 6 Tesla super chargers²³. Braintree demonstrates North Essex’s EV potential, and there is a real opportunity for the region to promote itself as an exemplar for others to follow within this green economy sector.

In addition, there are many other examples of broader work underway by leading North Essex businesses and initiatives, driving forward green technology and techniques essential to achieving North Essex’s net zero transition. Tevva and Global Marine in Chelmsford are respectively driving forward the technology required to electrify HGVs and offshore wind efficiencies, whilst the I-Construct programme mentioned previously has facilitated new construction and technology ideas that will be central to delivering net zero critical retrofitting activities.

Alongside this – and to the benefit of many of North Essex’s green businesses – Freeport East represents a critical opportunity to boost North Essex’s green and high-growth economic ambitions. Located on Harwich Port, a 112-hectare site is being dedicated to the development of green energy, taking advantage of transport links available from the port and the close proximity to the North Sea’s wind farms. The new green energy hub will focus on the manufacture of wind turbine components, as well as incorporating new nuclear sites – Sizewell and Bradwell. This builds on the 2011 designation of Bradwell B as a site for a potential nuclear reactor. Should this come to fruition, Bradwell B will provide an estimated 3,000 construction jobs for local and regional workers and deliver 900 jobs once completed²⁴. Freeport East’s Harwich site will create an estimated 3,478 new jobs in offshore wind and provide 77,900 square miles of manufacturing and office space²⁵.

Despite the need to build on the excellent progress made to date in delivering North Essex’s net zero transition, the importance of maintaining a balance between the development of green economy infrastructure – like solar panels and EV charging – whilst protecting the region’s outstanding natural beauty for the benefit of residents and the region’s visitor economy is acknowledged. As the region continues its net zero transition, it will be important to continue the promotion of the importance of progressing the region’s new Garden Communities that strike a balance between delivering greener homes and further active travel

opportunities, alongside maintaining and promoting the region’s natural beauty. One of North Essex’s key green economy strengths is the opportunity to promote the region’s rural and coastal characteristics with it important that areas like Maldon’s Promenade Park and Hythe Quay are appropriately protected and promoted as the region continues its net zero transition.

Chelmsford/Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Communities

Both the Chelmsford and Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Communities demonstrate how North Essex is best managing the importance of delivering on its net zero commitments, alongside maintaining the region’s important rural characteristics.

The Chelmsford Garden Community will create a community of around 10,000 new homes and include new employment opportunities in north east Chelmsford. In addition to the new homes to be delivered, the Garden Community will create a new country park, enhanced walking and cycling routes and facilitate new multi functional green infrastructure that will support North Essex in achieving its net zero ambitions. In 2021, an agreement was signed between Chelmsford City Council, Countryside Zest and Homes England to deliver 80 Net Zero Carbon ready homes as part of the new community.

Meanwhile, the Tendring and Colchester Borders Garden Community will be large enough to accommodate new homes and supporting community facilities and services, alongside employment land for businesses and industrial use. It will be served by a network of green and beautiful spaces to promote wildlife, attractive places, healthy living, recreational activity, sustainable drainage and to tackle the climate emergency; new services, facilities and infrastructure, including a new Rapid Transit System (RTS) and a new dual carriageway Link Road between the A120 and the A133.

²² Solar Together. Source: Group-buying for solar | Sussex (solartogether.co.uk)

²³ GRIDSERVE. Source: GRIDSERVE | Braintree

²⁴ Bradwell B Benefits - Bradwell B Project Site

Challenges

Despite the opportunities to build on the region’s green economy strengths, there are challenges that need addressing through collaborative working across North Essex.

The first challenge is the rural/urban divide when it comes to some green economy infrastructure, and the accessibility challenges faced by some residents and businesses. As the tables below demonstrate, it is the more urban North Essex authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – that have the closest number of EV Charging devices, compared to Braintree, recent improvement in the region’s digital within North Essex. The more rural authorities – particularly Maldon – have less EV charging infrastructure and relatively few rapid charging devices²⁶.

EV Charging Devices (2023)

Braintree	Colchester	Chelmsford	Tendring	Uttlesford	Maldon
82	62	44	37	33	14

Rapid Charging Devices (2023)

Braintree	Colchester	Chelmsford	Tendring	Uttlesford	Maldon
82	62	44	37	33	14

The lack of EV charging infrastructure across North Essex is impacting the transition to electric vehicles within the region. It is not practical for many to move away from internal combustion vehicle engines. If North Essex is to achieve its green economy ambitions, further work is required to consider how best to ensure EV charging infrastructure is evenly delivered across the region, ensuring all residents feel it possible to transition to electric vehicle use. Some movement will be seen with Tendring’s REPF funding contributing to EV infrastructure in the district, but more will still need to be done.

Away from the divergence in coverage of some of the region’s green infrastructure, another challenge the region faces is ensuring businesses know of the work already ongoing to deliver progress with the region’s net zero ambitions. Despite some effective partnerships being established to deliver green improvements in the region – for example the partnership between CB Heating and EDF Energy to support heat pump installation – many businesses seem unaware of such partnerships being established. The NEEB wants to work with partners across the region, using its convening role to ensure that those involved in delivering the region’s net zero ambitions collaborate regularly, and work together to scale up effective partnerships already established within the region.

A final challenge is ensuring the region’s residents benefit from the jobs that will become available as the region continues to deliver on its net zero commitments. There is a divergence in skills attainment across the region, and it is vital that North Essex’s residents have an awareness of the good low and high skilled roles the region’s green economy will offer looking ahead to 2030 and 2050. The Essex LSIP found that across the county, there is a paucity of green skills, and this may be partly attributed to a lack of awareness of and engagement with the opportunities available. Achieving this awareness will involve green businesses engaging with the region’s schools, and Further Education and Higher Education institutions ensuring school children and students are aware of the forthcoming green economy opportunities and positioned to gain the skills required to secure the good jobs to follow. connectivity. Despite these strengths, further improvements are required, with North Essex’s critical roads including the A12, A120 and A131 suffering from high levels of congestion and the region inhibited by rural connectivity blackspots, especially when it comes to ultrafast broadband.

²⁶ DfT. Electric vehicle charging devices by local authority. Source: <https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html>

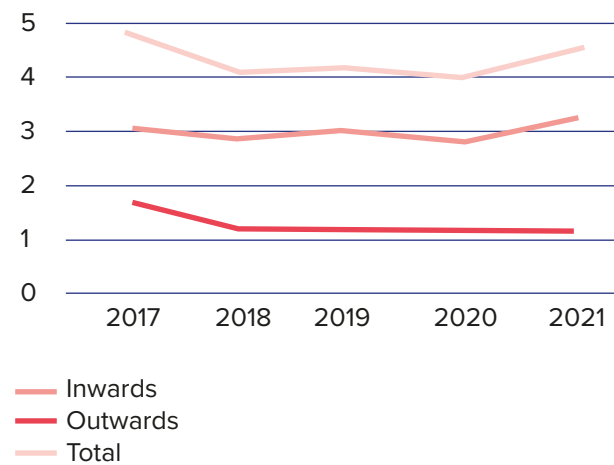
3 A Dynamic and Connected Region

With North Essex’s outward facing transport terminals forming important strategic trading links for the UK and best practice work delivered in the rollout of superfast broadband across the region, it is now imperative the region focuses on how it can drive infrastructure improvements. Specifically, the region should be focusing on how it can increase the region’s roads’ capacity; improve authority-to-authority public transport links; and boost ultrafast broadband availability. These improvements will further North Essex’s economic growth potential, through greater inward investment and businesses establishing themselves in the region.

Opportunities

Starting with the region’s transport infrastructure, one of the key opportunities for the region is to build on its external facing transport terminals – Harwich Port and Stansted Airport. As the region moves on from COVID-19 and looks to build on the post-Brexit landscape, these two international transport terminals will play a leading role in supporting economic growth in the region. Starting with Harwich Port, this international transport terminal plays a vital trade role in the region.

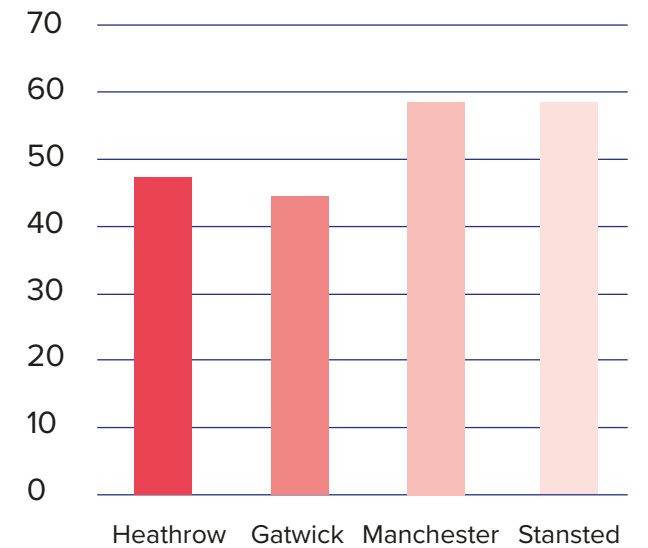
Harwich Port - Freight Volume Tonnage (millions) (2017 - 2021)



It plays a critical role for the UK when it comes to both inward and outward freight trade, importing 3.27 million tonnes of freight and exporting 1.30 million tonnes in 2021. Also of note is the route analysis of the freight’s start and end destinations, with the majority of Harwich Port’s freight trade coming from, and going to, the EU. This is evidenced by the observation that, in 2021, 98.4% of the port’s freight trade went to and from the EU²⁷. As the UK continues to build its relationship with the EU post Brexit, Harwich Port and the North Essex region will play an important role in facilitating prosperous trade links.

Moving to North Essex’s other international transport terminal, Stansted Airport also plays a vital outward facing role for the region. As the graph outlines below, the airport ranks as one of the busiest in the UK, with 23.3 million passengers passing through the airport in 2022²⁸. Alongside passenger demand, the airport – like Harwich Port – also plays an important role in transporting freight across the globe, with it vital the airport’s trading links are best utilised.

Airport Passengers 2022 (Millions)



Away from the region’s international transport terminals, there is an opportunity for the region to build on the internal transport infrastructure improvements underway. With the A120 planned to be widened where it meets the A12, and the A12 itself planned to be widened between junctions 19-25 and 25-29, the region’s road infrastructure is already being improved to accommodate local residents’ and businesses’ needs. With broader transport infrastructure improvements either planned or being made across the region, including the upgrade to the Army and Navy roundabout, the A131 road improvements, and the delivery of the new Beaulieu Park train station (expected to open in late 2025), there are reasons to be optimistic about the region’s internal transport network. The NEEB is keen to

²⁶ DfT. Electric vehicle charging devices by local authority. Source: <https://maps.dft.gov.uk/ev-charging-map/index.html>

²⁷ DfT. Maritime statistics: interactive dashboard. Source: UK maritime statistics: interactive dashboard (dft.gov.uk)

²⁸ UK Civil Aviation Authority. Annual Airport Data 2022. Source: Annual airport data 2022 | Civil Aviation Authority (caa.co.uk)

work with partners to see how further improvements can be delivered to best support North Essex’s residents and businesses.

Whilst transport infrastructure improvements will be critical to supporting the region’s economic growth ambitions, an increase in active travel initiatives will also be vital in ensuring residents and businesses can quickly and efficiently move around North Essex. The region’s new Garden Communities will have active travel at their core, and there are other initiatives and projects underway within the region to boost and promote active travel. Significantly, Colchester secured £19.7 million through round 2 of the Government’s Levelling Up Fund for its ‘Co-Creation: A Contemporary Colchester City Centre’ programme, with parts of this funding to be used to help improve active travel within the city. Specifically, the scheme includes plans to improve walking and cycling routes in the city centre by including a new road layout and removing underpasses at St. Botolph’s roundabout. In addition, the scheme will provide a convenient new hub for storing and hiring bikes, e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and e-scooters²⁹. Investment like this – alongside schemes such as Essex Pedal Power – means North Essex has a real opportunity to promote active travel within the region.

Finally – and away from transport infrastructure – it is important to note the success of the Superfast Essex programme and how this has driven an increase in the number of premises across the region that have access to superfast broadband. All of the North Essex authorities benefit from

over 90% of their premises having access to superfast broadband due to the success of Superfast Essex. As the region looks to address some of the ultrafast broadband challenges seen across the region, it will be important to learn from Superfast Essex’s successes, with collaborative working key to further ultrafast broadband progress.

The Superfast Essex Programme

This programme led by Essex County Council illustrates what can be achieved through effective collaboration between central Government, local authorities and the private sector. Funded by Essex County Council, central Government and network operators (Openreach and Gigaclear) the Superfast Essex programme is working to make superfast and ultrafast broadband available to as many homes and businesses across Essex as possible. To date, significant strides have been made with the delivery of superfast broadband across North Essex and it is imperative the programme continues at pace with the delivery of ultrafast broadband across the region. This includes a focus on some of North Essex’s rural authorities that are currently lagging behind their more urban neighbours.

²⁹ Colchester City Council. Colchester awarded £19.66m funding for Levelling Up (2022). Source: Colchester Awarded £19.66m funding for Levelling Up | Colchester City Council

Challenges

Away from the infrastructure opportunities present within North Essex, there are also challenges that need addressing to help support economic growth across the region.

The first critical challenge – which is understood by the need to deliver road improvements across the region – is the significant volume of congestion residents and businesses experience when commuting. With the high number of SMEs and a significant level of car use when travelling to work, North Essex’s critical roads – including the A120, A12 and A131 – all experience high levels of congestion during peak demand hours. Data presented as part of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 planned widening (junctions 19 – 25) scheme outlines that this stretch of road has 90,000 vehicles passing through it every day, with 9% to 12% of this traffic the result of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), given the importance of this stretch of road to both Felixstowe and Harwich Ports³⁰. Added to this, the data presented below shows Essex as the county with the highest estimated traffic in 2021³¹. Congestion within the region must be reduced to ensure residents and businesses do not continue to lose time in transit and suffer the productivity losses that result.

Highest Estimated Traffic (millions) (2021)

County	Vehicle Miles
Essex	8.5
Hampshire	8.5
Kent	8.4
Surrey	7.4
Hertfordshire	7.6

In addition to the high levels of congestion on the region’s roads, there are clear rural/urban divides when it comes to both transport and digital infrastructure. There is a clear difference in the travel time to key services within the region’s more urban authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – compared to more rural authorities – Maldon and Uttlesford. Alongside the travel time to key services, there is also a rural/urban divide when considering the rollout of ultrafast broadband, with Tendring particularly affected by the different levels of ultrafast broadband rollout across North Essex. If the region is to fulfil its economic potential, it is essential that all parts of North Essex benefit from the same standard of infrastructure, with the NEEB aware of the need to work with partners to ensure the region’s more rural areas benefit from the same standard of infrastructure as the region’s more urban areas.

³⁰ National Highways. A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme (junctions 19 to 25). Source: A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme (junctions 19 to 25) - National Highways

³¹ DfT. Road Traffic Statistics. 2021. Source: Road traffic statistics - Local authorities across Great Britain (dft.gov.uk)

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

With North Essex's successes in securing central government levelling up funding; its thriving third sector; and its distinct urban, rural and coastal characteristics, there is a real chance to advance pride in place and boost residents' confidence and economic engagement within all North Essex authorities. Combining the region's outstanding rural and coastal landscapes with fulfilled and motivated residents and businesses will have a significant impact on the visitor economy, with now the time to begin further promotion of the North Essex opportunity.

Opportunities

Opportunities to build on central Government funding, secured as part of the levelling up agenda, is an important way to deliver prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex in pursuit of further economic growth. The excellent work of North Essex's authorities has resulted in successful bids for various levelling up funding pots, and there is a real opportunity for the region to build on this funding to boost economic growth.

Firstly, two of North Essex's authorities – Colchester and Tendring – secured funding through round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund in January 2023. As outlined under the infrastructure strategic priority above, Colchester secured £19.7m of funding to deliver its 'Co-creation: A Contemporary Colchester City Centre' programme and, alongside this, Tendring secured £19.9m for its 'Clacton Civic Quarter' bid. This funding will rejuvenate a key area of Clacton, delivering 28 new affordable homes, a community hub including a new library, an adult community learning space for upskilling residents, and a space for public sector partners including a proposed University of Essex Centre for Coastal Communities³². In addition to Tendring's Levelling Up

³² Tendring District Council. Clacton Levelling Up Fund Bid. Source: Tendring District Council | Clacton Levelling Up Fund Bid (tendringdc.gov.uk)

Fund round 2 success, the authority is also set to benefit from the Levelling Up Partnerships workstream and an additional £6.7m of funding to support regeneration projects around Dovercourt, announced during the 2023 Spring Budget.

This funding success builds on Colchester's £18.2m Towns Deal and the authorities' UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund allocations, with all funding being put towards boosting pride in place and enhancing prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex. The NEEB is keen to work with partners to promote the success of this funding as projects and programmes are delivered, taking the opportunity to make the case for continued central government and wider investor support to enhance communities within the region, boosting pride in place and furthering economic growth.

Alongside the opportunity to build on the successes in securing central Government funding, there is the opportunity to build on the existing initiatives being delivered within the region to enhance community and wellbeing. The region benefits from a strong third sector involvement, with it important to explore how further collaboration with this sector can boost community and wellbeing to drive economic growth. Existing initiatives include:

- **'Community 360: One Colchester'** – A multi-agency group that provides a local strategic framework to target issues affecting local communities within the authority, with the ultimate outcome of encouraging communities to take charge of their own destiny with an emphasis on community self-help, health and wellbeing; stable homes; safety; prosperity and other outcomes deemed appropriate within the partnership³³.
- **Let's Talk Uttlesford** – This aims to be a safe and trusted online community space where residents can get information and share thoughts and ideas about local issues and initiatives. This includes the Uttlesford Net Zero Hub which provides information on how residents can help support making the authority carbon neutral³⁴.
- **Chelmsford CVS** – An independent support and development organisation set up to champion, support and strengthen local charities, voluntary and community groups. This organisation runs a number of different projects. A particular success story was Chelmsford 100 – a festival which brought together a wide range of individuals and local community groups, asking them to share stories about what living in Chelmsford meant to them³⁵.

³³ Community 360: Together We Thrive. One Colchester. Source: One Colchester - Community 360

³⁴ Let's Talk Uttlesford. Source: Let's talk Uttlesford

³⁵ Chelmsford CVS. Source: Chelmsford CVS - Inspiring Voluntary Action

- **One Maldon District** – A senior level partnership, working together to ensure a healthier and prosperous Maldon District in relation to place, prosperity, community and safety. One Maldon District seeks to maximise collaboration to ensure there is an abundance of opportunities for enhanced health, wellbeing, community safety and feeling of safety within communities across the district³⁶.

With strong foundations already in place in relation to delivering prosperous and inclusive communities across North Essex, there is ample opportunity to ensure successful existing authority-specific initiatives are scaled up to other parts of the region. The NEEB has an important convening role here and will look to work with partners across the region to achieve this.

Finally, it is worth noting how the success of the region's visitor economy links to prosperous and inclusive communities. With its mix of urban, rural and coastal characteristics, North Essex has foundations to build upon when it comes to its visitor economy, with the sector's further success dependent upon the health, wealth and pride of the residents and local businesses that call North Essex home. For the sector to flourish, residents and businesses need to feel engaged with their local areas, demonstrating a willingness to promote North Essex as a visitor destination. Recent central Government investment secured will help achieve this – boosting

pride in place – but there is an important role to play in promoting the region's visitor economy, and the need for more community investment across the region, to strengthen this sector further. There is a strong North Essex opportunity here and collaborative working is critical to strengthening North Essex's visitor economy.

Maldon District Community Container

Exemplifying the work that is ongoing across North Essex to support prosperous and inclusive communities, the Maldon District Community Container is supporting residents in need of help through the creation and running of a storage container stocked with items including food, childcare and household items, cooking equipment, warm packs, supermarket vouchers and other essentials. The container was created following a formal partnership agreed between Maldon District Council, Maldon & District Community and Voluntary Service (CVS), Salvation Army, local Housing Association, Citizen Advice Bureau and other key stakeholders. The Maldon & District CVS ensures items are topped up and use a network of supporting volunteers to manage the container's use. This container has supported many across the authority, including refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine following the devastating recent events within these countries.

³⁶ One Maldon District. Maldon District Council. Source: One Maldon District | One Maldon District | Maldon District Council

Challenges

Despite the opportunities present to enhance North Essex's prosperous and inclusive communities, there are challenges that need to be addressed to achieve this ambition.

Firstly, whilst there are ample examples of existing successful initiatives being delivered within the region to enhance community and wellbeing, scaling these up to become North Essex-wide initiatives can often be challenging and lead to gaps in provision. To ensure that community enhancements are best driving economic growth in the region, it will be important to identify what can prevent the scale up of initiatives, with the NEEB playing an important role in overcoming those challenges.

Additionally, as raised when discussing skilled residents, confidence and optimism in the job market is lacking across the region. North Essex faces issues around supporting inclusive employment, including providing mental health support for both employees and employers. These are significant barriers facing the region and raising morale through community

engagement will have to be addressed in order to achieve inclusive economic growth within North Essex's communities.

Finally, the region faces particular challenges when promoting its visitor economy, impacting the extent to which this sector is contributing to North Essex's economic growth. Specifically, there is much regional competition within the East of England when it comes to the visitor economy, with Suffolk and Norfolk popular destinations for many choosing to holiday within England. Despite these regions' popularity, their offerings align to North Essex's urban, rural and coastal characteristics, with there opportunities for North Essex to rival Norfolk and Suffolk as a holiday destination. Alongside further investment to support the region's visitor economy, there is a need to promote North Essex's positive attributes; improve authority-to-authority transport links; and advertise holiday options all year round to boost the region's visitor economy. Once again, there is an important role for the NEEB to play here, ensuring these challenges are addressed when promoting the North Essex opportunity.



Anglia Ruskin University – Chelmsford Campus

The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of district, city and county councils offering fully funded business support and skills programmes to support economic growth across North Essex. The partnership consists of Maldon, Tendring, Braintree, Uttlesford District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, and Essex County Council. Find out more at www.neeb.org.uk Socials @neebgrowth

Henham Strategy is a public policy and economic development consultancy with a focus on local growth, trade and investment and higher education. We aim to connect local, regional and international actors to stimulate economic growth across the UK.



North Essex's Economic baseline



**North Essex
Economic
Board**



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The North Essex Vision

A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity.

Alongside the North Essex Economic Board's (NEEB) 'North Essex Strategic Narrative', the partnership has undertaken a robust review of national, regional and local datasets to present 'North Essex's Economic Baseline', further informing the 2-year delivery plan presented within the NEEB's 'Delivering for North Essex' plan. This economic baseline has been produced in partnership with Henham Strategy, who have provided an independent voice to the evidencing and identification of the four key strategic priorities and the North Essex Vision. The four strategic priorities will deliver prosperity for the region's residents and businesses, with the 'Delivering for North Essex' plan outlining the short-term actions and long-term ambitions the NEEB will deliver.

Working together, we can leverage North Essex's core strengths...

Our innovative and thriving SME community and cutting edge HE and FE institutions, delivering good, local jobs

Our dynamic and competitive renewable energy generation strengths, driving net zero progression

Our unique strategic location linked to regional and international partners, supporting inward investment

Our proud urban, rural and coastal communities, focused on supporting prosperous residents and businesses

Methodology

In November 2022, Henham Strategy commenced work on developing a robustly evidenced North Essex economic baseline, underpinned by a comprehensive desktop and data analysis review process. This exercise allowed for an understanding of the region's economic opportunities, challenges and risks, alongside a comprehension of areas of collaboration that the NEEB could lead on to drive productivity, innovation and economic growth.

The economic baselines draw on existing material from NEEB authorities and their partners, alongside official statistics from the ONS, Essex Open Data, NOMIS, the Thriving Places Index, central government, and other sources. Data findings were also tested and developed through a series of workshops with councillors, officers, key local businesses and Higher Education and Further Education institutions.

The Data Analysis

To extend and deepen the evidence base and understand how North Essex's economy has comparatively performed in recent years, comparator geographies (and associated data) were used throughout the analysis. As well as using regional level data (at an East of England level) and national data (at an England level), we also analysed four other 'similarly-sized' Local Authority districts that were similar to the NEEB in statistical terms, based on a comparative analysis of publicly available Census 2021 data.

Our approach to the analysis of the four similarly-sized districts is outlined below:

- For each of the six North Essex districts (excluding Essex County Council), we looked at data on 'Population Density', 'Household Size (1 person, 2 people, 3 people, 4 people)', 'Distance Travelled to Work (less than 10km)', 'Distance Travelled to Work (10km and over)', '[Workers] Working Mainly From Home', 'Economically Inactive' and 'Economically Inactive'.
- For each dataset, we found the North Essex average to allow for a comparison to be made to districts across the country we may have wanted to include within our comparative analysis.
- Using the North Essex averages, we found the percentage differences in the statistics recorded for a long list of districts (identified through our strategy analysis stage and an initial analytical review of 'Population Density' data), before calculating the average percentage difference and using this as an indicator to demonstrate which districts were most closely aligned to the six that constitute North Essex.

With North Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Maidstone and Dover identified as the similarly sized districts, and an awareness of the need to analyse data on a regional and national level (East of England and England as a whole), we conducted our data analysis, bringing together district, county, regional and national level data (where possible) for the years 2017 – 2022. This timeframe was identified to help uncover potential COVID-19 and EU Exit impacts outlined within the datasets analysed.

The findings of the data analysis exercise made clear that there were four themes ('key strategic priorities') that united all seven authorities, from which a coherent and compelling 'North Essex Vision' could be built. These were:

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A resilient and outward-facing economy that builds on its incumbent strengths and is positioned to deliver economic opportunities for North Essex's residents, and drive inward investment to support businesses within the region's critical growth sectors.

2 A Green and High Growth Economy

A forward-looking economy that utilises the diversity of its resources in a sustainable way that furthers North Essex's clean energy strengths, boosts growth, and promotes residents' prosperity through net zero commitments.

3 A Dynamic and Connected Region

A well-connected and digitally-linked region that provides residents with quick and reliable access to key services, encourages inward investment, and makes the most of ties to regional and international neighbours.

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A thriving and inclusive region where all residents and businesses have the opportunity to contribute and prosper, exemplifying the region as a great place to live, work and visit.

Stakeholder Workshops

In order to test and refine the analysis underpinning the economic baseline, a series of six workshops were held with key local stakeholders, including councillors from each authority, lead council officers, local businesses, business representative groups, Higher Education and Further Education institutions, and others. The objective of each workshop was to test data findings, strengthen insights and conclusions, and understand their priorities for the 2-year delivery plan the NEEB will lead on. These workshops took place in February and March 2023.

The evidence baseline has then informed the 'Delivering for North Essex' plan, as well as the 'North Essex Strategic Opportunities and Challenges' document, which seeks to draw together North Essex's compelling vision around the four key strategic priorities above.

What has changed since 2019?

As part of the development of North Essex's economic baseline, a robust analysis has been undertaken on the key economic changes that have occurred since 2019, helping to develop an understanding of the current North Essex economic baseline. Predominantly, three key economic events have occurred since the NEEB published its last economic strategy – i) Brexit; ii) COVID-19; and iii) the current cost of living pressures. The impacts of these events on the North Essex economy have been detailed below.

Brexit

The first significant event that provides the economic context in which North Essex now finds itself in is the UK's formal departure from the EU on 31st January 2020. Over three years on from this moment, North Essex is continuing to adapt to the changing business and trading environment that has resulted. Essex Chamber of Commerce surveys have highlighted the extra challenges now placed upon North Essex's SME community, including the increased cost of purchasing from, and transporting to, the EU, artificially high shipping prices, an increase in paperwork and costs due to extra duty charges, and concerns around exports "standing still"¹. In addition, these surveys hone in on some of the recruitment challenges now faced as a result of Brexit, with North Essex businesses now finding it particularly challenging to recruit for 'semi/unskilled' roles².

With recent Office Budget for Responsibility (OBR) forecasts highlighting some of the negative Brexit consequences – including the UK and the EU's new trading relationship likely to reduce long-run productivity by 4% relative to remaining in the EU (as a result of increased trade barriers) – challenges are likely to remain as North Essex and the UK as a whole adapts to its new global position post-Brexit³.

¹ Essex Chambers of Commerce. 2022 First Quarter Economic Survey. Source: EssexQ1QuarterlyEconomicSurveyMarch2022.pdf (essexchambers.co.uk)

² Essex Chambers of Commerce. 2022 First Quarter Economic Survey. Source: EssexQ1QuarterlyEconomicSurveyMarch2022.pdf (essexchambers.co.uk)

³ Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR). Brexit Analysis (2022). Source: Brexit analysis - Office for Budget Responsibility (obr.uk)

Covid-19

The second significant event that provides the economic context in which North Essex now finds itself in is the onset of COVID-19 and the significant economic, health and social consequences that continue to impact the region and beyond. Unmatched in its impact, the pandemic has led to lasting economic behaviour changes that North Essex has had to adapt to, with these changes considered within the ‘Delivering for North Essex’ plan.

Like many other regions across the country, North Essex was significantly impacted by the restrictions enforced to protect people from the virus, with the restrictions’ impact clearly evidenced by North Essex’s claimant count across the pandemic period. Akin to other parts of the country, the region saw large increases in claimant count during the pandemic’s onset, with this variable increasing sharply in all of the NEEB’s constituent members in March 2020. As the pandemic’s first year progressed – and with the furlough scheme’s support – the region’s claimant count remained roughly around the peak recorded in May 2020. As the Government progressed its roadmap out of lockdown, North Essex’s claimant count started to gradually decline, with the rate observed lower than the rate of increase observed in March 2020⁴. This reflects the difficulty people faced getting back into work over the reopening period as the furlough scheme began to wind down.

Whilst the claimant count has fallen across the North Essex authorities following the pandemic period, COVID-19 has left a worrying and long-lasting economic trend that has gained much attention. This trend is the rise in economic inactivity across the pandemic years (2019 – 2020 and 2020 – 2021) and the observation that economic inactivity rates across the country have remained high relative to pre-pandemic levels. This has been observed within North Essex, with **Figure 1** outlining how the North Essex average economic inactivity rate rose considerably at the start of the pandemic (rising from 16.9% to 20.2% between 2018 – 2019 and 2019 – 2020), and stayed above pre-pandemic levels in 2021 – 2022 at 19.5%. Whilst the majority of North Essex’s authorities have seen a fall in their economic inactivity rates in 2021 – 2022, Chelmsford (18.3%) and Tendring (32.1%) saw increases in this year, with Tendring facing particular challenges in reversing the economic inactivity pandemic trend observed⁵.

The cause of this rise in economic inactivity has been much debated, from an increase in early retirees to childcare costs making it unviable for parents to return to the workplace.

North Essex Economic Inactivity (%) (2017 – 2022)

Area	2017 – 2018	2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020	2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022
Braintree	11.3	14.4	16.5	15.6	14.8
Colchester	17.8	12.0	17.1	20.0	18.3
Chelmsford	15.3	20.1	16.5	15.8	18.3
Tendring	17.1	20.7	31.3	31.3	32.1
Maldon	17.0	15.3	21.0	21.5	15.3
Uttlesford	19.4	18.9	8.8	24.3	18.0
Essex	18.4	19.7	20.2	20.6	18.9
North Essex Average	16.3	16.9	20.2	21.4	19.5

Figure 1: North Essex Economic Inactivity Rates (2017 – 2022)



Colchester Castle

⁴ Essex Open Data. COVID-19 Economic Impacts Report (2022). Source: COVID-19 Economic Impacts Report | Essex Open Data

⁵ NOMIS. Labour Market Profiles (Essex) (2022). Source: Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics

Away from North Essex’s changed economic inactivity picture, the final COVID-19 related change to note is the dramatic adoption and acceptance of hybrid working within workplaces across the region. With little choice during lockdowns, much of the working world switched to full working from home arrangements, with today’s working arrangements for many businesses reflective of employees’ desire to keep some element of home working, alongside commuting to collaborative office spaces. This change in workplace attitudes it illustrated when comparing Census 2021 and 2019 ONS working from home data.

Figure 2 below illustrates the Census 2021 data collated for the North Essex authorities, with Tendring the North Essex authority that recorded the lowest proportion of its workers working from home – 22.9% – and Uttlesford the

highest proportion – 39.4% – in 2021⁶. These figures are significantly higher than the ONS data collated in 2019 for the East of England as a whole that outlined that only 5.5% of workers in this region worked mainly from home prior to the pandemic’s onset⁷.

The increase and continued retention of hybrid working patterns within the workplace has had a significant impact on the structure of regional economies, with commuting patterns, high street footfall and retail/leisure expenditure all still being impacted by the new ways of working. This impact has been considered during the development of the ‘Delivering for North Essex’ plan, with a strong awareness of the impact this critical change has had on the North Essex economy.

North Essex Authorities - Census 2021: Mainly Working From Home

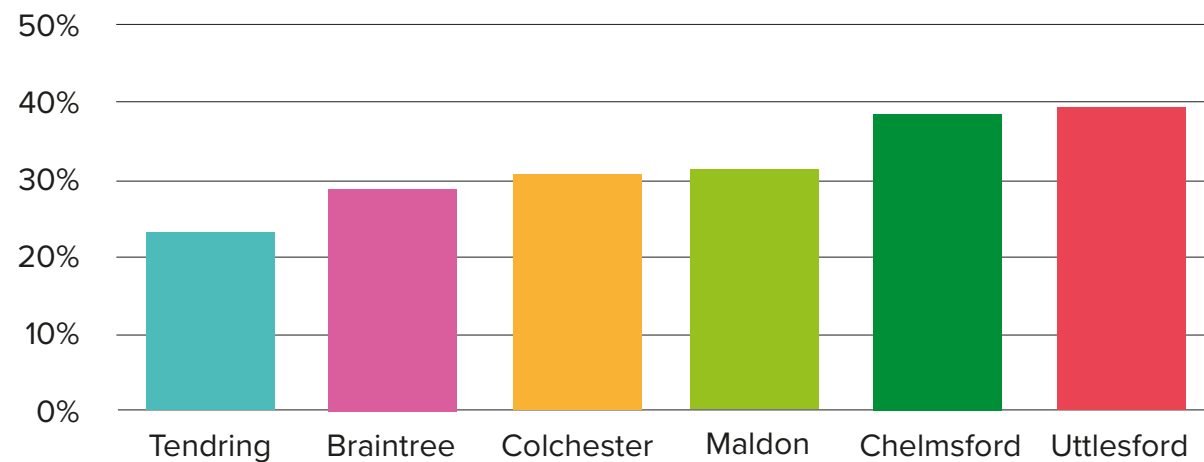


Figure 2: North Essex Authorities – Census 2021: Mainly Working from Home

⁶ ONS. Percentage of workers who work mainly at or from home (Census 2021). Source: Method of travel to workplace - Census Maps, ONS

⁷ ONS. Coronavirus and Homeworking in the UK Labour Market: 2019. Source: Coronavirus and homeworking in the UK labour market - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Cost of Living Pressures

The impact of the continued cost of living pressures within North Essex is best evidenced through published Essex Open Data⁸. Through in-depth interviews with 20 participants from across Essex, an understanding has been collated on experiences around the increasing cost of living; the impact this is having on people’s day-to-day lives as well as bigger life decisions being made or considered; and what things may help ease pressures. Key points from this research include:

- Some are experiencing the cost-of living increase much more harshly than others. Groups particularly impacted include those not working and in receipt of welfare (due to disabilities), families with children where only one parent is working, and single parent families.
- The cost of living is impacting on day to-day wellbeing, as well as life decisions and milestones. Many residents across Essex feel they are ‘surviving’ rather than living due to the removal of non-essential spending from budgets, whilst some are struggling to even afford the essentials such as food and heating. Many are also postponing key life-decisions.

- All are making lifestyle changes and cutbacks, but some residents have no other options to address cost of living pressures. Essex residents are making lifestyle changes to save money, with these including small behaviour changes to more significant sacrifices.

The challenges many North Essex residents have faced in light of the recent cost of living pressures are widely acknowledged, with this macroeconomic impact a key difference considered since publication of the 2019 economic strategy.

⁸ Essex Open Data. Cost of Living Qualitative Research (2023). Source: Cost of living qualitative research | Essex Open Data

North Essex's Strategic Priorities

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

The data analysis was clear that North Essex has incumbent key sector strengths, growth sector potential and SME foundations that are robust building blocks for future economic growth.

In regard to North Essex's incumbent sector strengths, the most recent Gross Value Added (GVA) data, which measures economic contribution, demonstrates North Essex's several incumbent sector strengths. First and foremost, the region benefits from a strong 'Real Estate and Activities' sector, with this contributing £3.1 billion of GVA to the North Essex economy in 2020⁹. This sector produced the greatest output for all six North Essex authorities in 2020. **Figure 3** outlines the top three sectors – in terms of GVA – for every North Essex authority in 2020.

Alongside North Essex's incumbent strengths in 'Real Estate Activities', the region also has strengths within the 'Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles', 'construction' and 'manufacturing' sectors. It is also important to note the diversity present within North Essex's economy – with Braintree having a specific incumbent strength within the 'Financial and insurance activities' sector and Colchester seeing a specific incumbent strength within the 'Human health and social work activities' sector.

⁹ ONS. Regional Gross Value Added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by ITL1 region (2022). Source: Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by ITL1 region - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

North Essex Authorities – Top 3 Sectors (GVA) in 2020

Braintree		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£500
2	Financial and insurance activities	£433
3	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	£374

Chelmsford		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£820
2	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	£568
3	Construction	£544

Colchester		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£726
2	Human health and social work activities	£548
3	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	£492

Maldon		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£235
2	Construction	£192
3	Manufacturing	£188

Tendring		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£426
2	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles	£250
3	Manufacturing	£167

Uttlesford		
No.	Sector	Value (m)
1	Real estate activities	£406
2	Construction	£249
3	Transportation and Storage	£222

Figure 3: North Essex Authorities – Top 3 Sectors (GVA) in 2020

Building on the understanding of North Essex’s incumbent sector strengths, it is important to reflect on the number of businesses that operate within certain sectors, to provide a picture of where North Essex’s most prominent employment opportunities can be found. Referring to ONS Business Count data, we see that the sector with the greatest number of businesses within North Essex, in 2022, was the ‘Construction’ sector, with a total of 6,885 businesses¹⁰. Aligning to this observation, the same data indicates that the ‘Construction’ sector saw the greatest increase in the number of businesses within North Essex between 2017 and 2022, with 1,305 businesses establishing themselves within this sector¹¹. **Figure 4** outlines the top 3 sectors that saw the greatest increase in businesses between 2017 and 2022 within North Essex.

¹⁰NOMIS. UK Business Counts – enterprises by industry and employment size band (2022). Source: UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

¹¹NOMIS. UK Business Counts – enterprises by industry and employment size band (2022). Source: UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)



North Essex Authorities – Top 3 Sectors in terms of business increase (2017 – 2022)

Braintree		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	165
2	Administrative and support service activities	85
3	Accommodation and food service activities	60

Chelmsford		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	225
2	Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	110
3	Transportation and storage	75

Colchester		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	450
2	Accommodation and food service activities	40
3	Administrative and support service activities	167

Maldon		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	100
2	Transportation and storage	250
3	Real Estate Activities	20

Tendring		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	160
2	Transportation and storage	100
3	Accommodation and food service activities	65

Uttlesford		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Construction	205
2	Administration and support service activities	100
3	Accommodation and food service activities	25

Figure 4: North Essex Authorities – Top 3 Sectors in terms of business increase (2017 – 2022)

The large number of businesses operating within North Essex’s ‘Construction’ sector reflects another important characteristic of the region’s business landscape – the large proportion of SMEs delivering North Essex’s economic output. The UK defines an SME as an enterprise that employs fewer than 250 employees, with **Figure 5** illustrating the high proportion of SMEs operating within North Essex. 90% of North Essex’s businesses are defined as ‘Micro’, meaning they employ between 0 and 9 employees. Illustrating the importance of this North Essex characteristic further, there were only 95 businesses within North Essex defined as ‘Large’, meaning they employ over 250 people in 2022, with these businesses accounting for just 0.3% of North Essex’s business population¹².

Away from North Essex’s incumbent business strengths and characteristics, Cambridge Insights’ forecasts provide a view on the roles that are likely to see the greatest growth in terms of employment in the lead up to 2040. Given population growth and areas of North Essex having relatively high levels of elderly residents, it is no surprise that for some of the North Essex authorities – Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Maldon – ‘Caring Personal Service Occupations’ roles are expected to see the greatest employment growth over this time period. For Braintree and Colchester, employment growth over this time period is expected to be greatest within ‘Skilled Agricultural Trades’ roles, whilst for Tendring, the authority is expected to see the greatest employment growth in terms of ‘Corporate Managers’¹³. **Figure 6** outlines the top three roles the Cambridge Insight modelling suggests will see the greatest percentage increase in employment growth leading up to 2040 for each North Essex authority.

Percentage of Micro Sized Businesses within North Essex (2022)

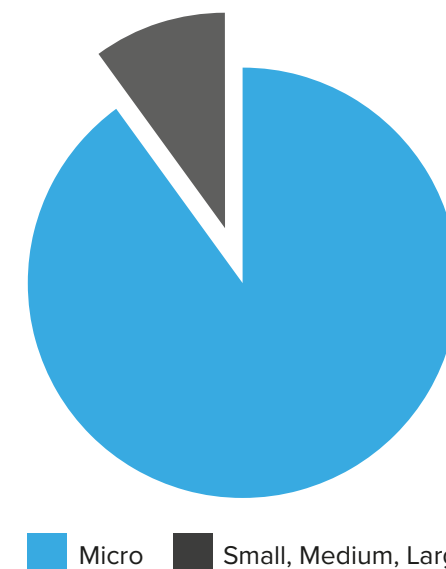


Figure 5: Percentage of Micro Sized Business within North Essex (2022)

¹² NOMIS. UK Business Counts – enterprises by industry and employment size band (2022). Source: Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

¹³ Cambridge Insight. East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) (2019). Source: Cambridgeshire Insight – East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM)

North Essex Authorities – Top 3 roles in terms of expected employment increases (up to 2040)

Braintree		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Skilled Agricultural Trades	57
2	Caring Personal Services Occupations	33
3	Health and Social Welfare Associate Professionals	27

Chelmsford		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Caring Personal Services Occupations	34
2	Corporate Managers	31
3	Health and Social Welfare Associate Professionals	30

Colchester		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Skilled Agricultural Trades	44
2	Caring Personal Services Occupations	41
3	Managers and Proprietors in Agriculture and Services	39

Maldon		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Caring Personal Service Occupations	40
2	Health and Social Welfare Associate Professionals	33
3	Customer Service Occupations	33

Tendring		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Corporate Managers	39
2	Caring Personal Service Occupations	38
3	Customer Service Occupations	37

Uttlesford		
No.	Sector	Number of Businesses
1	Caring Personal Services Occupations	47
2	Health and Social Welfare Associate Professionals	37
3	Health Professionals	

Figure 6: North Essex Authorities – Top 3 roles in terms of expected employment increases, up to 2040. The percentage increase has been calculated by taking the number jobs in 2022 and finding the percentage difference between the expected number of jobs in 2040

This analysis links to the strategic analysis undertaken by the North Essex authorities within their own economic strategies, with Essex CC's Sector Development Strategy providing insights into the growth sectors that North Essex – and the broader county – are expected to prioritise over the coming years to boost economic growth and drive prosperity across the region. These growth sectors are expected to focus on 'Construction and Retrofit', 'Clean Energy', 'Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering', 'Digital Tech' and 'Life Sciences'¹⁴. These growth sectors build on North Essex's incumbent strengths outlined within the data above, and will provide new and career progressing jobs for many residents across the region.

Shifting focus to the skilled residents elements of this strategic priority, to secure the good jobs the North Essex region is expected to benefit from, North Essex's residents need to have the opportunities and confidence to develop requisite skills.

When looking at North Essex's current skills levels, it is clear there is a divergence in attainment across the region. The latest Census 2021 data has been used to establish the skills baseline for the NEEB's 2-year delivery plan, providing detail of the relative skills attainment levels across the North Essex region. **Figure 7** outlines the North Essex average in terms of skills attainment at differing levels, and how these figures compare to regional and national comparators.

Skills Attainment (2021) – North Essex, East of England and England as a whole

Area	No Qualifications	Apprenticeships	NVQ Levels Levels 1, 2 and 3	NVQ Level 4
North Essex Average	18.1%	5.8%	44.5%	29.0%
East of England	18.1%	5.5%	42.0%	31.6%
England as Whole	18.2%	5.3%	39.9%	33.9%

Figure 7: Skills Attainment (2021) across North Essex, the East of England and England as a whole

¹⁴ Essex County Council. Essex Sector Development Strategy (2022). Source: Plans and strategies: Sector development strategy - Essex County Council

North Essex performs relatively well compared to the East of England and England as a whole when it comes to mid-lower skills level attainment, with a higher proportion of its working age population involved in apprenticeships and having attained NVQ skills up to level 3 (equivalent to 2 or more A levels or VCEs, 4 or more AS levels) when compared to regional and national comparators. Despite this success, North Essex compares less favourably when considering the proportion of its working age population that has secured skills at NVQ level 4 and above (equivalent to a degree (BA, BSc) or higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE)), with both the East of England and England as a whole recording higher percentages for this skills metric. This suggests North Essex has a relatively smaller proportion of high skilled workers compared to the regional and national comparators¹⁵.

Alongside comparing the North Essex average to the regional and national comparators, it is also important to note

the differences in skills attainment seen within the North Essex region. Taking the ‘NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3’ and ‘NVQ Level 4’ metrics, there is a clear divergence in the proportion of lower and higher skilled workers across the North Essex authorities. This diversity is highlighted in **Figure 8**.

Whilst there is some consistency to the proportion of workers across the North Essex authorities with skills attained up to NVQ level 3, there is a strong divergence when reviewing the proportion of working age populations within the North Essex authorities that have attained skills at NVQ level 4 and above. This divergence is observed by the difference between the highest ranking North Essex authority for this metric – Uttlesford – and the lowest ranking North Essex authority for this metric – Tendring – with a difference of 16.7% recorded¹⁶. This diversity in skills attainment across the region is an important consideration within the NEEB’s ‘Delivering for North Essex’ plan.

Skills Attainment (2021) – Lower and Higher Skilled Workers Divergence across North Essex

Area	NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3	NVQ Level 4
Braintree	47.2%	25.8%
Chelmsford	43.1%	33.9%
Colchester	44.6%	32.2%
Maldon	45.9%	25.4%
Tendring	43.8%	19.9%
Uttlesford	42.3%	36.6%

Figure 8: Skills Attainment (2021) – Lower and Higher Skilled Workers Divergence across North Essex

¹⁵ ONS. Education: Highest level of qualification (Census 2021). Source: Highest level of qualification - Census Maps, ONS

¹⁶ ONS. Education: Highest level of qualification (Census 2021). Source: Highest level of qualification - Census Maps, ONS

Whilst local authority data for T levels is not available, apprenticeship data provides some insight into the kind of vocational training available. The 2021 – 2022 data is shown in **Figure 9**. The number of apprenticeship uptakes are expectedly higher in Colchester and Chelmsford, as the urban districts, and lower in Uttlesford and Maldon, as the more rural districts. Tendring sees higher than expected levels of apprenticeship starts, closer to Braintree’s numbers. One significant trend is low, although similar, levels of vocational attainment across authorities¹⁷.

Finally, on skills, it is worth noting the productivity of North Essex’s working population, with this being a key factor in driving economic growth. Referring to ONS data outlining the GVA per hour worked, the North Essex region has seen an increase in productivity since 2017, 17 recording a figure of £32.4 in 2020¹⁸. **Figure 10** illustrates this increase and shows how the region compares to the East of England and England as a whole.

Apprenticeship Starts and Achievements (2021 – 2022)

Area	Starts	Achievement	Participation
Braintree	870	360	1850
Chelmsford	1030	450	2240
Colchester	1060	440	2230
Maldon	360	130	790
Tendring	800	310	1680
Uttlesford	490	170	980

Figure 9: Apprenticeship Starts and Achievements (2021 – 2022)

¹⁷ GOV.UK. Apprenticeships and traineeships. Source: Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

¹⁸ ONS. Subnational productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district (2022). Source: Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Whilst North Essex’s productivity has been rising between 2017-2020, the region’s productivity has consistently ranked below that of the East of England and England as a whole. The differences in 2020 are quite significant, with the East of England’s GVA per hour £2.8 greater in 2020, and England as whole £5.9 greater¹⁹. With North Essex lagging behind regional and national productivity comparators, it is essential actions are delivered to drive up productivity to help boost economic growth in the region.

Productivity - GVA Per Hour (£)

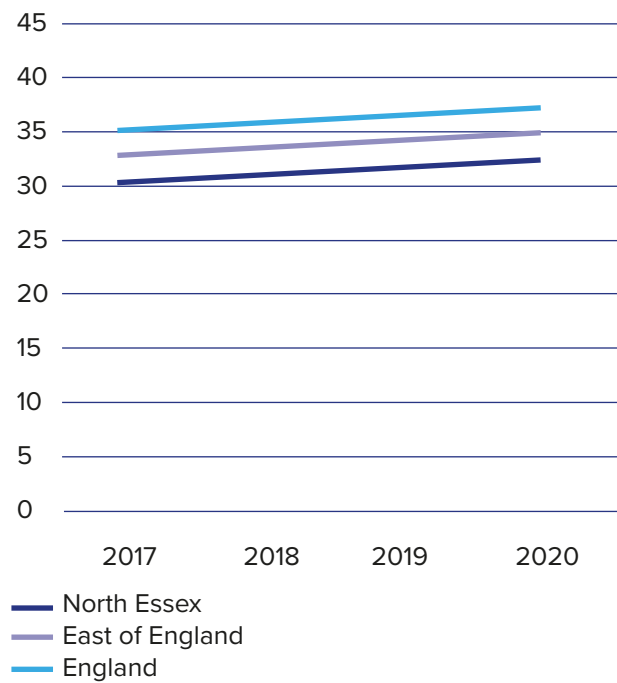


Figure 10: Productivity – GVA per hour (£) for the North Essex region, East of England and England as a whole between 2017 and 2020

¹⁹ ONS. Subnational productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district (2022). Source: Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

2 A Green and High Growth Economy

Local Authorities across the country are playing a vital role in supporting the UK to achieve its net zero objectives. In terms of establishing North Essex’s baseline for this area, data on the region’s renewable electricity capacity and generation has been collated, alongside data on attitudes towards the green economy and progress made in making households across the region more energy efficient.

Starting with renewable electricity capacity and generation, North Essex has the potential to build on its incumbent strengths in this space, positioning itself as a renewable energy exemplar. In 2021, the North Essex region had a renewable electricity capacity of 563.3 MW, with this capacity generating roughly 1 million MWh of renewable electricity in the same year²⁰. The regional renewable electricity strengths are driven by three main sources of energy – onshore wind, offshore wind and solar power, with **Figure 11** outlining the amount of renewable electricity each of the North Essex authorities generated from these sources in 2021.

²⁰ BEIS. National Statistics – Regional Renewable Energy Statistics. Source: Regional Renewable Statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

North Essex's Renewable Electricity Generation (2021) (MWh)

Area	Onshore Wind	Offshore Wind	Solar Power
Braintree	132	0	31,720
Chelmsford	76	0	10,783
Colchester	85	0	83,745
Maldon	152,931	0	10,311
Tendring	28,122	513,080	71,442
Uttlesford	41	0	44,322

Figure 11: North Essex's Renewable Electricity Generation (2021) (MWh) from onshore wind, offshore wind and solar power sources

Both Maldon and Tendring have particular strengths when it comes to onshore wind generation, whilst Tendring – given its coastal characteristics – is the only North Essex authority to benefit from offshore wind renewable electricity generation. In contrast to these sources of renewable electricity – where there are clear divergences in generation – all of the North Essex authorities generate a good amount of renewable electricity from solar power, with Colchester leading the way when considering this energy source. Building on these renewable electricity generation strengths will be essential as the region looks to benefit from the green skills and jobs required to deliver net zero commitments.

Away from the region's renewable electricity capacity and generation statistics, another important aspect to understanding North Essex's green economy baseline is residents' attitudes towards the green economy and the extent to which residents are invested in supporting the delivery of net zero commitments. As a proxy for this measurement, data has been collated on the North Essex authorities' recycling rates, with a high recycling rate taken as an indication of residents' willingness to support the environment and avert negative climate consequences. **Figure 12** outlines the recycling rates for the six NEEB authorities²¹.

Percentage of North Essex's Household Waste Recycled (2019/20)



Figure 12: Percentage of North Essex's Household Waste Recycled (2019/20)

There is a divergence across North Essex in terms of household waste recycling rates, with Tendring having the lowest recycling rates, and Maldon the highest. Whilst an interesting perspective on the relative green engagement within North Essex, it is important to consider how these rates compare to other local authorities across the country, to have a view on how the North Essex region compares to other areas when it comes to green engagement. Reviewing broader local authority data available, all North Essex's authorities – aside from Tendring – ranked in the top 50% of local authorities in terms of household waste recycled, with Colchester and Maldon ranking in the top 25%²². This suggests there is a fairly positive engagement with green actions, when taking household recycling rates as

a proxy for this engagement. However, it does appear that progress is needed with regards to attitudes towards the green economy, with Essex recording a relatively low level of conversation sites in positive management (36%) compared to some of its neighbours, including Norfolk who recorded a positive management rate of 74% in 2021/22²³.

²¹NimbleFins. Which English Councils are best and worst at recycling? Top 10 and bottom 10 revealed. Source: Which English Councils are Best and Worst at Recycling? Top 10 and Bottom 10 Revealed | NimbleFins

²²NimbleFins. Which English Councils are best and worst at recycling? Top 10 and bottom 10 revealed. Source: Which English Councils are Best and Worst at Recycling? Top 10 and Bottom 10 Revealed | NimbleFins

²³GOV.UK. ENV10 – Local sites in positive conservation management. Source: ENV10 - Local sites in positive conservation management - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

In addition to household waste recycling rates and positive conservation site management, another important statistic to consider when understanding North Essex's green economy baseline is the extent to which its households are energy efficient across the region, with the type of central heating used within households a useful metric to consider when understanding a region's relative green impact. Using Census 2021 data, **Figure 13** provides a view on how the North Essex region compares to the East of England and England as a whole in terms of the type of central heating utilised within households²⁴.

Whilst North Essex records a similar percentage to the East of England and England as a whole when considering renewable energy only and electric-only central heating, there are strong divergences when it comes to mains gas only and oil only. Less central heating is provided in North Essex through mains gas and more through oil, when compared with the regional and national comparators. The relatively high proportion of central heating systems being fuelled by oil only is largely explained by the relatively high proportion of this fuel being used within Maldon, Tendring and Braintree, as **Figure 14** demonstrates.

Percentage Central Heating Source (2021) – North Essex, East of England and England as whole

Area	Mains Gas Only	Electric Only	Oil Only	Renewable Energy Only
North Essex Average	66.0%	9.8%	10.5%	0.7%
East of England	70.1%	9.5%	7.2%	0.7%
England as Whole	74.0%	8.7%	3.2%	0.4%

Figure 13: Type of Central Heating (2021) – North Essex, East of England and England as a whole (main types of central heating – alongside renewable energy only source)

Percentage of Central Heating Fuelled by Oil Only in North Essex (2021)

Area	Percentage
Braintree	10.8%
Chelmsford	5.3%
Colchester	6.2%
Maldon	19.8%
Tendring	4.7%
Uttlesford	16.3%

Figure 14: Percentage of Central Heating Fuelled by Oil Only in North Essex (2021)

Central to North Essex's future economic prosperity will be the effective transition to a green and high-growth economy, with the data above illustrating how the region can look to build on its strong renewable electricity generation foundations, facilitate further resident engagement to promote the importance of green actions, and continue to work to consider how households can be made more energy efficient through the use of cleaner energy sources. This has all been considered within the development of North Essex's 2-year delivery plan.

²⁴ ONS. Housing. Type of central heating in household. (Census 2021). Source: Type of central heating in household - Census Maps, ONS

3

A Dynamic and Connected Region

With the green and high-growth economy strategic priority referencing key aspects of North Essex's green economy infrastructure, it is appropriate that the next area central to the region's baseline focuses on broader transport and digital infrastructure, critical enablers for economic growth.

Starting with transport, it is clear a rural/urban divide exists within the region, with those from the more rural authorities – in particular Maldon and Uttlesford – facing greater transport challenges when compared to the more urban authorities of Colchester and Chelmsford. This divide is best evidenced by 2019 data that illustrates the time it takes to get to key services by public transport/walking. As highlighted in **Figure 15**, the more rural authorities of Maldon and Uttlesford see the greatest time taken to get to key services by public transport/walking, with average journey times of 28 and 27 minutes respectively when travelling by these modes of transport. In contrast, North Essex's more urban authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – see much shorter average journey times, 19 and 18 minutes respectively²⁵.

Average Journey Time to Key Services by Public Transport/Walking in 2019 (minutes)



Figure 15: Average Journey Time to Key Services by Public Transport/Walking in 2019 (minutes)

In addition to analysing North Essex’s public transport infrastructure – and the divergence in coverage across the region – Census 2021 data has been used as a way of understanding the demands placed on the different parts of the region’s transport infrastructure when its residents travel to work. Whilst some of the travel to work Census 2021 data is likely to have been impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place during the first half of 2021, this data provides a proxy for the relative demand for different modes of transport when residents within the North Essex region are travelling to work.

The first Census 2021 travel to work data to note is the relative distances those living in different parts of North Essex travel to get to work. As **Figure 16** demonstrates, there is once again a rural/urban divide within North Essex, with a greater proportion of residents from the more rural North Essex authorities having to travel more than 10km to get to work, with Braintree the North Essex authority with the highest proportion when considering this metric²⁶.

²⁶ ONS. Work: Distance travelled to work (Census 2021). Source: Distance travelled to work - Census Maps, ONS

Proportion of workers travelling more than 10km to get to work (2021)

Area	Percentage
Braintree	29.7%
Maldon	28.8%
East of England	26.3%
Uttlesford	26.2%
Tendring	25.6%
Essex	22.6%
England	21.8%
Chelmsford	20.1%
Colchester	18.7%

Figure 16: Percentage of Central Heating Fuelled by Oil Only in North Essex (2021)

In a similar fashion to the average journey time to key services by public transport/walking statistics, it is only Colchester and Chelmsford that recorded statistics less than those recorded for Essex, the East of England and England as a whole – reflective of the authorities’ urban characteristics.

Linked to the distances travelled to get to work, much of the congestion seen on North Essex’s critical roads – including the A120, A12 and A131 – can be explained by the dominance of the use of cars/vans as the main mode of transport for getting to work in North Essex. As **Figure 17** demonstrates, car/van use is particularly prominent within Tendring, Braintree and Maldon as the main mode of transport to get to work, with these authorities ranking

²⁷ ONS. Work: Method of travel to workplace (Census 2021). Source: Method of travel to workplace - Census Maps, ONS

above the percentages recorded for Essex, the East of England and England as a whole. Once again, it is North Essex’s more urban authorities – Chelmsford and Colchester – where we see the lowest use of cars/vans, with Uttlesford – likely due to the high proportion of its workers working mainly from home – also recording relatively low car/van use in journeys to work²⁷.

Proportion of workers driving a car or van to work (2021) (%)

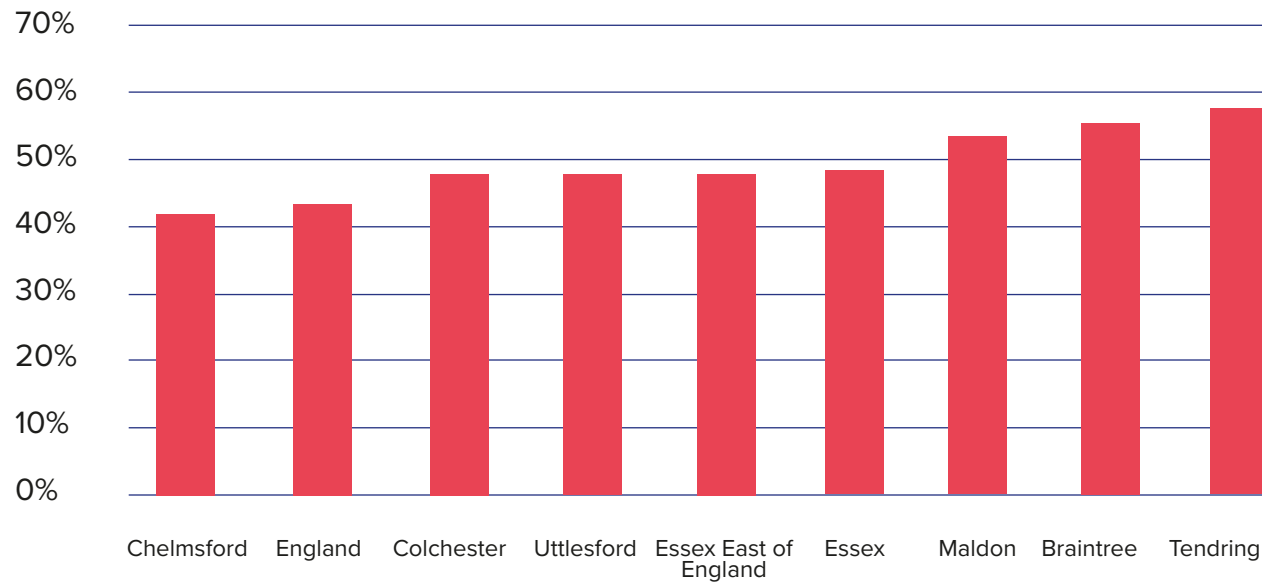


Figure 17: Proportion of workers driving a car or van to work (2021) (%)

From an active travel perspective, it is also worth noting that the only two North Essex authorities to rank above figures recorded for the East of England and England as a whole for the proportion of workers travelling to work on foot are Colchester and Tendring. As Figure 18 demonstrates,

the North Essex authorities with the lowest percentages of workers walking to work are Maldon and Uttlesford, with these two North Essex authorities ranking below the figure recorded for Essex CC²⁸.

Proportion of workers travelling to work on foot (2021) (%)

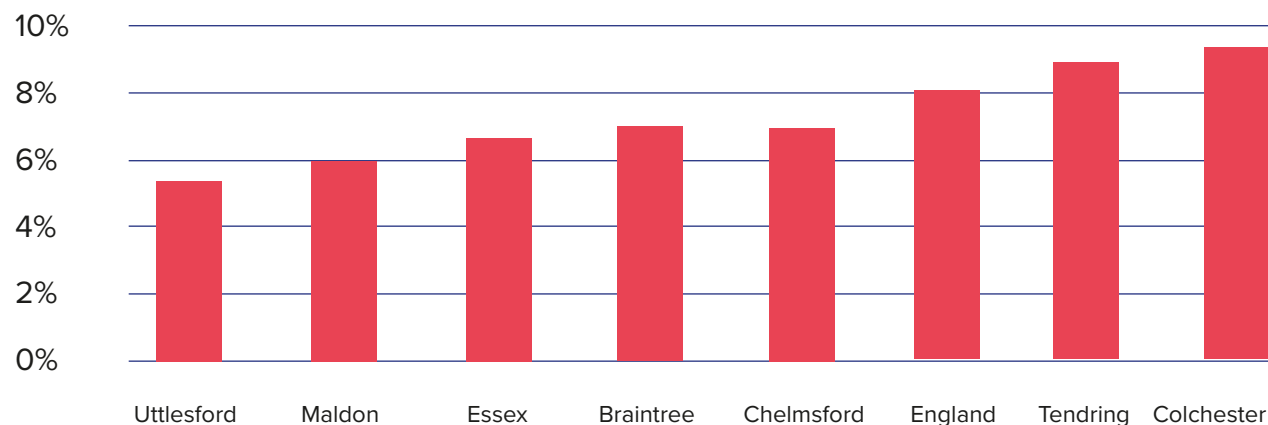


Figure 18: Proportion of workers driving a car or van to work (2021) (%)

²⁸ ONS. Work. Method of travel to workplace (Census 2021). Source: Method of travel to workplace - Census Maps, ONS

Away from transport infrastructure, Ofcom data presented in Figure 19, has been reviewed to consider the region’s relative digital connectivity, to understand the improvements that could be made to this economic enabler to help stimulate economic growth.

Starting with the number of premises with access to superfast broadband, the data shows that every North Essex authority performs well in terms of access to this broadband speed, with the lowest ranking North Essex authority – Uttlesford – still seeing 94.5% of its premises having access to superfast broadband. Tendring is the North Essex authority with the greatest proportion of its premises with access to superfast broadband, recording a figure of 97.8%²⁹. The high proportion of premises across North Essex with access likely reflects Essex CC’s ‘Superfast Essex’ programme successes³⁰.

The story is a little different when considering statistics collated for ultrafast – or gigabit – broadband, with divergence across the region in terms of the number

of premises with access to this level of broadband speed. The more urban North Essex authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – recorded the highest proportion of premises with access to ultrafast broadband, with figures of 66.2% and 63.0% respectively. Whilst Colchester and Chelmsford were the North Essex authorities with the highest proportion of ultrafast premises, the authorities ranked below 3 of the 4 similarly sized authorities included within the comparative analysis undertaken, with North Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire and Maidstone recording figures of 75.7%, 71.1% and 69.4% respectively. This suggests the North Essex region is behind other parts of the country in terms of ultrafast broadband rollout, with this observation reinforced when considering the North Essex authorities with the lowest proportion of premises with ultrafast broadband availability – Braintree and Tendring – who recorded figures of 48.6% and 14.8% respectively³¹. The transport and digital connectivity baseline has been considered within North Essex’s 2-year delivery plan, with this infrastructure critical to North Essex’s economic growth.

Superfast Broadband		Ultrafast Broadband	
Authority	Premises %	Authority	Premises %
Tendring	97.8	Colchester	66.2
Essex	96.9	Chelmsford	63.0
Braintree	96.8	Uttlesford	59.4
Colchester	96.2	Maldon	58.7
Chelmsford	96.1	Essex	58.1
Maldon	96.0	Braintree	48.6
Uttlesford	94.5	Tendring	14.8

Figure 19: North Essex’s Superfast and Ultrafast Broadband Coverage (2022) (%)

²⁹ Ofcom. Connected Nations 2022 (Superfast Broadband). Source: Connected Nations 2022 - Ofcom

³⁰ Superfast Essex. Source: Superfast Essex

³¹ Ofcom. Connected Nations 2022 (Ultrafast Broadband). Source: Connected Nations 2022 - Ofcom

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

Data indicators for North Essex's prosperous and inclusive communities have been considered to provide a robust understanding of how the 2-year delivery plan's actions can best facilitate economic growth for everyone within North Essex, ensuring no-one is left behind as the region looks to build on its incumbent strengths and seize future growth opportunities.

When understanding North Essex's community strengths, it is first important to understand the region's age demographics. **Figure 20** shows the North Essex authorities with the highest proportion of their populations aged 15 and under are Uttlesford, Colchester and Chelmsford, recording figures of 19.5%, 18.9% and 18.6% respectively. Tendring is the North Essex authority with the lowest proportion of its population aged 15 and under, recording a figure of 15.8%. Moving to those of working age, the more urban North Essex authorities – Colchester and Chelmsford – have the greatest proportion of their populations of working age, recording figures of 63.3%

and 62.0% respectively. Once again, Tendring is the North Essex authority with the lowest proportion, with only 54.6% of its population of working age. Finally, it is North Essex's more rural authorities – Tendring, Maldon, Braintree and Uttlesford – that have the highest proportion of their populations aged 65 and over, recording figures of 29.6%, 25.0%, 20.4% and 20.2% respectively³². Clearly, a rural/urban divide exists when considering North Essex's demographics, with the region's more urban authorities (not considering Uttlesford) having a higher proportion of younger residents, whilst the more rural authorities have a high proportion of older residents. This is an important consideration, with there likely being differing demands across the region that reflects the contrasting demographics across the North Essex authorities.

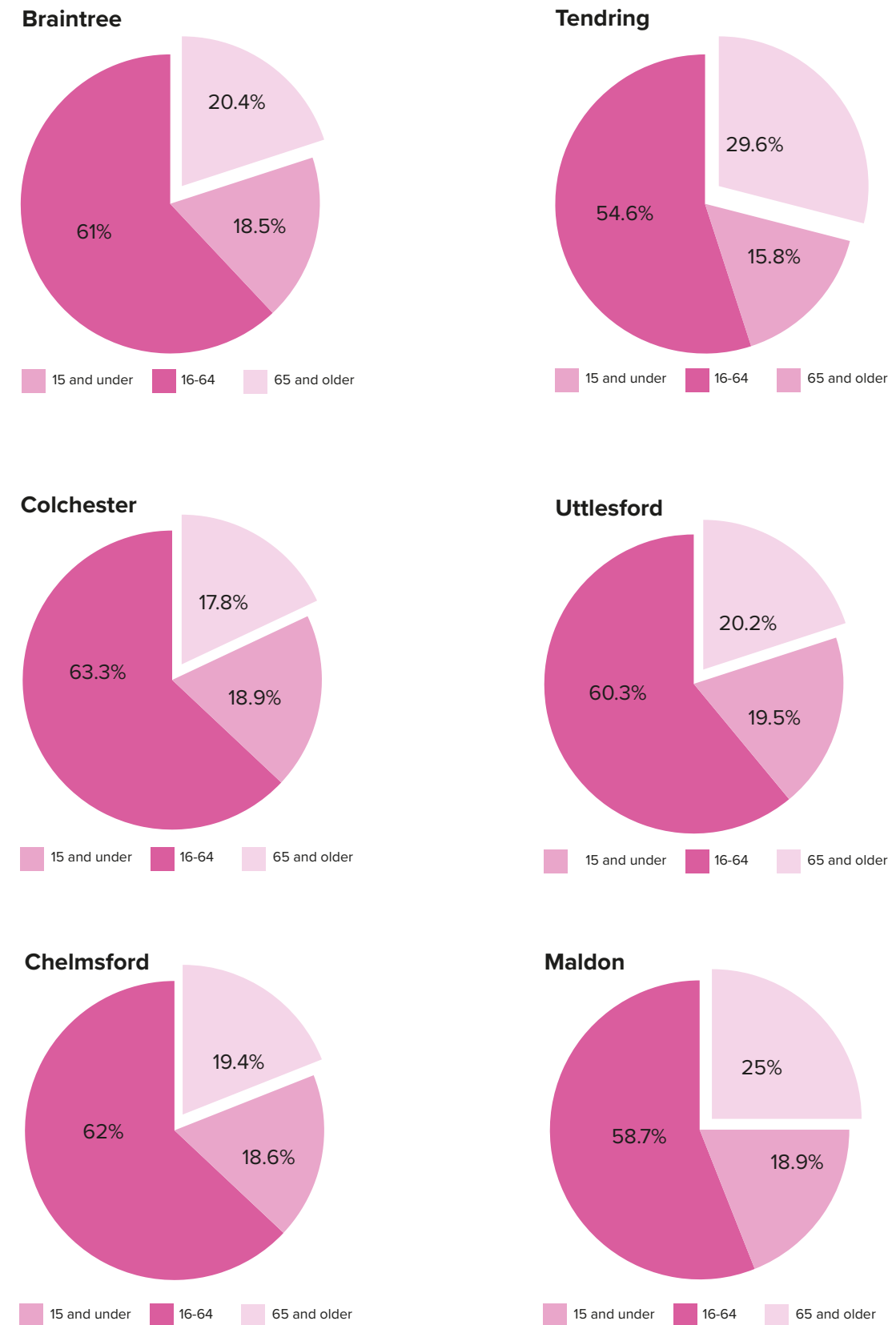


Figure 20: North Essex authorities' age demographics (ages 15 and under, ages 16 – 64 and ages 65 and under)

³² ONS. Population: Age (Census 2021). Source: Age - Census Maps, ONS

Building on the age demographics – and utilising the Thriving Places Index – critical community data provides a view of the region’s relative equality, local conditions and sustainability opportunities and challenges. Before exploring the metrics underpinning the three variables, it is important to note the scale used by the Thriving Places Index, with this critical to understanding the relative opportunities and challenges of North Essex’s authorities within these variables. This scale is outlined in **Figure 21**.

Starting with the equality variable, 2022 Thriving Places Index data suggests that Tendring and Colchester are the most equitable North Essex authorities, with Uttlesford and Maldon the least. Only Uttlesford and Maldon ranked in the ‘Low – Medium’ category for this variable. Moving the focus to the ‘local conditions’ variable, Uttlesford and Chelmsford are the North Essex authorities that recorded the highest score for this variable, both ranking within the ‘Medium – High’ category. The only North Essex authority to rank as low as the ‘Low – Medium’ category was Tendring, with a figure of 4.2. The index suggests there is a gap between Tendring and the next North Essex authority on the scale, with Colchester recording a score of 5.4, falling just short of the ‘Medium – High’ category for this variable. In terms of sustainability, all North Essex authorities performed relatively well when considering this variable, with the lowest ranking North Essex authority – Chelmsford – recording a figure of 4.9 which put it in the ‘medium’ category. The North Essex authority with the highest figure recorded for this variable is Colchester, with a figure of 6.2 putting this authority in the ‘Medium – High’ category³³. **Figure 22** lists the figures recorded for all the North Essex authorities across the 3 categories.

Thriving Places Index Scale

Low	Low -Medium	Medium	Medium - High	High
<3.5	3.5 – 4.5	4.5 – 5.5	5.5 – 6.5	6.5<

Figure 21: Thriving Places Index Scale

Starting with the equality variable, 2022 Thriving Places Index data suggests that Tendring and Colchester are the most equitable North Essex authorities, with Uttlesford and Maldon the least. Only Uttlesford and Maldon ranked in the ‘Low – Medium’ category for this variable. Moving the focus to the ‘local conditions’ variable, Uttlesford and Chelmsford are the North Essex authorities that recorded the highest score for this variable, both ranking within the ‘Medium – High’ category. The only North Essex authority to rank as low as the ‘Low – Medium’ category was Tendring, with a figure of 4.2. The index suggests there is a gap between Tendring and the next North Essex authority on the scale, with Colchester recording a score of 5.4, falling just short of the ‘Medium – High’ category for this variable. In terms of sustainability, all North Essex authorities performed relatively well when considering this variable, with the lowest ranking North Essex authority – Chelmsford – recording a figure of 4.9 which put it in the ‘medium’ category. The North Essex authority with the highest figure recorded for this variable is Colchester, with a figure of 6.2 putting this authority in the ‘Medium – High’ category³³. **Figure 22** lists the figures recorded for all the North Essex authorities across the 3 categories.

Thriving Places Index

Equality		Local Conditions		Sustainability	
Authority	Score	Authority	Score	Authority	Score
Tendring	6.0	Uttlesford	6.3	Colchester	6.2
Colchester	5.6	Chelmsford	6.0	Essex	5.9
Essex	5.0	Braintree	5.7	Maldon	5.4
Chelmsford	4.7	Maldon	5.5	Braintree	5.3
Braintree	4.7	Colchester	5.4	Uttlesford	5.2
Uttlesford	4.3	Essex	5.3	Tendring	5.1
Maldon	3.9	Tendring	4.2	Chelmsford	4.9

Figure 22: Thriving Places Index – Equality, Local

It is clear that there is greater diversity across the North Essex region in terms of the equality and local conditions variables than when compared to the sustainability variable. This suggests there is greater work that could be done to increase equality within both Maldon and Uttlesford, and to improve Tendring’s local conditions to ensure residents across the region feel a similar amount of pride in place and attachment to where they live.

Moving away from the Thriving Places Index, another important aspect when considering North Essex’s community opportunities and challenges is consideration of housing data and the level of crime prevalent within the area. Linking this data to economic growth, house prices are a key form of wealth for many, with an understanding of house prices and form of tenure within a region useful indicators of relative wealth that can support economic growth. In terms of crime, a more deprived area is likely to see increased incidences of crime, proving a useful proxy for economic growth considerations.

Within North Essex, it is clear there is diversity in house prices across the region, with the more rural authorities of Uttlesford and Maldon seeing the highest average house prices in 2023. In contrast, the lowest average house price is recorded by Tendring, with a price difference of £180,892 observed between Uttlesford and Tendring³⁴. This suggests there is significant divergence in wealth across the region, which has been considered when developing actions included within the Delivery Plan. **Figure 23** provides a view of the different average house prices within North Essex and how these figures compare to Essex CC and the East of England.

³³ Centre for Thriving Places. Thriving Places Index (2022). Source: Thriving Places Index | Centre for Thriving Places

³³ Centre for Thriving Places. Thriving Places Index (2022). Source: Thriving Places Index | Centre for Thriving Places

³⁴ UK House Price Index. House Price Statistics (2023). Source: UK House Price Index (data.gov.uk)

Average House Prices (£) (2023)



Figure 23: Average House Prices (£) (2023)

Building on the average house prices across North Essex to understand the region’s relative wealth, it is important to consider the form of tenure. As **Figure 24** illustrates, there is a divergence in the proportion of home owners (both with and without mortgages) across the North Essex authorities, with Maldon the authority with the highest proportion of home owners and Colchester the lowest, according to Census 2021 data³⁵. Given the average

house prices within both Uttlesford and Maldon – and the relatively high levels of home ownership within these authorities – it can be concluded that these two authorities are likely to see a higher proportion of wealthier residents when compared to other authorities across the region.

Proportion of Home Owners across North Essex (2021)



Figure 24: Proportion of Home Owners across North Essex (2021)

³⁵ ONS. Housing: Tenure of Household (Census 2021). Source: Tenure of household - Census Maps, ONS

Away from house prices and home ownership, the region’s crime statistics also provide a useful proxy for the region’s relative wealth. As **Figure 25** demonstrates, Tendring and Colchester are the North Essex’s authorities with the highest police recorded crimes per 1,000 population, both recording figures of 98.6 for this metric. Maldon and Uttlesford – the North Essex authorities with the highest average house prices – see the lowest crime rates, recording figures of 59.9 and 62.3 respectively³⁶.

In addition to the data above, the prosperous and inclusive communities strategic priority has considered data that provides perspective on residents’ views towards the North Essex region and pride and happiness they feel going about their everyday lives. This data is important to understanding this strategic priority, as it provides a view of North Essex’s resident’s engagement with their local communities, an important consideration when understanding how best to drive economic growth. ONS data has been presented below that provides a view of North Essex’s residents’ life satisfaction, happiness, anxiety, and a feeling that their lives are worthwhile.

Police recorded crimes per 1,000 population (2022)



Figure 25: Police recorded crimes per 1,000 population (2022)

³⁶ Police.UK. Compare your area. (2022). Source: Compare your area | Police.uk (www.police.uk)

Starting with life satisfaction, residents across North Essex feel fairly satisfied with their lives, with the North Essex authorities performing similarly across the board. As **Figure 26** outlines, Uttlesford recorded the greatest score for this statistic, recording an average figure of 7.9 out of 10, whilst Colchester recorded the lowest score at 7.4³⁷.

When considering happiness, it can be seen that five of the North Essex authorities recorded average scores of above 7, with Braintree the authority that recorded the highest average score of 7.7. As **Figure 27** shows, Colchester recorded the lowest happiness average score, with a figure of 6.8³⁸.

North Essex Life Satisfaction (April 2021 - March 2022)

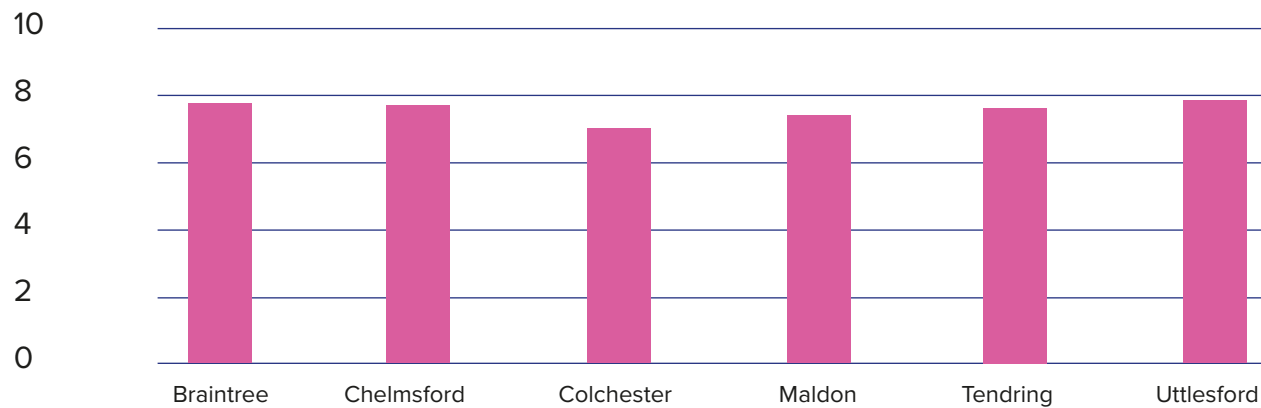


Figure 26: North Essex Life Satisfaction (April 2021 - March 2022)

North Essex Happiness (April 2021 - March 2022)

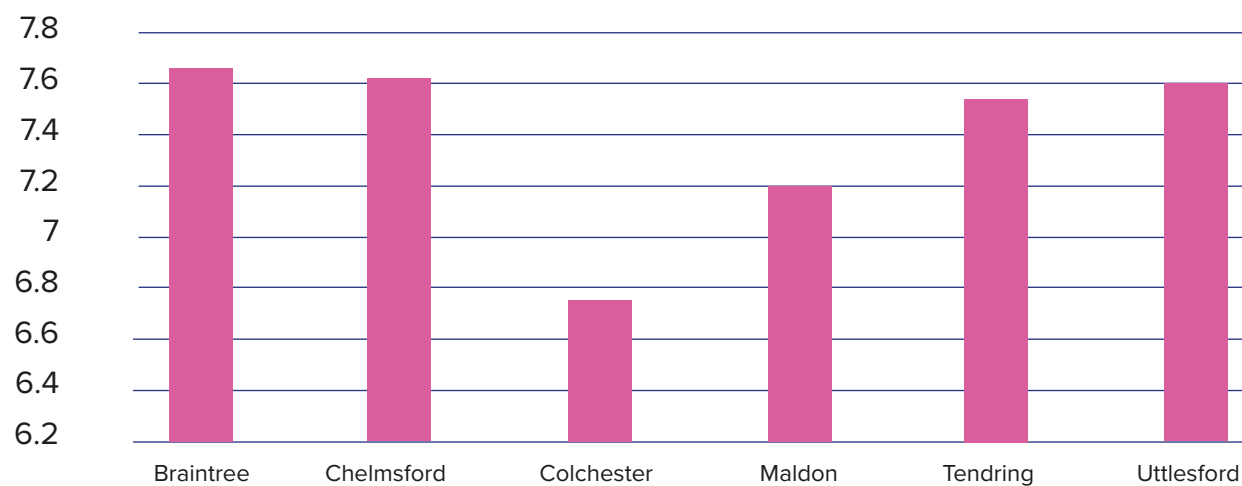


Figure 27: North Essex Happiness (April 2021 - March 2022)

Moving to anxiety, the North Essex authorities had similar average scores for this metric, with it important to note that the lower the score, the less anxious an authority is feeling. There is very little difference between the North Essex authority with the lowest anxiety levels – Braintree (3.0) – and the North Essex authority with the highest anxiety levels – Maldon (3.4)³⁹. This is exemplified in **Figure 28**.

Turning to the extent to which residents view their lives as worthwhile, again, the data collated for the North Essex authorities is fairly consistent, with little difference observed between the authority – Braintree (8.1) – recording the highest score in terms of residents viewing their lives as worthwhile and the authority – Colchester (7.6) – recording the lowest score in terms of residents viewing their lives as worthwhile⁴⁰. This is exemplified in **Figure 29**.

North Essex Anxiety (April 2021 - March 2022)



Figure 28: North Essex Anxiety (April 2021 - March 2022)

North Essex Worthwhile Data (April 2021 - March 2022)



Figure 29: North Essex Worthwhile Data (April 2021 - March 2022)

³⁷ ONS. Personal well-being in the UK: April 2021 to March 2022. Source: Personal well-being in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

³⁸ ONS. Personal well-being in the UK: April 2021 to March 2022. Source: Personal well-being in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

³⁹ ONS. Personal well-being in the UK: April 2021 to March 2022. Source: Personal well-being in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

⁴⁰ ONS. Personal well-being in the UK: April 2021 to March 2022. Source: Personal well-being in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

The importance of these metrics to North Essex's 2-year delivery plan is understood when considering the impact life satisfaction, happiness, anxiety and perception of worthiness have on a resident's confidence and willingness to engage with economic opportunities available, such as those offered by the NEEB. As explored elsewhere, there is a need to further explore why some NEEB opportunities delivered have not seen the uptake expected from residents across the region. Accessibility is likely one reason for limited uptake in some instances, but there is also likely a confidence aspect to consider. The more that can be done to boost life satisfaction, increase happiness, reduce anxiety and advance the feeling of worthiness, the more likely the region's residents – in particular those that feel they are being left behind – will engage in economic opportunities available, supporting North Essex's economic growth ambitions.



The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of district, city and county councils offering fully funded business support and skills programmes to support economic growth across North Essex. The partnership consists of Maldon, Tendring, Braintree, Uttlesford District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, and Essex County Council. Find out more at www.neeb.org.uk Socials @neebgrowth

Henham Strategy is a public policy and economic development consultancy with a focus on local growth, trade and investment and higher education. We aim to connect local, regional and international actors to stimulate economic growth across the UK.



Delivering for North Essex



North Essex
Economic
Board



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The North Essex Vision

A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region’s economic prosperity.

The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is proud to present our ambitious North Essex vision, ready to collaborate with partners to seize the region’s significant and diverse economic opportunities.

Established in 2019, the NEEB represents the economic ambitions of seven North Essex authorities – Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester City Council, Essex County Council, Maldon District Council, Tendring District Council and Uttlesford District Council – catalysing collective action to drive economic prosperity within all parts of the urban, rural and coastal region. It provides the strategic oversight of North Essex’s diverse, inclusive and productive economic priorities, ensuring tangible actions are delivered to support residents’ and businesses’ goals and aspirations. Promoting the region’s potential, the NEEB presents the strong strategic rationale for further central government and private sector investment, needed to deliver North Essex’s long-term ambitions.

Much has been delivered by the NEEB to date – including the distribution of critical COVID-19 support funding and career-enhancing business and skills support programmes – and the partnership is now positioned to go even further and deliver even more for North Essex’s residents and businesses. The 2-year delivery plan and ambitions presented below have

been developed by Henham Strategy, utilising ‘North Essex’s Strategic Narrative’ and ‘North Essex’s Economic Baseline’ to identify the short-term actions and long-term ambitions that will deliver economic prosperity for North Essex’s residents and businesses.

Working together, we can leverage North Essex’s core strengths...

Our innovative and thriving SME community and cutting edge HE and FE institutions, delivering good, local jobs

Our dynamic and competitive renewable energy generation strengths, driving net zero progression

Our unique strategic location linked to regional and international partners, supporting inward investment

Our proud urban, rural and coastal communities, focused on supporting prosperous residents and businesses

The Economic Context

Much has changed since the NEEB published its 2019 economic strategy, with three critical events in particular shaping the opportunities and challenges of the North Essex economy.

Firstly, the UK's departure from the EU in January 2020 has changed the economic landscape of both North Essex and the country as a whole, with challenges still being worked through as the country seeks to prosper through its new post-Brexit economic position. For North Essex specifically, the region's significant number of SMEs are continuing to adapt to changes in the business and trading environment, changes that Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts suggest could lead to a decline in the UK's long-run productivity, relative to remaining in the EU.

Alongside Brexit, there are lasting impacts caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Whilst Government-mandated lockdowns and restrictions are a thing of the past, their economic impacts remain, including

economic inactivity remaining stubbornly high and hybrid working patterns embedded across the country. This national picture mirrors what has been observed within North Essex, with the region's economic inactivity currently 1.9% higher than figures recorded pre-COVID-19 and a much greater proportion of residents working from home¹.

Finally, residents and businesses across the country have, most recently, been significantly impacted by cost-of-living pressures that have eaten away at disposable income and financial reserves. We know the damage inflation has had on many residents and businesses across North Essex – including the need to delay important life decisions² – with support for North Essex's residents and businesses at the forefront of our thinking as we look to progress actions to boost the region's economic growth.

¹ NOMIS. Labour Market Profiles (Essex) (2022). Source: Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)

² Essex Open Data. Cost of Living Qualitative Research (2023). Source: Cost of living qualitative research | Essex Open Data

North Essex's Strategic Priorities

Despite recent challenging economic circumstances, the North Essex economy stands ready to build on the fantastic opportunities within the region, with its diverse urban, rural and coastal characteristics differentiating the region from other parts of the country.

With these diverse characteristics in mind, this 'Delivering for North Essex' plan has been founded upon four key strategic priorities.

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A resilient and outward-facing economy that builds on its incumbent strengths and is positioned to deliver economic opportunities for North Essex's residents, and drive inward investment to support businesses within the region's critical growth sectors.

2 A Green and High Growth Economy

A forward-looking economy that utilises the diversity of its resources in a sustainable way that furthers North Essex's clean energy strengths, boosts growth, and promotes residents' prosperity through net zero commitments.

3 A Dynamic and Connected Region

A well-connected and digitally-linked region that provides residents with quick and reliable access to key services, encourages inward investment, and makes the most of ties to regional and international neighbours.

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A thriving and inclusive region where all residents and businesses have the opportunity to contribute and prosper, exemplifying the region as a great place to live, work and visit.

North Essex's Opportunities

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

Residents

We want all North Essex's residents to have the opportunity to:

- Make the most of the region's excellent Higher and Further Education offerings.
- Benefit from good, career-enhancing jobs within the region's key growth sectors – construction and retrofit, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, digital tech, and life sciences.
- Engage with NEEB-led skills development programmes, building workplace confidence and the region's skills.
- Benefit from living and working within North Essex, with a desire to remain within the region and contribute to its economic prosperity.
- Retrain, ensuring the region's workforce has the ability to pivot towards jobs within the region's key growth sectors.

Businesses

We want all our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Start and scale up within North Essex, benefitting from cutting edge commercial space.
- Engage with, and benefit from, the opportunities around Freeport East and its associated tax relief.
- Collaborate with other innovative businesses, sharing best business practices and supporting business growth.
- Secure inward investment, implementing cutting-edge innovations within business practices and boosting local economies.
- Employ an appropriately skilled workforce within North Essex, supporting resident and business ambitions and locally-sourced talent.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent business and skills strengths, with infrastructure and projects already in place that are driving innovative businesses and skilled residents within North Essex. Notably, North Essex benefits from a significant SME community, with current sector strengths including construction and real estate activities. Alongside incumbent sector strengths, the region is making positive strides towards seizing the opportunities associated

with key growth sectors. This includes the excellent work being progressed in the Digi Tech sector through the AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation and the Life Sciences sector through Chesterford Research Park. Supporting growth sector progression are North Essex's leading Higher and Further Education institutions, including the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin, University Writtle College, the Colchester Institute, Chelmsford College and Stansted Airport College. Education strengths include the University of Essex's expertise in computer and data science and the 'first of its kind' aviation training offered by Stansted Airport College.



2

A Green and High Growth Economy

Residents

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from North Essex's net zero transition, securing good jobs within a green economy boosted by Freeport East and Bradwell B's potential.
- Positively contribute to current and future steps taken to achieve net zero within North Essex.
- Continue enjoying North Essex's rural and coastal characteristics, in conjunction with green infrastructure delivery.
- Benefit from North Essex's renewable energy strengths – offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power – providing cheaper, long-term energy sources and exciting employment opportunities.
- Benefit from the transition to electric vehicles, with a sufficient number of charge points available across all of North Essex.

Businesses

We want all our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Form effective partnerships to progress net zero objectives, with a focus on linking national energy suppliers with local North Essex businesses to drive forward the net zero transition.
- Learn from successful green measures adopted by other North Essex businesses, ensuring best practice is adopted across the board.
- Better understand the green jobs required to deliver net zero objectives and how to create them locally.
- Articulate the green skills North Essex needs to fill green jobs identified, ensuring these jobs boost economic growth and attract inward investment.
- Build on North Essex's renewable energy strengths – offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power – benefitting from Freeport East and Bradwell B's potential.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent green economy strengths, with North Essex positioned to become a leader in several renewable energy sources. This includes offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power, with the region already generating a significant amount of electricity from these sources. Critically, North Essex's green economy strengths will be boosted by Freeport East which will see a 112 hectare area established in Harwich dedicated to the development of green energy. This green energy hub will focus on the manufacture of wind turbine components, as well as incorporating new nuclear sites at Sizewell and Bradwell.

Progress is also being made with the East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN) project, which will reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between the existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex. This will also connect new offshore wind generation, boosting North Essex's strengths in this renewable energy source. In addition, CB Heating's partnership with EDF Energy and the Heat Pump Installer Network's Academy means Tendring is playing a critical role in the education and delivery of heat pumps across the country.



3

A Dynamic and Connected Region

Residents

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from ultrafast broadband, building on the Superfast Essex programme's successful rollout of superfast broadband.
- Utilise digital services in all parts of North Essex, not simply the region's urban centres.
- Regularly travel between the region's urban, rural and coastal authorities, confident in the reliable and high quality public transport offering.
- Participate widely in active travel schemes, making use of walking and cycling infrastructure where possible.
- Access key public services (e.g. schools and hospitals) in a timely manner, not inhibited by where they live within North Essex.

Businesses

We want our businesses to have the opportunity to:

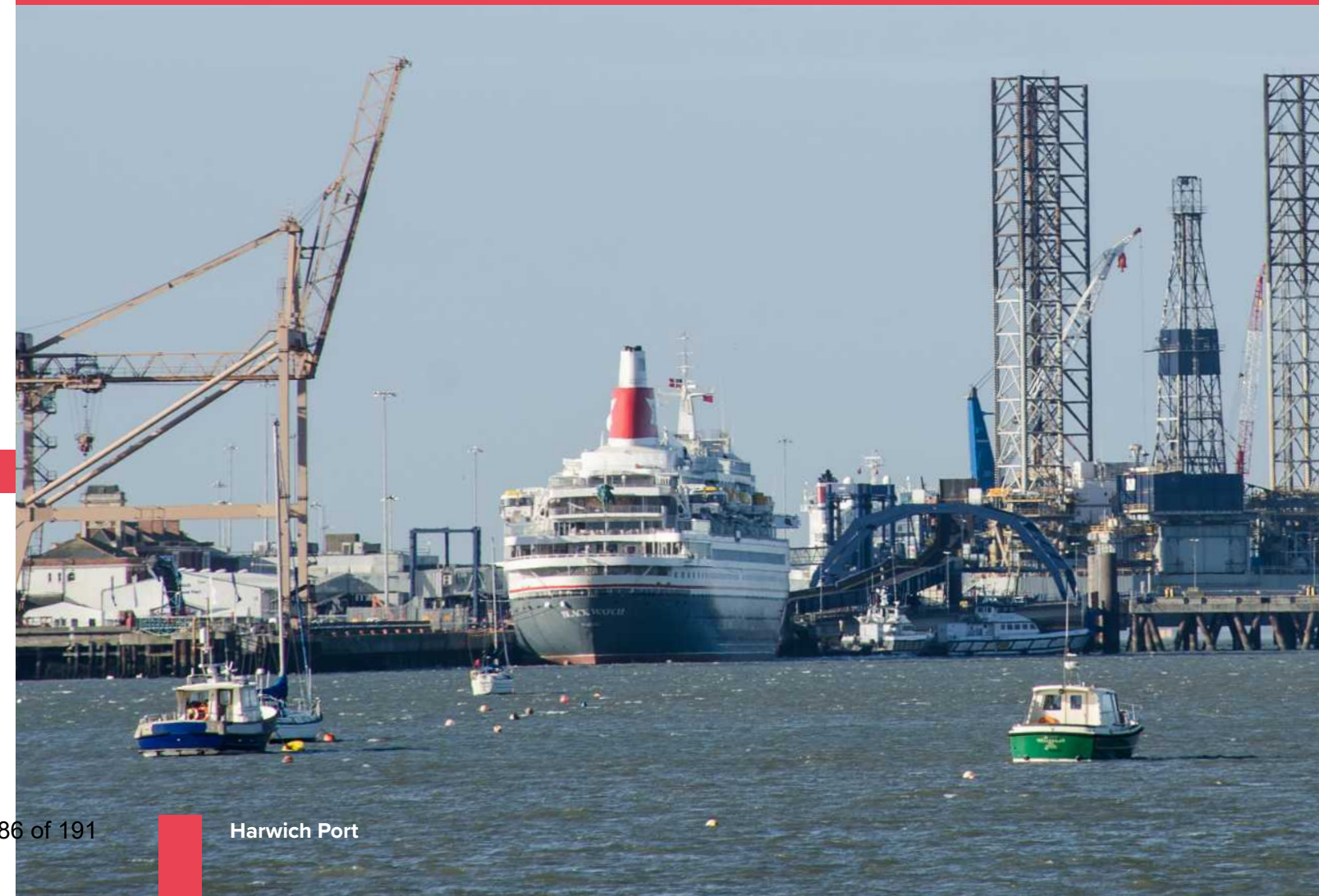
- Benefit from digital accessibility across North Essex, positioning all parts of North Essex as accessible and attractive places to do business.
- Benefit from quick and reliable transport links, with business decisions not impacted by North Essex's current congestion challenges.
- Feed into discussions on North Essex's transport needs, ensuring alignment with business needs.
- Attract inward investment, with investors having confidence in North Essex's transport infrastructure.
- Develop links with regional and national partners, with infrastructure developed to facilitate links to other parts of the country.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent infrastructure strengths and the need to go further to enhance some aspects of North Essex's digital and transport infrastructure.

Incumbent strengths include the region's outward facing transport terminals including Stansted Airport and Harwich Port. With 23.3 million passengers passing through Stansted Airport in 2022 and Harwich Port importing and exporting 4.57 million tonnes of freight in 2021, these transport terminals provide North Essex with excellent global links that are vital to

supporting the region's economic growth. In addition, the success of the Superfast Essex programme, has resulted in all of the North Essex authorities benefitting from over 90% of their premises having access to superfast broadband a significant recent improvement in the region's digital connectivity. Despite these strengths, further improvements are required, with North Essex's critical roads including the A12, A120 and A131 suffering from high levels of congestion and the region inhibited by rural connectivity blackspots, especially when it comes to ultrafast broadband.



4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

Residents

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Build closer connections with their local communities, helping boost pride in place.
- Participate more in community activities that help build a sense of North Essex belonging.
- Feed views into community developments, ensuring interventions best deliver for community needs.
- Understand how community progression can support their personal aspirations and goals.
- Benefit from a prosperous North Essex visitor economy through inclusive and year-round employment opportunities.

Businesses

We want our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from a confident and proud North Essex workforce, engaged in supporting North Essex's economic growth.
- Engage with local communities, advertising good jobs available to kickstart and restart careers within North Essex.
- Support local residents to secure good jobs, working with community partners and organisations to enhance the region's skills offering.
- Further understand North Essex's local communities, ensuring business decisions reflect local needs.
- Promote themselves as part of North Essex's visitor economy, benefitting from more visitors all year round.

The North Essex Snapshot

The opportunities above reflect the region's recent successes in progressing prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex. Successes include authorities securing central government support to level up North Essex, with Colchester and Tendring to benefit from £19.7m and £19.9m of Levelling Up Fund round 2 funding. Tendring will also benefit through the Levelling Up Partnerships workstream, with £6.7m of additional funding announced during the 2023 Spring Budget. Alongside critical levelling up funding secured, North Essex benefits from effective initiatives aimed at boosting community cohesion and pride in place.

This includes initiatives like Community 360: One Colchester and Chelmsford CVS that encourage communities to take charge of their own destiny, support and strengthen local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups. Further progress is required to enhance North Essex's prosperous and inclusive communities, ensuring all North Essex's residents feel pride in their communities and have the confidence to engage with the region's diverse and progressive economic opportunities.



North Essex's 2-Year Delivery Plan

Delivering against the four strategic priorities – and the associated opportunities that will catalyse economic growth within North Essex – the NEEB will lead on delivering an ambitious delivery plan. This will be delivered over the next 2 years in partnership with North Essex's residents and businesses.

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A Auditing Digital Skills Programme

The NEEB will review the delivery of its previous digital skills programmes, leading resident engagement to understand why some of the programmes previously run failed to stimulate demand. Audit outcomes will be fed into the region's Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Desired Outcome: Further understanding as to what makes a digital skills programme successful in North Essex, therefore adapting them better for the future.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B Convening Local Business Support Organisations

The NEEB will establish a 'North Essex Business Forum' which will invite key businesses and support organisations from across the region to quarterly meetings, with discussions to focus on highlighting initiatives underway, support available and business needs, to drive business growth and skills, aligned with ECC's efforts.

Desired Outcome: Increase in partnership working between North Essex's businesses and support organisations, with business needs addressed, and best practices adopted across the region – advertised through business best practice toolkits.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C Promoting North Essex to Graduates

Working with the region's Higher Education and Further Education institutions, the NEEB will develop promotional material advertising the region as a great place to work and live which will target the institutions' skilled graduates.

Desired Outcome: Promotional material on the benefits of living and working in North Essex shared during Further Education and Higher Education careers events and advertised through an online NEEB campaign.

Delivery Date: By the start of the 24/25 academic year (September 2024).

D Delivering the NEEB's 2324 and 24/25 Business Support Programmes

Building on the success of previous business support programmes, the NEEB will deliver its business support programmes planned for 23/24 and 24/25.

Desired Outcome: Continued positive business engagement with the NEEB's business support programmes, with more businesses receiving generalist support that reflects broad business needs within the region.

Delivery Date: By the end of 23/24 and 24/25.

2 A Green and High Growth Economy

A Convening Green Businesses

Utilising the CB Heating and EDF Energy partnership in Tendring as an exemplar, the NEEB will convene local and national green economy businesses, highlighting the benefits of partnership working and encouraging further collaboration.

Desired Outcome: Further partnerships established between local and national green economy businesses that support delivery of North Essex's net zero commitments.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B Establishing 'Green Champions'

Working with local community and volunteer groups, the NEEB will identify 'Green Champions' within each authority, whose role will involve delivering resident engagement focused on articulating the importance of the net zero transition and how local characteristics can be protected as part of this.

Desired Outcome: At least one 'Green Champion' established within each local authority with increased resident support for net zero actions.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C Promoting North Essex's Green Potential

The NEEB will position itself as the region's green economy lead, lobbying central government for further funding and positioning the region as a green exemplar through maximising the benefits of Freeport East.

Desired Outcome: Dialogue with Government on the opportunities around securing future funding to deliver the region's net zero commitments.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

D Delivering Student Green Economy Engagement

Working with North Essex's schools, Further Education, and Higher Education institutions, the NEEB will deliver engagement activities promoting the future opportunities available within the green economy, advertising roles that require both academic and more technical strengths.

Desired Outcome: Seminars delivered by leading local green economy stakeholders within schools, colleges and universities, promoting job opportunities within the region's green economy.

Delivery Date: By the start of the 24/25 academic year.

3 A Dynamic and Connected Region

A Establishing a Transport East Partnership

To better promote and address North Essex's strategic transport needs, the NEEB will establish a strategic partnership with Transport East, providing a North Essex collective voice to shape transport strategic thinking.

Desired Outcome: Strategic partnership with Transport East established, enabling one North Essex voice to be presented within strategic transport thinking.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B Convening Local Transport Operators

The NEEB will convene the region's local transport operators to discuss changes that can be made to service timetables to ensure residents in more rural areas are able to travel more easily across authorities.

Desired Outcome: Dialogue with transport operators around how services can be better tailored to meet all residents' and businesses' needs across North Essex.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C Facilitating Effective EV Charging Roll-out

To ensure the region's EV charging disparities are not solely considered within authority and county specific strategies, the NEEB will work with regional (e.g. SELEP) and national (e.g. National Grid) partners to articulate the particular challenges North Essex faces when delivering EV charging infrastructure, ensuring these challenges are acknowledged in regional and national EV charging strategies.

Desired Outcome: North Essex's EV charging needs effectively considered within regional and national strategies.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

D Leading Digital Infrastructure Community Engagement

To ensure the rollout of superfast and ultrafast broadband is effectively utilised within the region, the NEEB will lead resident engagement to educate and promote the benefits of digital use, focusing this engagement particularly on the region's elderly and digitally excluded population.

Desired Outcome: Increase in resident engagement with digital services available to them and an increase in digital literacy.

Delivery Date: By mid-2025.

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A Convening Local Third Sector Organisations

The NEEB will convene a ‘Third Sector Volunteers Forum’ which will invite key third sector organisations from across the region to quarterly meetings, with discussions to focus on highlighting initiatives underway that are being delivered to enhance communities and further support the work of the organisations to help them grow in stature. This forum will include a focus on facilitating intergenerational engagement through a mentorship scheme.

Desired Outcome: Increase in voluntary initiatives delivered across the region, with mentorship programme established to support intergenerational engagement.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B Developing a North Essex Pride in Place Evidence Base

The NEEB will undertake a project to showcase the region’s pride in place strengths and where further support can be best delivered. This will include a delivery plan on how North Essex can best improve critical community infrastructure across the region.

Desired Outcome: A well evidenced understanding of how North Essex can improve pride in place considerations, with a clear delivery plan outlining key partners’ responsibilities published.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

C Delivering a Visitor Economy Promotion Audit

The NEEB will undertake an audit of the visitor economy promotional material delivered in other parts of the country with a positive history of attracting visitors (e.g. Scotland, Norfolk and Suffolk), drawing together best practice and working with North Essex partners to implement such practices to boost promotion of the region’s visitor economy in alignment with Visit Essex.

Desired Outcome: A well evidenced understanding of best practice implemented within other regions with leading visitor economy offers.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2024.

D Leading North Essex’s Visitor Economy Promotion

Working with regional visitor economy partners, the NEEB will deliver promotional material that aims to promote the region’s mix of urban, rural and coastal characteristics.

Desired Outcome: A coherent North Essex story presented that outlines how key partners will work towards boosting the region’s visitor economy.

Delivery Date: By mid-2025.

North Essex’s Ambitions

Alongside North Essex’s 2-Year Delivery Plan, the NEEB is an ambitious partnership that has a long-term outlook for the North Essex economy. With devolved power ever more present across the country, we have considered our long-term ambitions for the North Essex economy, providing an exciting and aspirational outlook for the region’s residents and businesses. We will work collaboratively with our neighbouring Essex partners to make the strong strategic case for further private and public sector investment and support to deliver our North Essex ambitions.

1 Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A Delivering Businesses and Skilled Residents

The NEEB would like skills attainment across the region to become more uniform, with a focus on upskilling authorities currently with a higher proportion of low-skilled workers.

B Securing further R&D Investment

The NEEB would like to have greater influence over – and ability to drive – R&D investment into the region, focusing this investment on the region’s key growth sectors.

C Developing Commercial and Incubation Spaces

The NEEB would like to be the go-to partnership for business support within North Essex and would like greater funding to deliver further commercial and incubation spaces within North Essex.

D Agree International Partnerships

The NEEB would like to establish international partnerships with other regional economic development partnerships, universities and local government structures, promoting North Essex’s businesses and potential to drive inward investment.

2 A Green and High Growth Economy

A Facilitating Further Green Investment

The NEEB would like to lead on driving green investment into the region, drawing in more large energy companies and supporting innovative green start-ups within the region.

B Securing Longer-term Green Skills Funding

The NEEB would like to secure longer-term funding to support green skills initiatives – like the ‘I-Construct’ programme – ensuring there is clear commitment to green skills investment within the region, giving confidence to businesses that North Essex is serious about delivering and benefitting from the green jobs of the future.

C Leading the EV Charge

The NEEB would like to play a greater role in the delivery of EV charge points across the region, with further Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to help achieve these ambitions.

D Leading Essex’s Green Jobs Delivery

The NEEB would like North Essex to be the region leading delivery of Essex’s green jobs, ensuring the county reaches its goal of delivering 18,000 green jobs by 2030.

3 A Dynamic and Connected Region

A Supporting Superfast and Gigabit Broadband

The NEEB would like to see the availability of ultrafast broadband within North Essex’s premises match that currently seen (i.e. 90% plus availability) when looking at the region’s superfast broadband availability, and 85% for gigabit availability.

B Securing more public transport services that connect urban rural areas

The NEEB would like to see funding made available to deliver more public transport services (i.e. routes) between the region’s urban and rural authorities, making it easier for residents to travel across the region.

C Establish a North Essex EV Charging Exemplar

Building on Braintree’s GRIDSERVE EV Charging forecourt, the NEEB would like to see further EV charging points delivered across the region, positioning North Essex as an exemplar for other regions to follow.

D Enhancing Harwich Port’s EU links

Supporting the UK’s trade ambitions, the NEEB would like to work with Harwich Port to identify ways to boost inward and outward freight trade with the EU, given the port’s incumbent links with this trading bloc.

4 Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A Increasing Community Investment

The NEEB would like to see North Essex have further powers over funding to invest in enhancing its prosperous and inclusive communities across, with a focus on local leaders knowing what is best for local areas.

B Boosting Pride in Place

Would like to see an increase in residents’ pride in place, with opportunities for residents to have greater input into the ownership and delivery of assets of particular local importance.

C Creating confident communities

The NEEB would like to see further investment focused on increasing ‘soft skills’ across the region, ensuring more of the region’s residents are positioned to engage with North Essex’s economic opportunities.

D Matching other area’ visitors numbers

The NEEB would like to see North Essex rival other areas in the East of England (e.g. Suffolk and Norfolk) when it comes to the visitor economy, matching the popular visit destinations in terms of visitor numbers.



Saltmarsh Coast - Maldon

The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of district, city and county councils offering fully funded business support and skills programmes to support economic growth across North Essex. The partnership consists of Maldon, Tendring, Braintree, Uttlesford District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, and Essex County Council. Find out more at www.neeb.org.uk Socials @neebgrowth

Henham Strategy is a public policy and economic development consultancy with a focus on local growth, trade and investment and higher education. We aim to connect local, regional and international actors to stimulate economic growth across the UK.



Report Title: North Essex Councils	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Cllr Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Dan Gascoyne, Chief Executive dan.gascoyne@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress since agreeing the North Essex Authorities' (NEA) Memorandum of Understanding in December 2022, seek approval to establish the North Essex Councils partnership and commit resources to enable its objectives to be delivered.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree that Braintree District Council (the Council) will work in partnership with those Councils set out in paragraph 3.1 and will be collectively referred to as the North Essex Councils (NEC).
- 2.2 To agree that the Council will act as the accountable body for NEC.
- 2.3 To agree to contribute £20,000 from the transformation reserve in 2023/24 to enable resources to be put in place to manage the work of the partnership.
- 2.4 To agree that further funding in 2024/25 of up to £40,000 will be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget process, for the purposes of establishing a team to collectively represent North Essex Councils, establish a detailed terms of reference for NEC and develop a clear programme of work.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 For the purposes of this report, the NEC is made up of those local authorities located in the north of Essex, and representing a population of 1.063m, namely:
- Braintree District Council
 - Chelmsford City Council
 - Colchester City Council
 - Epping Forest District Council
 - Essex County Council
 - Harlow Council
 - Maldon District Council

- Tendring District Council
 - Uttlesford District Council
- 3.2 Councils in North Essex have been working together for several years, with a range of formal and informal collaborations, perhaps most notably the North Essex Economic Board, which is reported on elsewhere on today's Cabinet agenda.
- 3.3 The other councils in Essex already have a well-established strategic partnership, the Association of South Essex Authorities (ASELA), and a joint committee is in place enabling ASELA to take formal decisions collectively and to agree joint delivery arrangements to achieve improved outcomes in South Essex, for example with Homes England.
- 3.4 In December 2022, the Leader of the Council agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the other North Essex councils (Appendix 1) setting up the basis for a new strategic partnership to deliver place leadership across North Essex.
- 3.5 During 2023, Chief Executives from each of the North Essex councils have been meeting regularly to discuss and develop an action to deliver the aims in the memorandum of understanding.
- 3.6 At a meeting of North Essex Council leaders on 20 July 2023, it was agreed to formalise the partnership and committed to taking a common report through their relevant governance processes, hence this report.
- 3.7 As a result of those discussions, the Leaders of NEC have agreed that:
- NEC will identify common issues and develop shared solutions that add value beyond what any individual council can do on their own
 - NEC will convene partnerships that deliver improved outcomes on Economic Development, through the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB), Finance, Housing, Climate Change, Shared Services and Devolution.
 - Within NEC, partnership working will happen at all levels, may involve different groups of NEC councils working together, and collaboration may reach beyond North Essex where this serves to the purpose of NEC.
- 3.8 NEC Leaders have reached a shared understanding of some of the key benefits of joint work, including but not limited to
- Improving shared evidence, data and insights to inform collaboration
 - Enhancing Organisational Capacity & Resilience
 - Improving core service quality, efficiency and outcomes
 - Delivering key strategic programmes of work together
 - Influencing and supporting responses to legislative changes
 - Provide the basis for district, city and borough nominations to a future Greater Essex Combined Authority
 - Achieving financial security and increased investment

- Influencing policy through a stronger collective voice – nationally, regionally and within Greater Essex
 - Driving forward new Shared Services opportunities
 - Engaging businesses effectively to support the responsibilities of the LEP across North Essex
- 3.9 The outcomes listed in 3.8 will be achieved at different spatial levels, with the partnership allowing for projects across a subset of councils, all North Essex councils and influence beyond North Essex.
- 3.10 Delivering this ambitious approach to sub-regional working will not be possible without each partner council contributing resources to the NEC programme.
- 3.11 Each constituent council will be required to contribute £20,000 in 2023/24, enabling the partnership to bring put in place the resources necessary to take forward NEC work on behalf of all councils.
- 3.12 It is proposed that Braintree District Council, building on the successful arrangements with the North Essex Economic Board, will be the accountable body for North Essex Councils. This further demonstrates the Council's leading role in driving forward strategic partnerships for the benefit of our residents and businesses. As accountable body, the Council would be liable for any costs and damages associated with the NEC. This risk would be very low initially and, as part of the development of the work plan, a detailed partnership agreement will be put together to mitigate any risks to BDC.
- 3.13 From 2024/25 it is anticipated that the core costs of North Essex Economic Board membership will be incorporated into overall NEC contributions from 2024/25 for the eight constituent councils, and it is estimated that the total contributions for 2024/25 will be in the region of £40,000. This requirement will need to be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget process.

4. Options

- 4.1. The preferred option is for the Council to support the recommendations in this report, helping to mitigate a range of key strategic risks and opening-up additional opportunities that would not be available to the Council operating alone.
- 4.2. Alternatively, not supporting the recommendations risks this Council jeopardising the increasingly positive relationships between North Essex Councils and missing out on the considerable potential benefits set out in this report.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If the recommendations in this report are supported, the North Essex Councils strategic partnership will be able to progress with resourcing the work of the NEC. This will also help to mitigate known resource risks associated with key North Essex programmes of work e.g. NEEB and Shared Services.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. Contributions for the core costs of NEC and NEEB will be met from the transformation reserve in 2023/24 and be considered as part of the 2024/25 budget process for future years.

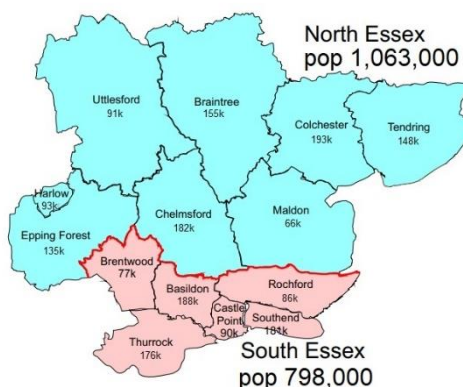
7. List of Appendices

- 7.1. Appendix 1 – Memorandum of understanding, December 2022

Association of North Essex Local Authorities Memorandum of Understanding

Between:

Braintree District Council
Chelmsford City Council
Colchester City Council
Epping Forest District Council
Essex County Council
Harlow Council
Maldon District Council
Tendring District Council
Uttlesford District Council



1. Background

- 1.1 Together, we are responsible for delivering services to over a million residents, equivalent to the City of Birmingham. The area delivers significant gross value added at over £17bn and supports almost 41,000 businesses.
- 1.2 This new partnership of North Essex Authorities is well placed to deliver local ambitions, to respond to emerging opportunities and Government policies, as well as being able to promote North Essex as desirable place for living, leisure and to do business in.
- 1.3 The Authorities have established a good track record of partnership working in various previous collaborations.
- 1.4 The nine Authorities wish to record their intention to establish the basis of our collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and to form this new partnership, building on previous joint working successes.

2. Core Purpose and aims

- 2.1 The core purpose of NEA is to provide for a platform for enhanced cooperation across North Essex, to achieve better outcomes for our residents and businesses, by working together rather than separately. Through our collaborative approach we are best placed to develop and deliver a vision for North Essex, promoting sustainable growth for our economies and communities up to 2050.
- 2.2 NEA will focus on the strategic opportunities, regardless of individual local authority boundaries, for North Essex to influence and secure the collaboration and investment that will help our individual areas to flourish and realise their full economic, social and environmental potential.

2.3 The aims of NEA will be to:

- a. Agree a 2050 vision for North Essex.
- b. Provide strong and collective place leadership and a voice into Government.
- c. Increase the ability of all authorities to cope with public spending restrictions and increased demands on services.
- d. Influence Government powers and attract Government funding to North Essex.
- e. Raise the profile and reputation of North Essex as a desirable place for living, leisure and to do business in.
- f. Improve transport and digital connectivity, securing funding for strategic infrastructure.
- g. Provide sufficient new homes to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population.
- h. Attract investment and stimulate economic growth, focusing on key sectors and the low carbon economy.
- i. Increase productivity by improving educational attainment and access to skills relevant to our future labour market.
- j. Enable North Essex to respond and adapt to Climate Change
- k. Support wellbeing and healthy life expectancy by tackling the wider determinants of health with our health partners and the voluntary and community sector.
- l. Develop innovative approaches to funding to deliver shared objectives, including developing joint bids where appropriate.
- m. Work together to help harness the energy, know-how and assets of local communities.

3. Principles of collaboration

- 3.1. Working together on strategic priorities irrespective of local authority boundaries.
- 3.2. Creating collective scale, resilience, and impact for the benefit of our residents and businesses.
- 3.3. Tackling problems and issues that we cannot solve individually.
- 3.4. Collaborating to gain something, without losing something (including local identities).
- 3.5. Governance arrangements proportionate to our shared ambition.
- 3.6. Opportunities to discharge certain functions jointly, and pooling of resources, should be considered where this can have collective and measurable impact.

4. Term and Termination

- 4.1. This MoU shall commence on the date of the signature by each Authority and shall expire if NEA dissolves, with its area of influence reducing should any individual signatory authority withdraw

5. Variation

- 5.1. The MoU can only be varied by written agreement of all the Authorities, save for any individual authority withdrawing

6. Charges and liabilities

- 6.1. Except as otherwise provided, the Parties shall bear their own costs and expenses incurred in complying with their obligations under this MoU.

7. Status

- 7.1. This MoU cannot override the statutory duties and powers of the parties and is not enforceable by law. However, the parties agree to the principles set out in this MoU.

Signed by

Local Authority	Leader/Chairman of Policy and Resource Committee	Chief Executive	Date
Braintree District Council			
Chelmsford City Council			
Colchester City Council			
Epping Forest District Council			
Harlow Council			
Essex County Council			
Maldon District Council			
Tendring District Council			
Uttlesford District Council			

Report Title: Risk Management Policy and Strategy and updated Strategic Risk Register	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/43
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Phil Myers, Head of Finance phil.myers@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To approve the revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy and updated Strategic Risk Register.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet to approve:

- 2.1 The revised Strategic Risk Management Policy and Strategy which is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 The updated Strategic Risk Register which is attached at Appendix B

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The purpose of risk management is to effectively manage threats and leverage opportunities to achieve Council objectives. Risk management is not about eliminating risk or being risk averse, it is about being aware of and managing acceptable risk in the pursuit of the Council's agreed objectives.
- 3.2 The Risk Management Policy is a formal acknowledgement of the Council's commitment to managing risk and communicates why and how risk management is embedded into the Council's activities. The Risk Management Strategy provides an overview of the Council's Risk Management Framework, acting as a reference to those executing the process.
- 3.3 The Risk Management Policy and Strategy is a key element in the implementation of good governance arrangements and the Council's Governance Review process.
- 3.4 A review of the Council's risk management arrangements was undertaken by the Audit, Insurance and Fraud Manager, referencing best practice

guidance. This review identified the need to agree an updated Risk Management Policy and Strategy. This has been considered and developed in conjunction with Management Board and the wider Corporate Management Team and the Governance and Audit Committee who considered and agreed the revised Policy and Strategy at their meeting held on 24th August 2023. The revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy is attached at Appendix A.

- 3.5 The Risk Management Policy and Strategy sets out the Council's approach to risk management, including roles and responsibilities; and the risk matrix and risk appetite tables to be applied when measuring risk. A modified risk matrix is being proposed adopting a 5x5 matrix (previously 6x4). Risks will continue to be measured based upon likelihood and impact i.e., the likelihood of the risk materialising and the impact to the Council should the risk materialise to produce an overall risk rating. Risk will be assessed at the inherent uncontrolled state before any measures or controls are applied to treat the risk. This allows demonstration of the importance of controls and degree of reliance placed on them to mitigate the risk. This will be illustrated by a residual risk score.
- 3.6 Risk tolerance levels have been considered to set the Council's 'risk appetite'. As the Council is a diverse organisation, with statutory obligations, it has been recognised that it is not appropriate to set one level of risk appetite to be applied to all identified strategic risks. Risk owners will therefore assess the appropriate appetite for each risk captured within the strategic risk register to support decision-making and management of the risk.
- 3.7 The revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy recommends a revised format to be applied to the Strategic Risk Register. The revised format has been used in a management review of the risk register the updated version of which is attached at Appendix B.
- 3.8 The Council is involved in many partnerships, which will only continue to grow as the authority seeks to achieve its corporate goals and address its key challenges. The management of risk around partnerships has therefore been strengthened in this updated version of the Risk Management Policy and Strategy.
- 3.9 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver its Corporate Objective of being a high performing organisation that delivers excellent and value for money services, by demonstrating that the Council has robust arrangements in place for risk management.

4. Options

- 4.1 The report invites the Cabinet Governance to review the revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy and consider if they wish to propose any amendments before approval. An updated Strategic Risks Register is also

attached for consideration and approval.

4.2 The Cabinet may approve with/ without amendment.

5. Next Steps

5.1 The Strategic Risk Register will be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 4th October 2023.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications associated with this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are no new legal implications arising out of 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 The Council's processes and approach to equalities and diversity are well developed and are not regarded as a risk. Where appropriate, each project arising out of the management of a risk will consider an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.

9. List of Appendices

9.1 **Appendix A** – Risk Management Policy and Strategy.

9.2 **Appendix B** – Strategic Risk Register

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Strategic Risk report to Cabinet – [Agenda item 8a of meeting held on 6th February 2023](#)

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY & STRATEGY


Author:

- Angela Mitchell, Audit Insurance & Fraud Manager

Internal Consultees:

- Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director
- Phil Myers, Head of Finance
- Kim Cole, Monitoring Officer / Head of Governance
- Corporate Management Team

Background / Purpose of Risk management Policy and Strategy:

The purpose of risk management is to effectively manage threats and leverage opportunities to achieve Council objectives.

The Policy is a formal acknowledgement of the Council's commitment to managing risk and communicates why and how risk management is implemented.

The Strategy provides an overview of the Council's Risk Management Framework, acting as a reference to those executing the process.

Version Control:

This version supersedes 'Risk management Policy, Strategy and Implementation Plan (est 2003/4)' V1. (DRAFT) May 2023

Strategy & Policy Approval – Officer Level:

- Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director
- Phil Myers, Head of Finance

Strategy & Policy Approval – Member level:

- Governance & Audit Committee (to endorse and recommend to Cabinet for adoption) (Proposed date August 2023)
- Cabinet (to approve) (Proposed date September 2023)

Other Distribution:

- Council Intranet (the Beehive) – Corporate Policies & Governance
- Council website – Council Strategy and Policy Documents

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1. INTRODUCTION – RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

RISK MANAGEMENT – Risk is unavoidable, it is the effect of uncertainty on our ability to achieve objectives, perform duties or meet the expectations of our stakeholders. Effective risk management is crucial to achievement of outcomes and is a key element of strong governance.

- 1.1. Risk Management is a vital activity which underpins and forms part of the Council’s vision, values, and strategic objectives; it assists the Council to operate effectively and efficiently; and provides confidence to our community.
- 1.2. Risk exists in everything we do – the Council’s policy is to identify, assess and manage key risks, through embedding a proactive approach throughout all processes, projects, and strategic decisions. This includes procurement and contracting, and relationships with partners.
- 1.3. Risk management is most effective as an enabler, and the policy aims to provide a consistent, communicated, and formalised process. Our risk appetite defines the level of risk exposure which the Council considers to be acceptable, providing clarity over those risks which will threaten achievement of objectives.
- 1.4. The policy statement and supporting documentation form the Council’s framework for effective management of risks, and through this we provide assurance to stakeholders that risk identification and management is key to delivery of our strategy and related objectives.
- 1.5. Staff are involved and empowered to own, identify, and manage risk, supported by discussion and action by Senior Management. This includes review and confirmation of risks, and evaluation of mitigation strategies applied to reduce risk to an acceptable level wherever possible. The management of risk is an integral part of both strategic and operational planning and the day to day running, monitoring, development, and maintenance of the Council’s activities.
- 1.6. The Council’s Corporate Strategy sets the context within which the Council operates, and the direction of travel for the lifetime of the plan. The Corporate Strategy includes statements about the Council’s priorities which help to determine the Council’s risk appetite – the risk appetite is the amount of risk the Council is willing to take in the achievement of its priorities. Risk appetite will vary over time, for example in response to a change in ambition, priorities, and the regional or national landscape of local government. The Council’s overall approach to risk is:

To balance caution and innovation, seeking the right opportunities and minimising risk as effectively as possible. The Council is not willing to take risks which could cause significant negative consequences to our objectives, although in some cases the Council may have to accept higher risks due to the cost of controlling them or statutory obligations.

Signed: **Cabinet Portfolio Holder**

Signed: **Chief Executive**

Date:

Date:

2. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

2.1. Aims and Objectives

2.1.1. A good risk management process and culture will help protect reputation, improve resilience, reduce unexpected loss, demonstrate good governance, increase the effectiveness of change projects and programmes, and position the Council in a better place to meet strategic objectives and priorities through enabling delivery of desired outcomes.

2.1.2. The aims and objectives of the Risk Management Strategy are to manage threats and leverage opportunities to achieve Council objectives through:

- Integration of risk management into corporate culture
- Raising awareness of the need for risk management by those connected with service delivery
- Facilitating anticipation of and response to social, environmental, and legislative changes
- Mitigating the impact and / or likelihood of risks occurring, and minimising the total cost of risk

2.1.3. The Risk Management Strategy enables this through provision of a structured framework to identify, assess and manage risks, including:

- Risk management governance (including defined roles and responsibilities for managing risks)
- Risk identification, assessment, and prioritisation
- Risk treatment and control
- Reporting, monitoring and communication
- Integration of risk management in the Council’s culture through instilling attitudes and behaviours of risk awareness, management and control
- Ensuring working arrangements with Partners and Third Parties are informed by our approach to risk management and respective risk appetites and tolerances are aligned

2.2. Governance

2.2.1. The responsibility to manage risks rests with every Member and Officer of the Council, however there are **key roles and responsibilities** required for ensuring that a clear structure exists for the coordination and review of risk information, and ownership of the processes:

Group / Individuals	Role / Responsibilities
<p>Elected Members – Cabinet</p> <p>Overall ownership of the risk management process. Understand risks faced by the Council, use risk knowledge to inform strategic decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve strategic direction of risk management, including through approval of Council risk management policies and strategies • Determine the levels of risk and outcomes which are tolerable in achieving Council objectives • Approve the Strategic Risk Register and related Management Action Plans for managing the high rated risks • The Lead Member for Risk Management is the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance
<p>Elected Members – Portfolio Holders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Strategic risks within their portfolio are effectively managed through discussions with Senior Officers

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<p>Elected Members – Governance and Audit Committee Scrutiny and oversight of risk governance and risk profile, and monitor effectiveness of risk management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, scrutinise and challenge risk management processes • Endorse the Risk management Strategy and recommend it to Cabinet • Monitor development and operation of risk management including progress in addressing risk related issues reported to the Committee • Ensure the Code of Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement properly reflects the risk environment and the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s risk management framework • Review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Council from fraud and corruption
<p>Elected Members – General</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to review and development of the Strategic Risk Register, including through dedicated Member Development sessions
<p>Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team Champions risk awareness. Leads in identifying, owning and managing strategic risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on the risk management framework strategy and process • Identify, analyse, and prioritise strategic and cross cutting risk and monitor progress against action plans • Promote a culture of effective risk management and encourage staff to be open and honest in identifying risks or missed opportunities. • Support and promote the embedding of risk management such that it is practiced as part of usual activities, including the sharing of best practice and experience. Review implementation. • Contribute to the Code of Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement for submission to Members, including the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management arrangements
<p>Management Board Strategic Risk Owner Ultimate accountability for ensuring nominated risks are appropriately managed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures risk is assessed, managed, monitored, and reported, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider factors affecting inherent risk likelihood or impact ○ Review effectiveness of mitigating controls and impact on residual risk scoring ○ Update risk narrative to ensure accurate presentation to Management and Members
<p>Corporate Director – Support Services Lead Officer for the risk management process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and promote the Risk management Policy and Strategy and ensure it is regularly reviewed • Develop risk management controls in conjunction with Heads of Service and generally assist the Council to ensure an appropriate internal control environment exists • Arrange and administer insurance cover
<p>Corporate Directors and their Heads of Service Develop risk management culture, own control, and report on operational risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, analyse, prioritise, and report service operational risks, and identify risks for potential escalation to the Strategic Risk Register. Provide assurance on the effectiveness of controls to mitigate risks • Ensure reports and information include meaningful information on risks • Maintain business continuity plans, risk registers and action plans • Notify the Corporate Director (Support Services) of matters related to insurance requirements or claims • Manage processes to ensure established controls are applied and effective, provide evidence of controls and risk mitigation • Review controls in the light of change, implement new controls as necessary with guidance from the Corporate Director (Support Services)
<p>Risk Manager (Audit Insurance & Fraud Manager) Coordinates risk management activity on behalf of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement, and regularly review risk management policy, strategy and processes and provide advice on the same • Coordinate risk management process, prepare reports for the Corporate Management Team and Members, provide advice and support, and make recommendations to Management Board

APPENDIX A

<p>Council and provides link between risk management and related disciplines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate departmental risk profiles and assurance statements including for related disciplines • Arrange risk assessment and risk management training for staff
<p>External Audit and other review bodies Focus on financial risk, review and report on arrangements for managing risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the annual audit of financial statements, reviews and provides assurance on the adequacy of arrangements for managing risk and the control environment risk having due regard to statutory requirements and best practice
<p>Internal Audit Provide assurance to Senior Management and Members on risk management and governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align the Internal Audit Plan with Strategic risks, test controls for effectiveness, and provide advice on risks and controls • Review and challenge the effectiveness of the risk management framework, to provide assurance to Senior Management and the Governance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
<p>All employees Identify, assess, and help manage risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain awareness of risks, their impact and costs, and take ownership of the need to identify, assess and help manage risks in individual areas of responsibility • Bring to management attention at the earliest opportunity details of any emerging risks that may adversely impact service delivery

2.3. Risk Identification

2.3.1. The aim is to understand the potential impact of risk on the Council’s strategic and operational objectives. Failure to manage risks may lead to financial, reputational, legal, regulatory, safety, security, environmental, employee, customer, or operational consequences.

2.3.2. The Risk Management Process involves identifying, analysing, managing, and monitoring risks:



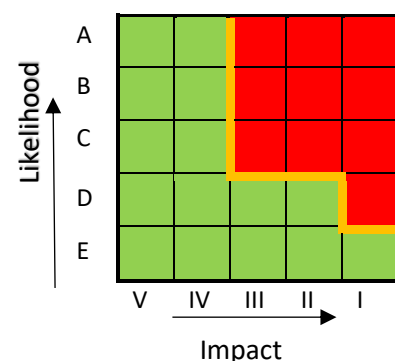
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- 2.3.3. Senior Management and Services should **identify risks**, and in doing so may consider internal information sources such as objectives, strategies, plans, financial arrangements, inspection outcomes etc, and also external sources such as professional guidance on trends and risks, and risks identified by other public sector organisations and partners. **Appendix 1** identifies a range of suggested risk areas for use as a prompt in identifying risks.
- 2.3.4. Arrangements for the identification of **Strategic Risks** include review by Management Board, and Members via Member Development sessions and reporting to / oversight by the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet.
- 2.3.5. **Operational Risks** are defined within Service Business Plans, with oversight by Corporate Directors / Heads of Service for each area within their remit, providing opportunity to escalate any risks considered to be of strategic importance.
- 2.3.6. **Project Risks** associated with the Council’s involvement in specific initiatives are identified as part of corporate project management protocols, with oversight in accordance with project governance arrangements.

2.4. Risk Assessment

- 2.4.1. This is the process of analysing and assessing risks. Risks are **assessed at the inherent / uncontrolled (gross risk) state** before any measures are applied to treat the risk, this allows demonstration of the importance of controls and the degree of reliance placed on them to mitigate the risk. The **residual risk (net risk with control measures in place)** is also assessed and plotted, allowing reflection on the significance of the controls applied, and demonstrating direction of travel for mitigation of each risk.
- 2.4.2. Risks are assessed in terms of **likelihood** (probability of the risk occurring) and **impact** (consequences if it did occur). The Council has adopted the following Risk Assessment Matrix – risks which fall in the **RED** zone are outside the tolerance level and require actions and controls to mitigate them.

<p>Likelihood:</p> <p>A – Very High B – High C – Significant D – Low E – Almost impossible</p>	<p>Impact:</p> <p>I – Catastrophic II – Critical III - Significant IV – Marginal V – Negligible</p>
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2.4.3. A rating grid providing additional guidance on the assessment of impact and likelihood is attached at **Appendix 2**.

- 2.4.4. Once assessed, risks are plotted on to a grid illustrating the Council’s risk appetite and tolerance.

2.5. Risk Appetite and Tolerance

2.5.1. **Risk appetite is a way of articulating how much risk the Council is willing to accept or tolerate in the pursuit of its corporate objectives and strategies**, balancing the propensity to take risk and the propensity to exercise control. Defining Risk Appetite provides a framework which informs decision making, and in defining risk appetite the Authority is able to:

- Enable managers making decisions to understand the degree to which they are permitted to expose the organisation to the consequences of an event or situation
- Prioritise risks for mitigation more effectively
- Better allocate resources
- Demonstrate consistent and more robust decision making around project and programme initiation

2.5.2. **Risk Appetite scales** are summarised as:

RISK APPETITE	DESCRIPTION
Averse	Avoiding risk is key objective – activities undertaken will be only those considered to carry virtually no inherent risk
Cautious	Safe options with low residual risk – accept some risk where potential benefit is significant. Activity may carry higher inherent risk, but this is deemed controllable to a large extent
Innovative	Innovative, options with greater uncertainty. Potential benefit may be higher, but activity carries high residual risk

2.5.3. The Council’s overall approach to risk is defined in the Risk Management Policy Statement (section 1 above), however the appetite for different types of risk will vary, for example the Council will be averse to safety risk exposure which could result in injury or loss of life, or where there is potential significant financial loss. Risk owners for strategic risks will assess the appropriate appetite for risks, to support decision making and management of the risk.

2.5.4. **Risk tolerance relates to the absolute boundaries of risk taking - the Council will respond to mitigate a risk where the tolerance level is exceeded.** The Council’s tolerance level is defined in para 2.4.2 above.



2.6. Risk Treatment & Control

2.6.1 Many risks identified during the first stage of the risk management process will have controls in place to mitigate them and an assessment will be made to determine their effectiveness in mitigating the risk to enable an informed decision to be made on any additional controls required. Risk action planning or treatment will address those risks considered to be at an unacceptably high level (outside approved tolerances).

2.6.2 For risks requiring additional treatment, there are four primary responses:

- **Terminate (avoid):** where the risk is undesirable / off-strategy or outside risk appetite, does not offer attractive reward, or we do not have the capability to manage the risk. Terminating includes stopping a process or activity completely.
- **Treat (reduce):** employ controls which reduce the likelihood or consequence(s) of the risk to within acceptable levels. Includes improvements to strategy, process, systems etc.
- **Transfer:** involves transferring the cost of the risk to a third party, for example insurance, contract, outsourcing
- **Tolerate (accept):** accept risk and do nothing to mitigate it. Such risks still need to be monitored and reviewed

RISK LEVEL	Options for mitigation of risk
MAJOR / UNACCEPTABLE RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terminate / avoid activity • Treat • Transfer • Tolerate (where no other options / last resort / Statutory function)
MODERATE RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat • Transfer
MINOR RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat (if cost not prohibitive) • Tolerate / accept

2.7. Risk Register

2.7.1. Risk owners will be assigned to each risk, and will develop action plans to record the mitigating controls, including target completion dates

2.7.2. The risk register format attached at **Appendix 3** is intended to provide a clear summary for reporting to Management Board and Members, whilst risk owners are likely to record additional information for their own risk oversight and management purposes.

2.8. Reporting, Monitoring and Communication

2.8.1. **Strategic Risks** are reviewed by:

- **Management Board** - twice a year
- **Cabinet** – twice a year
- **Governance and Audit Committee** – twice a year
- **Additional review by Members at Members Development Evenings**

2.8.2. **Operational Risks** are reviewed by:

- Heads of Service and Directors as part of annual Business Planning and during plan monitoring, including to identify any risks requiring monitoring at strategic level
- Cabinet Portfolio Holders as part of Business Plan review and approval

2.7.3 **Health and Safety Risks** are reviewed by:

- Management Board / Corporate Director with responsibility for Health & Safety / Head of Environment / Sustainability Manager – as part of normal management oversight arrangements
- Corporate Health Safety & Welfare Committee - quarterly
- Cabinet – quarterly

2.8.3. **Fraud Risks** – are reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee

2.8.4. **Business Continuity Risks**

- The main threats with the potential to disrupt services, and actions to minimise their impact, are identified in service **Business Continuity Plans** and corporate procedures are in place to enable a coordinated response to a disruptive event involving Council premises, staff, Members, contractors, or suppliers.
- The specific threats associated with ICT facilities, and actions to minimise their impact are identified in the **ICT Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Plan**
- Business Continuity plans are subject to annual review and periodic testing

2.8.5. **Other Risk Registers – Such as for Significant Projects and Contracts** are reviewed by:

- Project Boards or Steering Groups convened for oversight of a specific project, contract, or activity

2.8.6. This Policy will be accessible to all employees via the staff Intranet (the Beehive), and to Members and stakeholders via the Council's internet page www.braintree.gov.uk.

2.9. Partners and Third Parties

2.9.1. Many public services and community projects are now delivered through different forms of partnership, involving public, private and third sectors. *Partners are defined here as 'organisations with which we work to deliver corporate objectives, with a formal agreement of roles, contract, funding agreement, or service level agreement'.*

2.9.2. Partnerships are exposed to risks and should be managed accordingly – risks can arise from:

- Fundamental differences in agenda, strategy and objectives, legislative and regulatory environments, or governance arrangements
- Poor communication
- Resource constraints or lack of skills
- Lack of agreement on respective roles

2.8.3 Effective partnership risk management is aided by:

- Senior management team encompassing members from all organisations within the partnership, who support own and lead on risk management

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- An approved risk management framework – risks should be identified, managed, and reported on an ongoing basis
- Clear ownership of every risk identified
- A partnership culture supporting well thought through risk taking and innovation
- Risk management considerations embedded in management processes and consistently applied throughout all partnership activities

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APPENDIX 1 – RISK IDENTIFICATION

Suggested risk areas to use as a prompt in identifying risks:

STRATEGY RISKS	Poorly defined, based on inaccurate data, not communicated, performance not managed, or fails to support delivery due to changing environment (e.g. political, economic, social, technological, environmental or legislative change)
GOVERNANCE RISKS	Unclear plans priorities or accountabilities, ineffective oversight of decision making or performance, plans based on inaccurate social profiles, leadership & authority, democratic change
OPERATIONS RISKS	Inadequate or ineffective processes resulting in fraud, error, impaired quality or quantity, non-compliance, or poor value for money. Environmental impact from Council activity e.g. pollution, emissions, energy efficiency
LEGAL RISKS	Arising from Defective transaction, claim or other event resulting in liability or loss, failure to take measures to meet legal or regulatory requirements, or to protect assets (e.g. intellectual property). Risks in professional judgement activity
PROPERTY RISKS	Risks arising from property deficiencies or poorly designed or ineffective / inefficient safety management resulting in non-compliance and / or harm and suffering to employees, contractors, service users or public
FINANCIAL RISKS	Not managing finance in accordance with requirements and constraints, accounting & reporting, delegation & limits of authority, resulting in poor returns from investment, failure to manage assets / liabilities or to obtain value for money from resources deployed, or non-compliant financial reporting, fraud & corruption
COMMERCIAL RISKS	Weaknesses in the management of commercial partnerships, supply chains and contractual requirements, governance, legacy issues, or competition for service users, resulting in poor performance, inefficiency, poor value for money, fraud, or failure to meet business objectives
PEOPLE RISKS	Arising from ineffective leadership or engagement, sub-optimal culture, inappropriate behaviours, insufficient capacity / capability, industrial action, recruitment or retention, non-compliance with relevant employment legislation or HR policy resulting impact on performance
SAFETY RISKS	Arising from deficiencies or poor hazard management in buildings and physical assets, resulting in non-compliance or harm to employees, contractors, service users or the public
TECHNOLOGY RISKS	Arising from technology not delivering the expected services due to inadequate or deficient system / process development and performance or inadequate resilience, unreliable data, cyber-crime, capacity to deal with change, product reliability, integration of systems
INFORMATION RISKS	Arising from failure to produce robust, suitable, or appropriate data / information, or to exploit it to its full potential
SECURITY RISKS	Arising from failure to prevent unauthorised / inappropriate access to information, including cyber security and non-compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
PROJECT / PROGRAMME RISKS	Change programmes not aligned to strategic priorities or do not deliver requirements and benefits to time, cost, and quality
REPUTATIONAL RISKS	Arising from adverse events including ethical, sustainability, systemic failure, or poor quality, leading to damage to trust and relations, and interventions

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APPENDIX 2 – RATING RISK IMPACT AND LIKELIHOOD

The following rating grid provides additional detail to help users assess the impact and likelihood of risks

ASSESSING IMPACT:

		Service Delivery	Finance & Resources	Reputation	Compliance / Legal / Regulatory	People H&S and Safeguarding	Effect on Project Objectives
I	Catastrophic / Very High / Major	Unable to deliver in medium / long term Complete breakdown of service delivery, severe prolonged impact, affects wider organisation. Failure of strategic partnership	Very significant financial loss Substantial failure in accountability or integrity Large financial loss over 50% of budget or greater than £1m Total loss of critical building	Total loss of trust, credibility and support Vote of no confidence in one service area Officers or Members forced to resign or secretary of state intervention Substantial adverse & persistent national media coverage	Very serious breach/loss of contract/very high financial loss. Risk of imprisonment Breach of law, action very difficult / impossible to defend	Real potential for fatal injury Death of one or more individuals	Complete failure of project
II	Critical / High	Disruption to delivery of key service for 1 to 2 weeks Failure of operational partnership	Sizeable financial loss up to 50% of budget / between £100k-£1m Extensive damage to critical building or considerable damage to several properties from one source	Criticism of key process Large scandal High levels of complaints at corporate level across several service areas Adverse national media coverage	Breach of law / major statutory process resulting in legal action which would be difficult to defend	Reportable major injury to one or more people	Extreme delay, project unlikely to achieve anticipated significant benefits
III	Significant	Disruption to delivery of services for 3-5 days	Financial loss: £50k to £100k Significant damage to buildings	Criticism of operations, scandal, complaints relating to specific service area. Adverse local media coverage	Significant breach of statutory process, duty or law, legal action or intervention likely	Reportable significant injury	Significant adverse impact on project and project benefits Considerable slippage impacting on overall finances / programme
IV	Marginal / Medium / Moderate	Widespread dissatisfaction Disrupted service delivery up to 3 days Can handle but some difficulty	Moderate financial loss: £10k-£50k Unable to delivery popular policies due to budget constraint Substantial damage to one part of building	Negative effect on perception (criticism or local bad press)	Minor breach of statutory process, duty or law, legal action is possible / likely	Minor injury	Adverse impact on project or most of expected benefits Some project slippage With possible impact on overall finances / programme

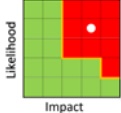
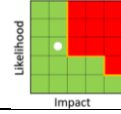



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IV	Negligible / Very Low / Minor	Minor / short term interruption Minor service disruption, Local dissatisfaction, may result in complaints	Negligible loss Small financial loss less than £10k. Negligible/slight damage to property	Minor concerns No or minimal adverse effect on perception e.g. minor criticism of Council)	Very minor / near miss breach No legal implication	No injury or damage to wellbeing	Minimal impact to project Minor slippage
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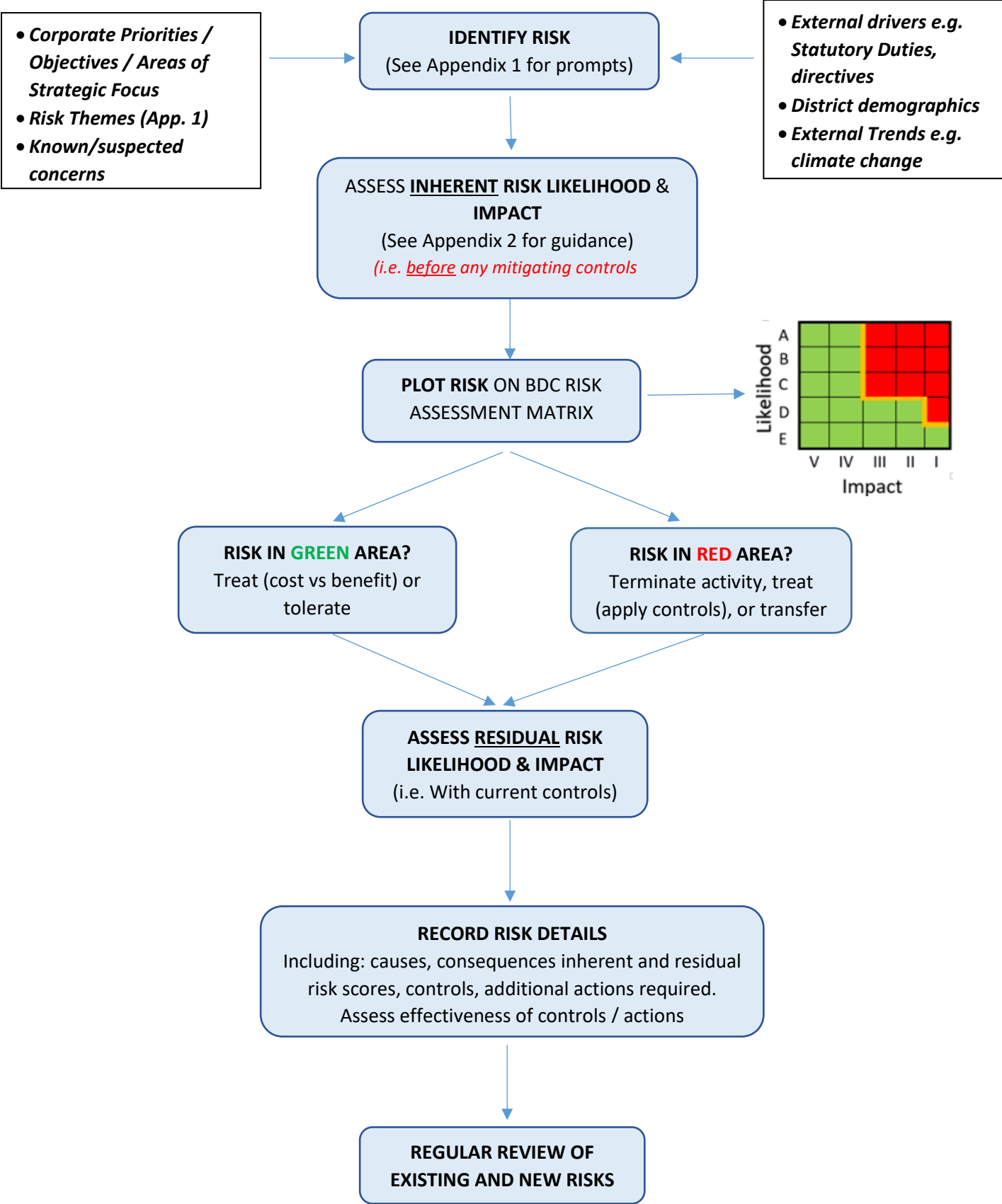
ASSESSING LIKELIHOOD

Score	Likelihood	Description
A	Very High: Definite / almost certain	The event is expected to occur or occurs regularly
B	High: Very likely / probably	The event will probably occur (annually)
C	Significant / Medium: Likely / possible	The event may occur (1 incident in 2 years)
D	Low: Unlikely / rare	The event could occur (1 incident in 5 years)
E	Almost Impossible	The event is unlikely to occur

APPENDIX 3 – RISK REGISTER FORMAT

<p>1. Risk Headline <i>E.g. Medium term Financial Strategy</i> <i>Risk Description e.g. The Council is unable to set a balanced budget and have a deliverable Financial Strategy over the medium term</i> Risk Owner: <i>Corporate Director (SB)</i> Cabinet Member Owner: <i>Cllr Kevin Bowers</i> Link to Corporate Priorities: <i>eg 'A balanced budget is essential to delivery of all priorities'</i></p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	<i>E.g. High</i>	<i>E.g. Critical / High</i>		<i>E.g. Cautious – safe delivery options with low residual risk but restricted potential for reward/return</i>
Residual Risk Rating	<i>E.g. Significant</i>	<i>E.g. Marginal</i>		
Direction of Travel			e.g.:   	
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p><i>E.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Additional spending arising from Covid-19 and associated reduction in income from fees and charges, and Council Tax / Business Rates collection rates</i> - - 			<p><i>E.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Planned savings not achieved, shortfall in resources leading to service cuts and increased use of balances or rushed decisions to identify other savings (in year and future years)</i> - - 	
Current Controls:				
<p><i>E.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>MTFS and Budget setting processes involving management board & Members, balanced base budget set for 2021/22.</i> - <i>Maintain unallocated balance above minimum of £1.5m</i> 				
EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective / partially effective / not effective				
Additional Actions Required				
Corporate Director – SB				
<p><i>E.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Timely reporting of Budget variations (Target date)</i> - <i>Continued close monitoring of cashflow, budgeted income and expenditure including ensuring costs reductions and income delivered on time / as budgeted (Target date)</i> - - 				

APPENDIX 4 - RISK MANAGEMENT QUICK GUIDE



APPENDIX 5 – PARTNERSHIP RISKS

Partnership working is key to delivery of corporate priorities. Officers engaging in partnerships will adopt a proportionate approach to assessment of partnership risks, this Appendix is intended to assist in the [assessment of risks to the Council associated with engaging in partnerships](#). The Council’s Constitution (16.8) contains further direction concerning arrangements for approving partnership frameworks and ensuring proper accounting arrangements and consideration of implications.

Each Partnership will determine its own governance and risk management arrangements, the following reflects considerations for the Council in engaging with partnerships.

Significance of Partnership: The Council has a number of arrangements in place which are not classed as significant partnerships and will therefore not require the same degree of review and monitoring. The following are indicators of the scale and significance of the partnership to the Council.

- Financial Commitment from the Council – *the extent of financial, resource and equipment costs to the partnership required of the Council.*
- Impact on Council objectives – *to what extent will the success or failure of the partnership affect the achievement of corporate priorities and objectives?*
- Procurement Complexity – *are contracts involved, and if so, what risks are associated with the delivery of the contracts? If the Council is the lead partner, will the Council bear those risks?*
- Organisational Impact – *will the partnership require new business processes, training or restructuring?*
- Legal Requirements – *will the partnership contribute to or directly link to the Council’s legal responsibilities?*

Detailed Risk Management is not necessary for **Low Risk ‘Partnerships’** (i.e. those with low financial or resource commitment, no or minimal impact on corporate objectives, no or minimal organisational impact, no impact on delivery of the Council’s legal requirements, and no contracts).

NB Special interest / professional groups convened for networking and collaboration on best practice, but without risks or liabilities, are not considered to be ‘Partnerships’ for the purpose of this briefing.

High Risk Partnerships will require more comprehensive management of risks as follows

<p>There is a clear business need for the partnership and engaging with the partnership</p>	<p><i>Consider alternative vehicles for achieving the desired outcome – are Partnership objectives consistent with Council priorities and is the Partnership the best way to achieve our objectives and priorities</i></p>
<p>There are clear Terms of Reference for the partnership, identifying:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - partnership objectives - governance and legal status - accountability - financial arrangements - partnership exit strategy 	<p><i>Are the liabilities of the Council and other partners, and respective roles and responsibilities, clear?</i></p> <p><i>Are they consistent with Council priorities, principles, Constitution, Rules, and ethics?</i></p> <p><i>Will the procurement of goods and services be consistent with Council protocols?</i></p> <p><i>Are funding arrangements, and responsibilities for the financial management, accounts and audit arrangements for the Partnership, clear?</i></p>

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	<i>Are there any taxation issues?</i>
Robust business case	<i>Does the business case justify the Council's engagement with the partnership Are resource implications for the Council clear (staff, premises etc)</i>
Arrangements for Monitoring Performance / Measuring Success	<i>Are responsibilities and reporting arrangements clear, are the right things measured</i>
Arrangements for managing and monitoring Partnership Risks	<i>Is Partnership risk management clear and robust, with appropriate review and responsibility assigned</i>
Approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cabinet - S151 Officer - Corporate Directors and Heads of Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Cabinet is responsible for approving delegations including frameworks for partnerships – Lead Officer to ensure appropriate approval obtained</i> - <i>S151 Officer to ensure proper accounting arrangements</i> - <i>Corporate Directors / Heads of Service to ensure the full implications of any partnership are explored and that Finance and Legal officers are consulted at an early stage</i>

RISKS TO THE PARTNERSHIP:

If the Council is the lead authority in the partnership, it will seek agreement from partners to adopt the Council's approach to Risk Management for partnership risks. Partnership risks may include:

- **Poorly defined shared vision and objectives** – *there should be no conflict between Partnership vision and objectives, and the corporate objectives of partners.*
- **Engagement of Partners** (for the expected duration of the partnership) – *governance arrangements should identify how key roles and responsibilities are allocated and address how the Partnership will deal with the exit of individual partners or the termination of the partnership.*
- **Financial & Resource Commitments** - *Is funding required for project costs? How will projects be funded and what are the implications if funding is not received. Are responsibilities for financial management, accounts, and audit arrangements clear and recognised as part of the financial commitment? Are there any taxation issues?*
- **Delivery targets not met** – *are there arrangements for monitoring and reporting performance and delivery, how will failure be managed?*
- **Stakeholder Engagement** – *have all Stakeholders been identified and protocols for engagement and communication identified?*
- **Operational Risks** – *Are technical and operation risks being managed? For example, relating to: people, assets, data and technology*

Acknowledgements & Reference:

ALARM (Association of Local Authority Risk Managers) – Risk Management Toolkit 2021

ALARM National Performance Model for Risk Management in Public Services

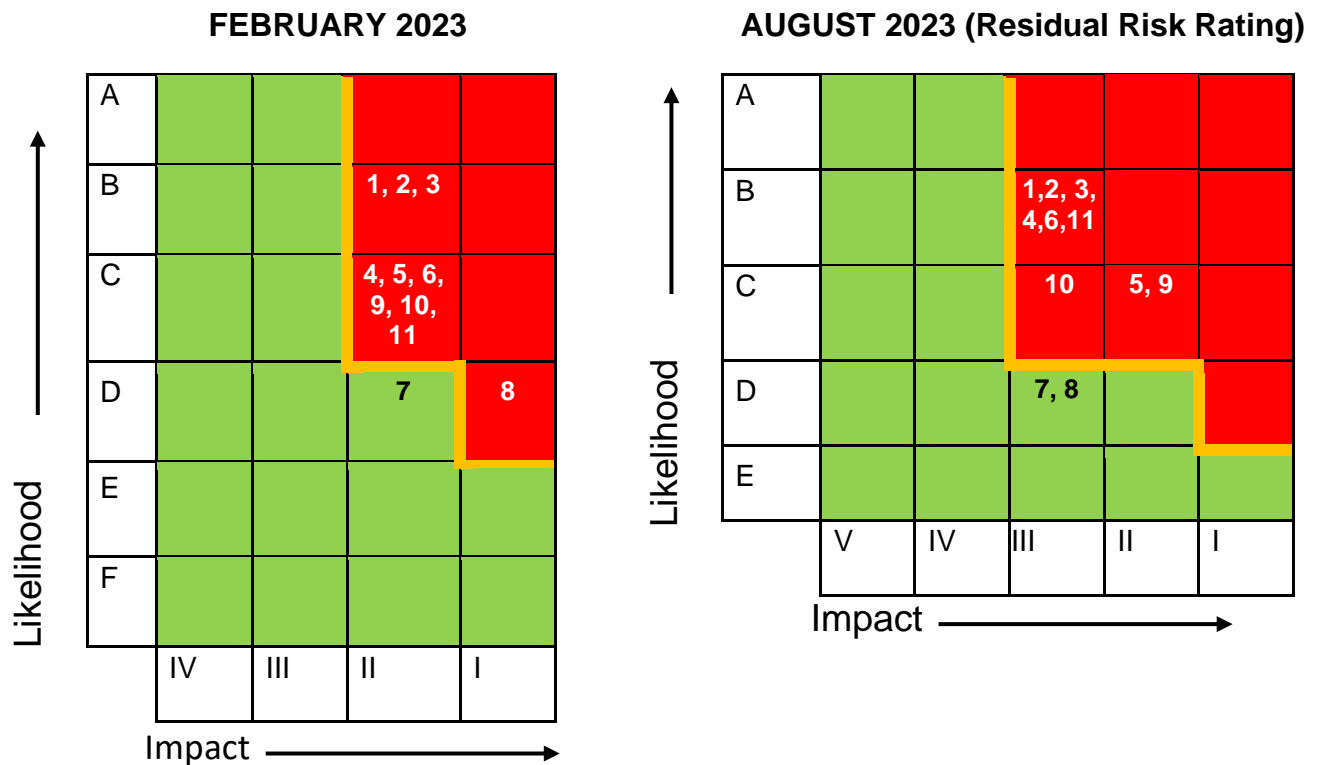
HM Government Orange Book – Management of Risk Principles and Concepts 2020

HM Government Finance Function Orange Book – Risk Appetite Guidance 2021

The Institute of Risk Management – Risk Appetite and Tolerance

STRATEGIC RISK PROFILE

(Last reviewed by Members via Cabinet February 2023)

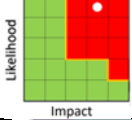
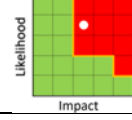



Likelihood:	Impact:
A – Very High	I – Catastrophic
B – High	II – Critical
C – Significant	III - Significant
D – Low	IV – Marginal
E – Almost impossible	V – Negligible

Risk 1: Medium Term Financial Strategy
Risk 2: Economic Development
Risk 3: Planning
Risk 4: Community Resilience
Risk 5: Service and project Delivery
Risk 6: Affordable Housing & Homelessness
Risk 7: Return on Investments
Risk 8: Emergency Planning
Risk 9: Information Management & Cyber Security
Risk 10: Strategic Investment
Risk 11: Climate Change

Note: The risk assessment matrix has been changed since the last review

RISK APPETITE	DESCRIPTION
Averse	Avoiding risk is key objective – activities undertaken will be only those considered to carry virtually no inherent risk
Cautious	Safe options with low residual risk – accept some risk where potential benefit is significant. Activity may carry higher inherent risk, but this is deemed controllable to a large extent
Innovative	Innovative, options with greater uncertainty. Potential benefit may be higher, but activity carries high residual risk

<p>Risk 1. Medium term Financial Strategy & Financial Resilience The Council is unable to set a balanced budget without impacting significantly on service delivery and performance and have a deliverable financial strategy over the medium term.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (SB) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers</p> <p>Corporate Priorities: A balanced budget is essential to enable delivery of all priorities</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	Very High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		
Direction of Travel				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p>Significant short/ medium term impact of pay and price inflation and a higher interest rate environment. Global supply chain impacted by the ongoing war in Ukraine and sanctions. Geo-political and economic outlook remains volatile.</p> <p>Cost of living crisis and economic downturn impact on the finances of residents and businesses.</p> <p>The absence of a long-term financial agreement with central government making future financial planning very difficult and without certainty over grants and retained business rates. Many streams of government funding is currently subject to bidding rounds.</p> <p>Future reforms of Local Government Finance system and potential impact on medium-longer term finances.</p> <p>Changes in demand for property and/ or ability of tenants to meet lease obligations.</p> <p>Funding streams from third parties & partners experiencing their own financial pressures with the risk to either changes or withdrawal of their level of contributions or an inability to meet contractual obligations.</p> <p>Future capital receipts are subject to demand or decisions on planning or other triggers exercised by third parties.</p> <p>Legislative changes e.g., Environment Act 2021 secondary legislation, Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill.</p> <p>Audit of prior year accounts have been delayed meaning that assurance has not been confirmed by the external auditor on the 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 accounts alongside the recently published draft 2022/23 accounts.</p> <p>Plans to address financial shortfall over the medium-term do not deliver the savings or additional income required or at the pace required.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Income falls across multiple streams leading to shortfall in budget and ability to fund ongoing services. - Collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates impacted. Income from business rate effected by rating appeals. - Assumptions made in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are found to be incorrect. Pay and other expenditure increases above levels provided in budgets leading to overspends and/ or unplanned cuts in services or use of balances. - Reduction in government funding and a reset to business rate retention reducing income gains from accumulated growth. - Restricted ability to invest for the long-term through capital to either maintain asset base or meet the Councils priorities and aspirations. - Unplanned increase in borrowing impacting adversely on the revenue account through higher financing charges. - Need to instigate recovery plans at short notice leading to unplanned savings and impact on services. - Changes to usable resources that have been taken into account for financial planning & budget due to changes required post-audit. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unplanned use of reserves & balances impacting on resilience & ability to invest reserves as intended. - Unable to set balanced budget – Section 151 Officer must issue S114 Notice. Potential trigger for government intervention.
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Current Controls:

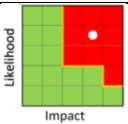
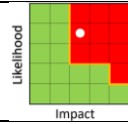

- Annual review of MTFS updating the current and 3-year horizon. Assumptions are kept under review and sensitivity analysis of key variables.
- Annual review and in-year monitoring of reserves.
- In-year budget monitoring and forecasting at regular intervals reported to Management Board and the Cabinet. Review includes progress against achieving savings reflected in budget.
- The Authority has demonstrated in the past that Corporate Management & Members will implement corrective recovery action when necessary to ensure spending is brought into line with Budget.
- Minimum balances level increased to £3m as part of the 2023/24 budget process. Current balances exceed this level.
- Earmarked reserves set aside in addition to general balances to help mitigate risks from fluctuations in income from business rates, recycling material, and treasury management.
- A developing strategy on meeting the projected funding shortfall estimated in the MTFS over the medium-term through a transformation programme and the Investment & Development Programme (IDP).
- Monitoring financial viability of key contract partners and commercial property tenants.
- Monitoring of the disposal of assets and other capital receipts against planned timescale for receipt of sale proceeds.
- New Homes Bonus and gain share from Business Rate Pooling are currently not being used to support base budget, but instead investment.
- Development of capital plans in accordance with the Capital Strategy with full financial appraisal and revenue implications. Oversight through a Capital Programme Board.

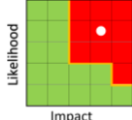
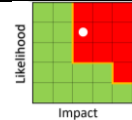

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective

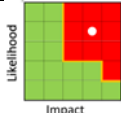
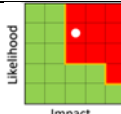
Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director & Section 151 Officer

- Horizon scanning of government announcements concerning Local Government Finance and participate in any consultations.
- Work with other Essex authorities and Local Government representative bodies to lobby Central Government for resources and greater certainty for financial planning.
- Continuation of development of MTFS and sensitivity/ stress testing of assumptions
- Develop strategy to deal with potential for DLUHC not continuing with statutory regulations mitigating accounting requirement for long-term polled fund investments.
- Develop & embed transformation agenda across the Authority linked to achievable targets for savings/ additional income

<p>Risk 2. Economic Growth The impacts of Covid and 'Brexit' have combined with international market issues and international socio/political disruption have severely impacted on the economy, including in Braintree District. This could lead to declining employment, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and productivity.</p>				
<p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC)</p>		<p>Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Frankie Ricci</p>		
<p>Link to Corporate Priorities: Connecting People and Places / Promoting Prosperity</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		
Direction of Travel				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
Long term impact of Covid and Brexit on businesses Inflation rises on the cost of materials and staffing Energy cost rises which have squeezed businesses operating costs Lack of workforce available with the right skills			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the District economy is reduced then this could lead to job losses, company closures and a reduction in the standard of living for residents of the District as well as loss of livelihoods for business owners. - Business rates collection less than anticipated 	
Current Controls:				
The Economic Growth Strategy 2023 was agreed in March with an action plan of projects The Council is the host of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB), a partnership of 6 local authorities working together to deliver economic growth A NEEB strategy has just been approved and an action plan is being developed Braintree business newsletter with over 3000 subscribers and closed Facebook page for businesses to network and share opportunities and best practice. Programme of projects developed through Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to support businesses in the district. Strong working relationships with skills providers, Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and other stakeholders working to support business and skills development				
EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective (as far as BDC influence can go)				
Additional Actions Required				
Corporate Director (DC)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop the Locate Braintree District website and inward investment marketing campaigns to attract businesses to locate and grow in Braintree District - Continue to develop our business engagement and support offer, including regular networking meetings, to understand what the businesses need from the authority - Deliver the actions as set out in the Economic Strategy Action Plan 				

<p>Risk 3. Planning Changes to the planning systems</p> <p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Spray</p> <p>Link to Corporate Priorities: Connecting People and Places / Promoting Prosperity</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		
Direction of Travel				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p>The government has indicated it is seeking to make substantial changes to the planning system, although none of these changes have been confirmed. This has led to uncertainty and instability in the system.</p> <p>A downturn in the economy could lead to a reduction in housebuilding in the district which would mean the Council failing to meet its housing delivery targets</p> <p>The change in the required number of homes to be built each year in the district has led to a significant backlog of homes to be built which has impacted on the Councils ability to show a 5year housing land supply</p> <p>The Council is involved in five Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) which whilst being determined by government, are extremely time consuming for officers to engage with and respond to the substantial information required to tight timescales.</p> <p>Planning and other related specialist areas are difficult to recruit to and this has led to vacancies within the teams.</p>			<p>Planning may need to be approved on residential sites outside of those allocated in the Local Plan</p> <p>Reduction in staff resources or increased workload could impact on our ability to meet national government targets</p> <p>Inability to participate in NSIP proposals on behalf of residents</p>	
Current Controls:				
<p>Braintree Local Plan adopted to provide the strategic direction for growth and development</p> <p>Staffing levels are delivering the performance needed on targets of efficiency and effectiveness set by government.</p> <p>Performance Planning Agreements (PPAs) are negotiated on most of the larger applications including the NSIPs</p> <p>Strong communication plan including press releases on important issues, regular bulletins and quick responses to social media and press queries.</p> <p>Involvement and ability to influence regional planning matters with staff members being chair of the Essex Planning Officers Association, Biodiversity Net Gain working group, Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy working group and being part of a range of other regional groups</p> <p>Members forum introduced and changes to the Planning Committee and Local Plan sub committee constitutions to make them appropriate and fit for purpose.</p> <p>The Council is involved in a project with Suffolk CC to enhance local authority capacity and skills on NSIP projects</p>				
EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective (as far as BDC influence can go)				
Additional Actions Required				
Corporate Director (DC)				
<p>Recruit to vacant roles within the wider service to ensure that staff and specialist resources are available to support the planning process</p> <p>Consider and respond to changes in national planning policy framework, guidance and legislation</p> <p>Continue to hold regular meetings with developers and stakeholders</p>				

<p>Risk 4 Community Resilience Food and child poverty, health inequalities, lack of skills and lower paid employment exacerbated by cost-of-living crisis and welfare changes mean the Community may not have resilience, leading to increased demand for Council and other Public Sector services.</p>				
<p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (CR) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Mary Cunningham</p>				
<p>Corporate Priorities: Supporting our Communities</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		
Direction of Travel (as at 14/08/2023)			↑	
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p>Cost of living increases are affecting residents' ability to live financially sustainably without support. The number of residents has increased and the impact on those residents has also increased.</p> <p>Employment levels are high, but average pay for those who live and work in the district is lower than other areas of Essex.</p> <p>There is a significant difference in life expectancy and health outcomes for the most and least deprived wards in the district.</p> <p>People may not take opportunities to live an active lifestyle and will be more susceptible to physical and mental health issues as a result.</p> <p>There is a growing population of older people in the district who may require increased support.</p> <p>Charities have been affected financially since the pandemic and are less able to access previous income streams. There are not enough volunteers to enable them to continue in the role that they have been in supporting communities previously. The lack of volunteers is also impacting on the availability of community transport.</p> <p>The rural nature of the district makes it more difficult for some of our residents to access services.</p> <p>Some residents have concerns about community safety and crime rates in their area. Community Safety remains a key priority for residents.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for services from the Council and other public sector organisations increases which exceed capacity. • Increased health inequalities. • Increase in number of households in fuel and food poverty and increase in number of children in poverty. • People feel more socially isolated and lonely. • People have an increased risk of suffering from physical or mental health issues. • Charities are less able to support communities and there are less volunteers. • Requests for Discretionary Housing Payments and/or Exceptional Hardship Fund payments exceed resources allocated. 	
Current Controls:				
<p>Supporting residents to be healthy and live well working with a range of partners through the Livewell Boards and the Health and Wellbeing Panel.</p>				

A Cost-of-Living Partnership group has been created to respond to emerging issues. Braintree District Council is investing £1 million over two years to support residents with issues around cost of living.

Work with Braintree, Halstead, and Witham Citizens Advice (CA); Eastlight Community Housing; and DWP to assist those affected by income and welfare changes. We have a Community Employment Support Officer who is working to support those with barriers to employment. Funded by DWP but embedded in BDC to ensure support can be given to those who most need it.

Key partnerships exist across public sector and the community and voluntary sector to support community and population issues, including:

- Community Safety Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Local Cultural Education Partnership

BDC's Councillors' Community Grant Fund Programme continues in 23/24. BDC Grant Funding continues to be provided to Community360 to help support the voluntary sector and also the CA to provide advice.

The Braintree District and Eastlight Community Fund provides grants totalling approx. £100,000 annually to projects that help improve health and well-being, increase aspirations and opportunities, or develop skills through training.

Our Health and Wellbeing Board continues to deliver a range of projects to support people to LiveWell across the district, tackling priority areas of health. There are specific sub groups to deal with key issues, including:

- Mental Health Forum
- Dementia Action Alliance
- Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum
- Active Braintree Network
- Holiday Hunger & School Holiday activities

Our Community Safety Partnership delivers an annual plan to respond to current and emerging priorities in order to reduce crime and disorder.

The Council is in the second year of our levelling up programme, part funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: partially effective

Additional Actions Required

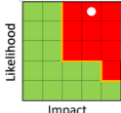
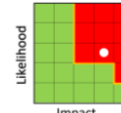

Ensure continued work with the Health and Wellbeing Panel and other partners to identify and respond to community needs.

Continue to provide regular updates on activity to support residents through cost-of-living issues.

Regular reviews of the impact the welfare changes are having on those affected by reforms and work with key partners.

Support Community 360 to provide assistance to charities and community groups across the district.

The Council is working with key partners to respond to the levelling up white paper and key missions. This will seek to tackle a number of highlighted vulnerabilities and triggers identified in the community resilience risk.

<p>Risk 5: Service and Project Delivery The organisation is unable to deliver services or projects either due to unavailability of staff or inability to fill key roles or lack of access to digital/traditional infrastructure</p> <p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (SB) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers</p> <p>Corporate Priorities: Delivering and Innovating</p>					
RISK SCORE		Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating		<i>Very High</i>	<i>Critical</i>		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating		<i>Significant</i>	<i>Critical</i>		
Direction of Travel					
Risk Cause(s)				Risk Consequence(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to key technological systems is either limited or removed through systems failures, cyber-attacks, provider failures, failure of digital infrastructure or similar - Staff are unable to access key delivery locations or to provide services due to restricted or denied access to traditional infrastructure such as buildings, roads, public transport or electrical, energy and fuel supplies - Key operational assets are unavailable either through failures in procurement, crime or other events that restricts or denies organisation the ability to deliver services - Significant numbers of staff or key individuals are unable to work due to widespread sickness as a result of a pandemic - Inability to recruit to roles due to highly competitive labour market and decreased offer and desirability of the sector - Failure of third parties such as providers, suppliers or partners, to deliver current services/products or at current service levels or at budgeted prices - Failure to meet regulatory or legislative requirements resulting in an incident requiring response - Major incident occurs requiring a significant amount of BDC resource to make a response - Corporate and additional projects resourcing requirements conflict with the delivery of BAU - Industrial action restricts availability of significant numbers, key individuals impacting on service delivery 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services delivery is reduced or halted for a period of time that begins to have a significant impact on safety or wellbeing of citizens or employees - Service delivery is reduced or halted for a period of time that begins to have a significant impact on the quality of life in the district - Service delivery is reduced or halted for a period of time that begins to have a significant impact on the reputation of the organisation - Projects are unable to be delivered or suffer from material or significant delay, therefore delaying delivery of outputs and outcomes and potentially increasing costs - Supply chain issues increase costs of projects making them unviable or reducing the cost/benefit ratio - Statutory or regulatory requirements are not delivered resulting in punitive action by regulators - Organisational priorities are not delivered - Sickness levels increase and morale decreases 	
Current Controls:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People strategy and workforce development plans - Workforce planning and succession planning included in business plans - Flexible approach to recruitment, including the provision of market supplements when and where appropriate - Support arrangements including mental health first aiders, employee assistance programme and wellness at work programme in place - Sickness management process in place and managers supported by HR - Employee benefit scheme in place including childcare vouchers, reward scheme and other perks - Cyber security measures in place including training of users - Regular server and workstation upgrades and ensuring latest version of software is used - Disaster recovery plan, including emergency generator, independent resilient network, alternative accommodation identification 					

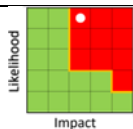
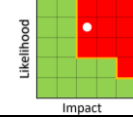

- Business continuity plans in place, tested through planned exercise
- Mandatory training in place to ensure all staff understand regulatory and statutory requirements
- Transformation Reserve in place to support resources required to delivery transformation
- Planning for potential different service delivery models for key contracts
- Effective learning and development opportunities to support and train existing staff into technical roles

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective

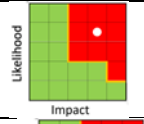
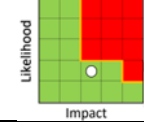

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (SB)

- Development and delivery of Transformation Programme. Shared Service element has a key outcome of improved staffing resilience so will play key role in addressing this risk. Other elements of Transformation programme should also be designed to address this risk
- Development of Transformation Programme to include a comprehensive resource plan including requirements for backfill and third-party support
- Further consideration of potential short-term impacts of climate change on service and project delivery and what adaptations are needed to address

<p>Risk 6: Affordable Housing & Homelessness The Council is unable to balance the demand for accommodation with the supply, so that increasing numbers of households require homelessness assistance</p>				
<p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (CR) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Lynette Bowers-Flint</p>				
<p>Corporate Priorities: Connecting People and Places / Supporting Our Communities</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	Very High	Significant		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		
Direction of Travel				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p><u>Local / UK Domestic Factors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mortgage rate rises: increase in number of repossessions and buy-to-let landlords raising rents to mitigate their increased costs. - Impact of the increase in cost of living: households, particularly in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) experiencing affordability issues - Freeze in Local Housing Allowance Rates: increasing the gap between actual rent and the benefit support available. - Reduced PRS availability and resulting increased market competition: reduced opportunity to relieve homelessness through offer of accommodation in PRS market. - Renters (Reform) Bill: PRS Landlords exiting the market. - Increase in 'County Line' and other gang-related activity - Increased competition for hotels: households placed further afield. - Continued impact of the pandemic: increase in number of people presenting with mental health needs. - Delayed delivery of final stage of Rough Sleeper pathway: Residents of first stage accommodation are unable to move on, therefore the accommodation does not become available for other individuals or residents are asked to vacate without suitable alternative accommodation, leading to potential return to rough sleeping. <p><u>Assistance to Persons from Overseas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breakdown in arrangements for households in the District providing accommodation to Ukraine nationals - Potential pressure from resettlement of Afghan households from bridging hotels. - Potential for households to be larger in size, therefore more challenging to rehouse. - Potential additional pressure from the asylum dispersal programme - Potential additional pressure from the use of Wethersfield air base as an asylum centre: if asylum decisions issued whilst applicants are at Wethersfield, there is potential for BDC to receive applications for Housing Assistance. Where applications are from healthy single people with no priority need, it may lead to an increase in rough sleepers. 			<p><u>Increased demand for services and accommodation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in number of households, including priority households, threatened with homelessness, or awaiting social housing. - Increased time spent in temporary accommodation and, therefore, more units required - Potential increase in rough sleepers <p><u>Impact on service costs and service provision:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in agency / temporary staffing, and recruitment costs. - Increased demand for, and reduced ability to provide services and resulting increased pressure on staff. - Increase in numbers of customer enquiries and complaints. - Increased cost pressure on the Housing Benefits budget. 	

<p><u>Changes to BDC Staffing and Responsibilities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased homelessness duties arising from the Domestic Abuse Act: increasing the number of priority need households waiting for social housing - Staff retention: additional pressures in the sector causing staff to elect to change their career leading to increase in use of agency staff and associated costs, increased cost of recruitment, and more officer time spent liaising with agencies/interviewing/training. Gaps in service provision - Staff recruitment: increased competition for staff within the sector leading to recruitment challenges - Housing Assessment Team Manager role reduction of 2 days / week - Capacity issues and lack of resilience during absences adds to pressure on remaining staff and increases likelihood that staff will leave <p><u>Partner Changes Impacting BDC Ability to Deliver:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff turnover within Eastlight Community Homes: impacts on established working relationships and procedures 	
<p>Current Controls:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has recruited to the following posts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2-year post to investigate empty homes and access to the Private Rented Sector ○ Health & Wellbeing post ○ Cost of Living post ○ Ukraine Resettlement Officer • New Healthy Housing Strategy was adopted in 2023 – the focus on maximising the number of affordable homes brought on-stream, developing a private rented sector ‘offer’ and addressing the number of empty homes will all ensure that housing opportunities for residents are optimised. • Registered Provider Forum established - Enables partners to discuss issues of concern and develop a consistent and appropriate response, e.g., to damp/mould/condensation • Improvement achieved in the balance between inward and outward migration through Gateway to Homechoice. 	
<p>EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Partially effective</p>	
<p>Additional Actions Required</p>	
<p><u>Corporate Director (CR)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is planning to recruit an Assistant Housing Operations Manager (interviews 22/08/23) • Housing Options Triage role (additional 2 days / week on 12-month contract whilst the permanent post holder is on a career break) – contract pending 07/23 • Housing Apprentice – contract pending 07/23 • The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy (2018-2023) is currently under review to develop an Action Plan with increased focus on homelessness prevention. • Additional resources available via the Homelessness Prevention Grant top up of £194k (grant conditions apply) – research is currently being undertaken to determine how best to utilise these additional resources. • Maximise use of available funding through Homes for Ukraine and Asylum Dispersal schemes 	

<p>Risk 7. Return on Investments The Council is not able to optimise its return on its financial or property investments or suffers financial loss.</p>				
<p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (SB) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers</p>				
<p>Corporate Priority: Delivering and Innovating</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	Low	Significant		
Direction of Travel as at July 2023				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic & financial market conditions impacting on investment returns and market values. - Cost of living crisis and potential impact on commercial property tenants - Liquidity requirements of the Council are subject to forecast future incoming / outgoing revenue and capital cashflows. - Increased exposure to property and reliance on rental income for the base budget through expansion of portfolio by the strategic investment programme. - Change in property trends reducing demand for certain property types from prospective tenants. - Tightening regulatory framework from HM Treasury/ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). - DLUHC do not extend statutory regulations that mean changes in fair value of pooled funds is accounted for through unusable reserves protecting the General Fund revenue account from volatile changes in market values beyond 31.3.25. - Significant lease arrangement for Mayland House due to expire Jan 2028 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction or loss of income impacting on the General Fund revenue account resulting in unplanned savings or changes to services. - Impairment loss from failure of a counterparty to a financial investment which needs be met from the General Fund. - Requirement to take back management of property assets and look for alternative tenant. - Forced renewal of lease terms from tenants entering Creditor Voluntary Arrangement. - Property cannot be re-let without significant expenditure or maybe not at all. - Divestment of funds resulting in loss of principal invested. - Suspension of trading in funds due to market conditions preventing the Council to access funds. - Adverse impact on the Council's reputation. - Alternative investments do not provide comparative returns leading to income shortfall against budget/ MTFS. - Changes in the fair value of pooled funds are required to be taken into account for budgeting & council tax setting purposes leading to increased volatility and uncertainty in financial planning 	
Current Controls:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capital and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy are in place in accordance with CIPFA Codes of Practice and Government Statutory Guidance - Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) that set out how the Council manages the inherent risks within its treasury management activities on day-to-day basis. 				

- Expert advice procured through contract with Arlingclose to provide advice on treasury management including credit worthiness advice and monitoring of the Council's pooled fund investments.
- Treasury Management reserve held with a current balance of £1.07m (31.3.23)
- Maintenance of short-term (daily) and medium/ long-term cashflow forecasts to manage daily liquidity and projection of future investment balances available or requirements for borrowing (including conversion of internal borrowing to external debt).
- Portfolio diversification and limits on investment types of investment, duration, and counterparties.
- Pro-active asset management of the commercial property portfolio & lease/ tenant arrangements.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective

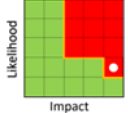
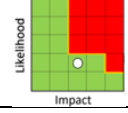
Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (SB) and S151 Officer

- Continue to develop the Capital and Treasury Management Strategy in line with evolving regulatory and professional code requirements.
- Consider implications and options for the potential removal of statutory regulations on accounting for changes in fair value of pooled fund investments. This to consider current and future investments, including whether volatility and risk can be managed without detriment to service delivery and sustainability, while complying with proper accounting practices.

Corporate Director (DC)

- Continue towards implementing the recommendations arising from the recent Asset Management Review.
- To review and develop options for Mayland House offices.

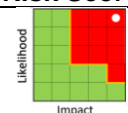
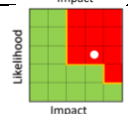

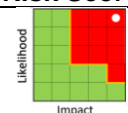
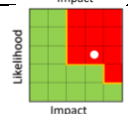

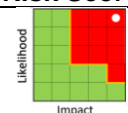
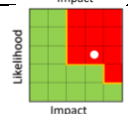

Risk 8. Emergency Planning				
The Council is unable to respond to an emergency as required under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004				
Risk Owner: Corporate Director (CR)		Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Graham Butland		
Corporate Priorities: Supporting Our Communities				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	Low likelihood	Catastrophic impact		Averse
Residual Risk Rating	Low likelihood	Significant impact		
Direction of Travel (as at 28.07.2023)			↓	
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency event both response and recovery - New roles and legislative powers that require enactment and management - Braintree District Council has responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 as a Category 1 responder: to plan for and respond to major emergencies working alongside the blue light services. Part 1 of CCA 2004 places legal obligations on emergency services and local authorities to assess the risk of, and plan and exercise for emergencies as well as undertake business continuity management. - BDC does not have the resources to respond effectively to the Emergency and continue to deliver services. - The COVID pandemic has added an extra dimension as it cannot be responded to in the same way as previous emergency planning issues. This is due to the long-term nature and progression of the pandemic. 			<p>District Wide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible loss of life or serious harm or injury to residents and/or staff. - Loss of physical assets e.g., premises. - Ineffective response to an incident causes extended disruption. - Vulnerable residents at risk through lack of core service delivery. - Delays/perceived shortfall in Council's response in recovery phase. <p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of preparedness results in the inability to identify and deliver key/critical services e.g., benefits, refuse collection, homelessness applications, food inspections, etc. - Increased short term demand for services e.g., housing - alternative accommodation, repairs, waste team clean-up operation. - Major impact on reputation if the Council is perceived to not provide an adequate response. - Council facing Public Inquiry – risk of cost, reputation and public trust. - Priorities and projects are not delivered. - Being found wanting at public inquiry. 	
Current Controls:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A robust, peer reviewed Emergency Plan and Recovery Plan have been developed. - The new Recovery Plan improves the Council's ability to support the community following an incident. - Communications & Media plan. - A Members' Protocol has been produced setting out guidance for Members during an emergency. - Mutual Aid agreements are in place between authorities and BDC is strengthening its procedures to receive Mutual Aid with a revised Memorandum of Understanding. - Each service has to planned and tested procedures for resilience to unexpected and potentially long-term challenges. - Pandemic Flu Plan agreed. - Regular review of our response and adaptation of response if required. 				

- Training delivered: senior/tactical training, recovery training, loggist training, rest centre training; and communications training.
- Peer reviewed training programme for staff involved at all levels, volunteers-tactical-strategic.
- New starters have a requirement to assist in emergencies detailed in their role profiles.
- Active responses were progressed using command structures for COVID Ukraine, storms, Sudanese evacuation, fire and public disorder events.
- Senior Staff underwent Multi Agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC) training in 22/23.
- Corporate Recovery Plan approved and adopted in 2022

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: **partially effective**

Additional Actions Required

- Bi-yearly review of Emergency Plan.
- Bi-yearly review of Communications and Media Plan.
- Review of Flood Plan and Severe Weather Plan diarised for 2023
- Rest Centres plan – run an annual exercise.
- Continue to deliver training programme
- Dialogue with partner organisations.
- Services need to demonstrate the capability and capacity to manage excessive additional demand due the Council's responsibility for response and recovery under the CCA 2004, Housing Act. Local Government Act and other relevant legislation.
- Bi-yearly review of Recovery Plan.
- Testing of dual emergency response – Exercise deferred due to the pandemic, now planned for 2023/24.

<p>Risk 9: Information Management and Cyber Security Increased use of technology and larger volumes of information stored increases the impact of cyber security threats including ability to deliver key services, enforcement, unable to collect money / pay money, unable to share data with partners, vulnerable to cyber-attack or data breach incident</p> <p>Risk Owner: Corporate Directors (CR and SB) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers</p> <p>Corporate Priorities: Effective management of information and cyber risks is essential to enable delivery of all priorities</p>																																											
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>RISK SCORE</th> <th>Likelihood</th> <th>Impact</th> <th>Risk Score</th> <th>Risk Appetite</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Inherent Risk Rating</td> <td>A – Very High Likelihood</td> <td>I – Catastrophic</td> <td></td> <td rowspan="2">Cautious</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residual Risk Rating</td> <td>C – Significant</td> <td>II – Critical</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Direction of Travel</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Risk Cause(s)</td> <td colspan="2">Risk Consequence(s)</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> <p>Cyber-attack, Distributed Denial of Service, Phishing, Ransomware, Security / Data Breaches are all triggers that need mitigation to prevent potential loss of information and ability to deliver services.</p> <p>The Council has been responsive to technology and has used it to shape the way services are delivered, to drive efficiency and improve productivity.</p> <p>With the increased use of technology and larger amounts of information stored comes an increase of the impact created through cyber security threats.</p> <p>Increased use of technology and increased amounts of information stored also increases the likelihood of data being incorrectly handled by employees.</p> <p>Increased reliance on technology, including remote working tools since more staff have been working from home.</p> </td> <td colspan="2"> <p>Loss of ability to deliver service/degradation in service.</p> <p>Loss of reputation.</p> <p>Enforcement from Information Commissioner's Office with potentially significant fines and reputational damage.</p> <p>Inability to collect/payout money to customers.</p> <p>Inability to share customer data with partners.</p> <p>The Council cannot meet its requirements under the Data Protection legislation.</p> <p>The Council is not able to adequately manage its information, which would then prevent it from being able to carry out services effectively.</p> <p>Unplanned financial cost to the Council.</p> <p>Potential losses/damage to residents/service users/employees whose data is incorrectly handled</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5">Current Controls:</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information security policies – regularly reviewed and updated. - External auditing and challenge on a regular basis against policies and systems as well as regular external penetration testing with action plans created. - Regular review of technical infrastructure, including firewalls, hardware and software. - Public Services Network (PSN) compliance. - Training/education in cyber security and information security for employees including Learning Management System mandatory courses. - Regular meetings of local, regional and national cyber-security groups to review all aspects of cyber-security. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite	Inherent Risk Rating	A – Very High Likelihood	I – Catastrophic		Cautious	Residual Risk Rating	C – Significant	II – Critical		Direction of Travel					Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)		<p>Cyber-attack, Distributed Denial of Service, Phishing, Ransomware, Security / Data Breaches are all triggers that need mitigation to prevent potential loss of information and ability to deliver services.</p> <p>The Council has been responsive to technology and has used it to shape the way services are delivered, to drive efficiency and improve productivity.</p> <p>With the increased use of technology and larger amounts of information stored comes an increase of the impact created through cyber security threats.</p> <p>Increased use of technology and increased amounts of information stored also increases the likelihood of data being incorrectly handled by employees.</p> <p>Increased reliance on technology, including remote working tools since more staff have been working from home.</p>			<p>Loss of ability to deliver service/degradation in service.</p> <p>Loss of reputation.</p> <p>Enforcement from Information Commissioner's Office with potentially significant fines and reputational damage.</p> <p>Inability to collect/payout money to customers.</p> <p>Inability to share customer data with partners.</p> <p>The Council cannot meet its requirements under the Data Protection legislation.</p> <p>The Council is not able to adequately manage its information, which would then prevent it from being able to carry out services effectively.</p> <p>Unplanned financial cost to the Council.</p> <p>Potential losses/damage to residents/service users/employees whose data is incorrectly handled</p>		Current Controls:					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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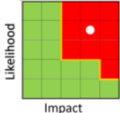
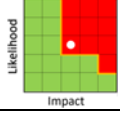

- Regular engagement with the National Cyber Security Centre and use of cyber protection tools and services.
- Regular meta-compliance checks for all employees and members.
- Controls in place around the use of technology to work virtually and collaboratively.
- Latest versions and security patches to be maintained for all software / operating systems.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: partially effective

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (SB and CR)

- Continued review of cyber security arrangements.
- Continue to raise awareness of information management and cyber security issues for all staff and members.
- Targeted training following phishing campaigns.
- End of life hardware replaced as and when necessary.
- Continue to keep abreast of cyber security issues and ensure that these are factored into BDC response.
- Obtain certification for Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials+

<p>Risk 10: Strategic Investment</p> <p>Lack of infrastructure inhibits delivery of required housing and associated facilities, reduces employment and business opportunities and limits growth in Council Tax/NDR. Capital investment is impacted by socio-economic and market conditions and funding availability and requires robust project management.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers</p> <p>Corporate Priorities: Promoting Prosperity / Connecting People and Places</p>				
RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	<i>High</i>	<i>Critical</i>		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>		
Direction of Travel				
Risk Cause(s)			Risk Consequence(s)	
<p><u>Economic / Politicial:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Macro-economic conditions with high inflation, and rising interest rates and cost of borrowing, changing political emphasis, availability of skilled resource and national and international market conditions (e.g. construction supply chains) - Inability to secure prudential borrowing at preferential interest rates and the impact of the government's changes to PWLB accessibility removes potential capital funding route. - Capital investments are subject to variations in market conditions occurring during development of projects / business cases and between business case sign off and project delivery/completion, impacting cost, time taken and viability of projects - Prolonged period (>six months) of house price deflation. - Prolonged period (>12 months) of commercial rent deflation. - Higher inflation increases construction costs. - Regulatory changes on Minimum Revenue Provision increasing revenue financing costs - Rising yield expectations by institutional investors & rising construction costs - Movement in market conditions. <p><u>Project Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Failure and delays in securing planning consent on development projects. - Lack of robust project management could lead to inconsistent decision making, failure to agree and deliver priorities, under-utilisation of finite resources, weak cost control, over-reliance on external advice without proper challenge or consideration of the brief/scope/purpose - Failure to clarify and agree core project and/or programme objectives, Critical Success Factors (CSFs) or Key performance Indicators (KPIs). 			<p><u>Economic Growth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inhibited delivery of Local Plan housing requirements and associated healthcare, community, and town centre facilities - Businesses/jobs may relocate outside of District and lead to fewer new businesses/jobs being created and falling Gross Value Added (GVA) in the district. - Depressed land values <p><u>Project Delivery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dilution of support for programme / funding from other partners or government may not be available to support the action plan priorities. - Project failure or delay due to lack of stakeholder engagement. - Projects undeliverable due to refusal of planning consent <p><u>Return on Investments / Income</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on the business case stated financial viability and sustainability of projects (including impacts on commercial rents and operational costs) - Unplanned and/or abortive expenditure. - Approved schemes already in development may not achieve required financial return. - Interest charges have to be charged to revenue rather than capitalized against projects. 	

<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of investment in infrastructure acts as a barrier to required housing growth and reduces opportunities for businesses to grow. <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Many investment opportunities require work with partners and suppliers who may or may not have the same level of commitment to a project as BDC. <p>Competition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competition from large commercial development plans in neighbouring districts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revenue costs of projects developed but aborted not charged to capital and fall upon Council's revenue budget. <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of revenue growth in Council Tax and Business Rates. - Public perception of Council spending and lack of effective control. - Failure to sell/lease newly developed properties.
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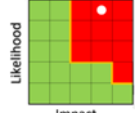
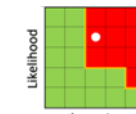
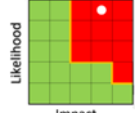
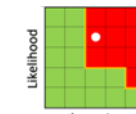
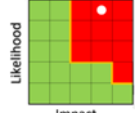
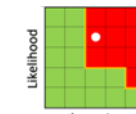

Current Controls:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feasibility reserve approved and ring-fenced. - All investment opportunities rely on cost/value advice provided by expert third party specialists in support of business case development. - All investment opportunities appraised via investment tool and/ or HMT Green Book appraisals. - Strong working relationship with Essex County Council, NHS, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Homes England on major projects and key priorities to support delivery and potential funding routes. - Project engagement across relevant BDC teams (including Asset Management, Finance, Legal, Operations, Planning and Procurement) to ensure early engagement on scheme development to ensure end product delivers on objectives and is fit-for-purpose. - Procurement of appropriate architects, cost and planning consultants secured for each scheme. - Business case development with specialist external advice. - Robust programme assurance processes and extensive management information and reporting outputs. - Strong emphasis on project documentation, tools and techniques. - Highly developed budget monitoring processes in partnership with the Finance department. - Effective contract management processes.
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EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Partially Effective

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (DC)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring of costs and spend is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of expert third parties to provide comprehensive cost estimates and advice of market trends is in place.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent modelling to agreed financial parameters is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased networking and promotion of BDC's investment aspirations with key external stakeholders and potential funders. Continue to source local and national funding resources which could provide grants for key projects is in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of timely, high-quality marketing strategies for all development projects is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early engagement with Planning Team and judicious use of the pre-application process is in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase organisational "maturity" and embed rigorous and consistently applied project and programme processes and reporting is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular review of approved parameters and hurdle rates is in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weighted NPV measure to reflect non-financial priorities is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Independent evaluation of business case is in place

<p>Risk 11. Climate Change The Council has declared a climate emergency with an aim to make the Council's activities, as far as practical, carbon neutral by 2030 – risk of failure to deliver targets.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Cherie Root Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Tom Cunningham</p> <p>Corporate Priorities: Enhancing Our Environment</p>																		
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<p>'Climate change' refers to changes in the earth's climate that are caused by increasing levels of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere.</p> <p>Climate change adaptation describes measures that can be put into place to help us adapt to the changes in our climate that are now inevitable. These changes range from increased temperatures and drought conditions to extreme weather events such as intense periods of rainfall and subsequent flash flooding.</p> <p>The Council has declared a "Climate Emergency" with an aim to make Braintree District Council activities, as far as practical, carbon neutral by 2030.</p> <p>Climate change will impact council services, from the buildings that we manage through to open spaces and our role in emergency planning, as well as impacting on Braintree district residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable.</p> <p>The services provided by the Council are reliant on access to all parts of the district by our vehicles and the ability of staff to travel to their place of work. This is combined with the potential increasing and changing demand for services including parks and landscapes, environmental health, community support, health and wellbeing, building control etc</p> <p>.</p> <p>The scale and degree of change required to meet net zero will require significant resources which the District Council will not be able to provide on its own. It will require a coordinated response from partners including Government to meet the challenge.</p> <p>Key Identified Triggers:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in mean temperature • Decrease in air quality 			<p>Failure to maintain/deliver services and an increased cost of delivering services</p> <p>Increased financial costs for Council (due to insurance excesses/ pressures on service delivery)</p> <p>Future Capital investment needed in alternative fuel infrastructure and vehicles</p> <p>Reduction in resilience of the organisation</p> <p>Reputation of Council damaged through failure to deliver services.</p> <p>Failure to give local community leadership in preparing for climate change.</p>															

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depletion of key resources including water • Severe weather event(s) including drought, floods and gales. • Failure to deliver 2030 carbon neutral target 	
<p>Current Controls:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Local Strategy 2021 - 2030 in place and a number of actions being undertaken to reduce negative impact on climate from council services and assets as well as encouraging residents and businesses to reduce their impact on the climate. - A Climate Change working group has been established. An action plan has been developed to ensure all Council functions and decision making is in line with the shift to carbon neutral by 2030. - Emergency Plan considers climate related risks and our response to this type of emergency. - The Climate Local Strategy has a number of actions in place to support the community to adapt to climate change. <p>Business Continuity plans are essential for the Council to be able to respond to the effect of climate change on our estate and our staff which impacts our services.</p> <p>Progress to Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business Continuity plan for the organisation to respond to risks - Joint working with ECC who are also tackling Climate Change. - Completed actions from the Climate Local Action Plan 2014 – 2018 (Feb 2021). Further details on achievement available - Declared Climate Emergency July 2019 - Climate Change Working Group in place representing the Council, Businesses and Residents with academic support to develop the next Climate Local Strategy - 2-year Emergency Planning desktop exercise, concerning severe weather / emergency events, for BDC - Officer Climate Group established to encourage engagement. - Oct 22 Full Council approval of monitoring plan and key targets - Internal Climate Delivery Board established bringing all Senior Project Leads together to the strategy and deliver actions on the Climate Action Plan - Full Council Update in May 23 - Annual Reporting template developed pending release of BEIS Carbon figures in Autumn 23 	
<p>EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: partially effective</p>	
<p>Additional Actions Required</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Climate Strategy has now been adopted. - Continue to review Emergency Plan to consider emerging climate related issues and risks. - Implement the outcomes from the Environment Act. - Climate Actions Performance reporting will be via Pentana system. Management Board to monitor outcomes and targets - Annual performance report to be submitted - Monitoring of Success Factors and KPIs – Annual Review - Delivery of objectives of Climate Change Strategy and agree associated overarching KPIs - Carbon reporting (Dept. for Energy Security and Net Zero for district) and internal report for Council emission 	

Report Title: Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/36
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Phil Myers, Head of Finance phil.myers@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To receive details of the proposed budget process for the financial year 2024-25.
- 1.2 To provide an update on issues that will impact on the Budget and updating of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

2. Recommendations

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- 2.1 To note the budget process for 2024-25.
- 2.2 To agree to delegate to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance in consultation with the Section 151 Officer to give agreement to the Council's participation in an Essex business rate pool if the opportunity arises and it is financially beneficial to do so.

Recommendation to Full Council

- 2.3 To agree a one-off virement in 2023-24 of up to £600k from treasury management investment income to staff pay budgets to reflect the estimated additional cost of the annual staff pay award.
- 2.4 To agree that the budget is increased up to £300k to reflect the legal costs estimated to be incurred by the Council in bringing the numerous legal challenges against the Home Office in relation to their proposed use of the Wethersfield site for the accommodation of asylum seekers, such increase to be funded from the General Fund unallocated balances.

3. Budget 2023-24 & Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-24 to 2026-27

- 3.1 The Budget and updated MTFs for the period 2023-24 to 2026-27 were approved by Full Council at its meeting held on 20th February 2023. A Council Tax Band D rate for the Council's share of the overall bill was agreed at £194.31. The budget was balanced by a planned drawdown from General Fund balances of £644k.
- 3.2 The projected annual budget shortfall across the period of the MTFs was as follows: 2024/25 £1.5m; 2025/26 £0.4m; and 2026/27 £0.1m, a total ongoing shortfall of £2m per annum by the end of the forecast period. Cumulatively, the shortfall in resources without any proactive intervention being taken to would result in having to drawdown on General Fund unallocated balances by £5.4m.
- 3.3 Despite the considerable financial challenges, the Council was able to earmark significant financial resources to be used to help residents during the ongoing cost of living crisis, including funding for a two-year-period to deliver targeted support, and payment of a universal dividend to council taxpayers towards their 2023-24 bill. Funds were also set aside to support Economic Growth and Healthy Housing Strategies and to invest in organisational transformation and a proposed new programme management office.
- 3.4 The budget included proposed savings and additional income totalling over £1m, the delivery of which is being tracked in the current year. Subject to a future Cabinet decision, £200k was allocated to provide funding for implementation of a subscription-based garden waste collection service. The decision to implement the service was taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on 10th July 2023.
- 3.4 The 2023-24 budget reflected a balance between supporting communities, investing in key priorities, and continuing to improve financial resilience.

4. Economic Context

- 4.1 The UK economy may escape a recession thanks to a better outlook for energy prices, a more resilient global environment, and continued tightness in the labour market. Nevertheless, economic growth is expected to remain weak by historical standards.
- 4.2 Twelve-month Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation remains well above the government's 2% target, having fallen back to 7.9% in June down from 8.7% in May. In 2023 Q2, CPI inflation averaged 8.4%, slightly higher than the projection by the Bank of England. Inflation is expected to continue to fall to an average of 6.9% in 2023 Q3 and 4.9% in Q4. That near-term decline is expected to be accounted for by lower energy, and to a lesser degree, food, and core goods price inflation.
- 4.3 The Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) increased the Bank Rate by 0.25% to 5.25% to address the risks from greater inflation

persistence. With recent data outturns revealing a mixed message it is deemed too soon to conclude whether the economy is at or near a significant turning point. Looking further ahead, the MPC is expected to adjust Bank Rate as necessary to return inflation to the 2% target sustainably in the medium term, in line with its remit.

- 4.4 Households and businesses have been adjusting to higher prices and interest rates by curbing consumption and investment. Although inflation is set to continue to fall in the near term, borrowing costs will likely remain higher for longer, depressing activity.
- 4.5 The ongoing cost of living crisis is likely to impact on the demand for services and also poses a risk to the Council in terms of income collection. Affordable housing whether through the private rented sector or owner-occupied remains an issue and there continues to be demand for temporary accommodation from households at risk of homelessness.
- 4.6 Geo-political risks, including any deterioration and fallout from the ongoing war in Ukraine, means that the economic outlook continues to remain highly uncertain and volatile. For the UK, there is the added political uncertainty as the next General Election looms closer.

5. Budget Outturn 2022-23

- 5.1 The budget outturn for 2022-23 was reported as part of the Fourth Quarter and Annual Performance Management Report to Cabinet on 10th July 2023. A positive variance for the year was reported of £728k and a net increase in the unallocated General Fund balances of £268k. The main reason for the positive variance was an overachievement of income.
- 5.2 A review of the outturn indicates that many of the budget variations have already been reflected in the 2023-24 budget as they had already been identified through the in-year monitoring. However, a number of items have been identified that are likely to further impact on 2023-24 and also the budget planning for 2024-25. These items are:
 - Investment income from treasury management as cash balances are projected to be higher than originally expected combined with the continuing rise in interest rates.
 - Council Tax Sharing Agreement gainshare to the Council from the major preceptors where council tax collection performance has so far remained resilient. Whilst a higher level of gains is projected these will not be of the same magnitude as changes were introduced to the scheme for 2023-24.
 - Market prices for recycling material and from which the Council obtains income rose sharply during the 2022-23 year, peaking in Q3, before prices began to fall. This generated a windfall overachievement of income for the year, but this not expected to be repeated in 2023-24. Currently, the price paid for material has dropped to below the budget assumption.

- Income from planning services was mixed, with increased demand for Performance Planning Agreements; however, this was more than offset by a shortfall in planning application fees which have not achieved the base budget for several years, and Pre-application income was underachieved.
- Income levels and expenditure requirements for the Council's new property facilities developed through the Strategic Investment Programme continue to evolve and will continue to take time before stable and accurate budget projections can be determined.
- Income from car parks declined during the Covid pandemic and has not yet recovered to levels previously achieved. However, the outturn position was an improvement over that assumed at the time of setting the 2023-24 budget.
- The Council continues to face challenges in recruiting and retaining staff in many service areas leading to higher costs.

6. In-Year Budget Position 2023-24

- 6.1 A review of income and expenditure against budget and forecast for the year has been completed and is reported in the First Quarter Performance Report to be considered under a separate item on this Committee's agenda.
- 6.2 The projection for the year is an overall positive variance of £218k. Staffing expenditure is currently projected to be underspent at service level and achieve the corporate efficiency target; however, the Employers' current offer for the annual pay award from April 2023 would add a further estimated £568k of cost (this is extra to the 3% provision already reflected in the budget). Other expenditure is forecast to be £500k over budget, and the Council is accruing costs in relation to the Wethersfield asylum centre appeal for which £162k (out of a total spend to date of £172k) is impacting on the 2023-24 financial year. Offsetting the projected additional expenditure, is income which is currently forecast to be overachieved by £1.4m, mainly due to treasury management investment income.
- 6.3 There remains uncertainty over the final cost of the staff pay award due to be implemented from April 2023. The Employers' representatives have offered staff covered by the National Joint Council a consolidated payment of either £1925 or 3.88%, whichever is the higher. Chief Officers have already agreed a pay award of 3.5%, and whilst Chief Executives have been offered the same, this has not been agreed yet. At the time of writing this report, the Trade Unions were still consulting with their members over potential industrial action.
- 6.4 To address the in-year budgetary implication on individual services from implementing the pay award it is proposed that service budgets are adjusted once the pay award has been finally agreed. To facilitate this adjustment, a virement is requested from the treasury management income budget. This will alleviate the need for services to address an immediate budget overspend and allow time to address the extra cost of pay through the budget process for 2024-25.

- 6.5 For future financial planning an allowance of 2% has been made for annual pay increases in the MTFS; however, given recent public sector pay settlements and the expectation that inflation will remain above the government's target for some time, increasing this allowance will be considered as part of the process of updating the MTFS.
- 6.6 To ensure that accurate service budgets are reflected in the planning for 2024-25 and the updating of the MTFS, the current year variances and last year's outturn will be reviewed by finance and service managers as part of the annual Service Budget Review process.
- 6.7 The process of updating the assumptions and financial forecasts has already started and will continue through to Autumn when the Cabinet will consider their initial budget proposals. Based on what is currently known and anticipated, a budget gap for 2024-25 and across the period of the MTFS is still expected.
- 6.8 Since the approval of the 2023-24 budget, the Council has become involved in a number of legal challenges against the Home Office, following their decision to use the Wethersfield site for the provision of asylum accommodation. To date the Council has incurred cost of £172k, which relate to the cost of bringing the injunction and appeal proceedings. Since then, the Council has also issued Judicial Review proceedings, and the final hearing is expected in the Autumn. In order to deal with these unexpected costs, it is necessary to agree that the budget is increased by up to £300k to reflect the estimated legal costs incurred by the Council in bringing these challenges, and that such increase will be funded from the General Fund unallocated balances.

7. Local Government Finance

- 7.1 Local government finance is currently funded in the context of the Spending Review (SR21) which was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27th October 2021, and which set out the public sector spending plans across a three-year period covering 2022-23 to 2024-25.
- 7.2 Whilst SR21 provided a three-year horizon for most government departments, for local government this level of information was only referenced at a national level. Real terms increase in resources were implied at the time of the announcement; however, this was before the significant rise in inflation and therefore the impact has been eroded. At the micro level local government was provided with its fifth single-year finance settlement in a row for 2023-24, and the lack of multi-year settlements continues to hamper sound financial planning and creates uncertainty over financial sustainability.
- 7.3 The Government uses a measure of Core Spending Power (CSP) to illustrate the resources that are available to councils to fund their services. CSP includes Revenue Support Grant, Retained Business Rates, New

Homes Bonus, various other government grants, and an assumed amount of Council Tax income based on premise that all local authorities will increase their Council Tax rate by the maximum allowed. The Council has typically used New Homes Bonus for one-off investment and not for meeting day-to-day expenditure. This approach will need to be kept under review as the Council continues to face considerable financial pressures whilst also wishing to protect front-line services.

Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) 2024-25

- 7.4 In announcing the 2023-24 LGFS, the government took steps towards providing some clarity about funding in 2024-25 although this stopped short of a two-year settlement.
- 7.5 It was confirmed that there will be no reset of business rates for the remainder of the current spending review period and the Review of Relative Needs and Resources of councils (formerly known as the Fair Funding Review) will be paused for the same period, from 2025-26 at the earliest.
- 7.6 The Council Tax referendum principle applicable to shire districts of less than 3% or £5 would continue in 2024-25.
- 7.7 A commitment was made to set out the future of New Homes Bonus before the LGFS. Government has previously consulted on proposed changes to the scheme but has never responded, instead keeping the allocation basis the same for several years.
- 7.8 Revenue Support Grant is to continue as set out in the 2023-24 settlement with indexation; however, along with New Homes Bonus, there is no certainty over other grants such as Rural Services Delivery, and the Services Grant, and there is no commitment to provide a 3% funding guarantee as was given for 2023-24. For Braintree, the funding guarantee equated to a grant of £449k, albeit this was funded in part from a repurposing of the Lower Tier Services grant.
- 7.9 Business rate pooling, which allows local authorities to retain a larger share of business rate growth generated in the area, will continue to be an option.
- 7.10 The government also referred to the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging scheme suggesting this would bring additional income to councils. However, at the time the government stated that an impact assessment would also be undertaken on the relative needs and resources of individual local authorities, suggesting that there would be some compensating reduction in other areas of funding. It has recently been announced that there will be a year's delay in introducing the scheme.
- 7.11 On 23rd December 2022, the Government provided detail of the Council's allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) for 2023-24 and 2024-25. Following a review of the basis of distribution, the amounts receivable by the Council were higher than had been given for 2022-23. HPG is ringfenced

grant to ensure that local authorities are fully resourced to take action on homelessness and to continue to embed the changes required through implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

- 7.12 Since the budget for 2022-23, HPG has been reflected in the base budget funding a number of posts within the housing services team and other service costs that support HPG related interventions.
- 7.13 Housing Benefit Administrative Subsidy is also provided annually by the Department for Works and Pensions. This subsidy is being reduced to reflect the switch of new working age claimants (or those with changes) to Universal Credit (UC). The Council has been notified recently of plans to progress the managed migration process in the Braintree area which will transfer existing work age claimants to UC. This is expected to have significant financial implications on the amount of subsidy that will be received and will require a review of resource requirements in the service.

8. Business Rate Pooling

- 8.1 The Council has participated in an Essex business rate pool for many years which has resulted in a higher amount of income retained for the benefit of investment in the district. Gains from this arrangement have been used to part fund, for example, the I-Construct Innovation Centre and the Plaza.
- 8.2 The Council continues to forecast payment of a levy on income growth above the government set baseline and therefore pooling should continue to be of benefit to the authority if the opportunity exists. Participation in a pool is not risk free, as the normal safety net provisions that apply in the event of significant reduction in business rate income is determined at the level of the Pool rather than individual local authority. However, this risk is mitigated by ensuring that proposed pool participants have a reasonable level of contingency in their business rate forecasts. The Essex pool has also provided a financial safety net for authorities that participate within the agreed scheme conditions.
- 8.3 Decisions on pooling are normally required in a short timescale after government invite authorities wishing to indicate their intentions regarding pooling and, therefore, as in previous years it is proposed that delegation is given to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to agree to the Council's participation in a pool if it is beneficial to do so.

9. Stronger performance of local planning authorities supported through an increase in planning fees: government response

- 9.1 The Government has published its response to their consultation on increasing planning application fees.

- 9.2 As proposed within the consultation, planning fees will increase by 35% and 25% for Major Applications and all other applications respectively. It has been reported that the new fees will come into force on 1st April 2024, but this is unclear from the consultation response. Application fees will then increase annually each April using the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) from the previous September and will be capped at 10%. In the event of deflation, the fees will not be adjusted.
- 9.3 The Government also announced a 'Planning skills Delivery Fund' to help local planning authorities (LPAs) to clear backlogs of planning applications and address skills gaps. LPAs can apply for funding for up to £100k and the deadline for submissions was 11th September 2023.
- 9.4 It is proposed to reduce the timescales for the Planning Guarantee (fee refund provision) for non-major applications from 26 weeks to 16 weeks. This change could have a major impact on how the service operates and increases the risk of refunds being required. Further consideration of the potential impact is being assessed by the service.
- 9.5 The Government has backtracked on its proposal to ringfence the additional fee income instead leaving it local authorities to make decisions about funding of local services, including planning departments. However, reference is made to protecting at least the income from the planning fee increase for direct investment in planning services. Notwithstanding this, the current base budget for planning income which was supposed to meet the cost of previous additional investment already made into the service is not being achieved which poses a material risk to the budget for 2024-25 and MTFS.

10. General Fund Balances

- 10.1 General Fund unallocated balances are projected to be £7.5m at the end of the current financial year. The minimum level of balances to be maintained was increased to £3m during the 2023-24 budget process. Given the projected budget shortfalls, the large uncertainty and persistent volatility, it is only prudent to maintain a robust level of reserves whilst medium-longer term plans continue to be developed and implemented which will address the structural budget deficit.
- 10.2 In addition to the unallocated balances, the Council holds earmarked reserves which have been set aside specifically to fund project related expenditure, or to mitigate risks. A number of reserves are committed to supporting service expenditure and once used this will mean that any ongoing pressures on the revenue budget will need to be managed or addressed through the budget process.
- 10.3 The retention of balances and reserves do contribute positively to treasury management in terms of facilitating internal borrowing, reducing capital financing costs; or are invested and generate dividend and interest income.

As balances and reserves are used, these positive benefits will inevitably diminish.

11. Capital

- 11.1 The Council has made significant investment through its capital programme in recent years with the delivery of several major projects. The current capital programme reflects a shift towards a reduced level of investment, but nevertheless includes projects that support the Council's priorities and need for reinvestment. Part of the budget process will be to review the programme and assess the need for further investment to support key priorities.
- 11.2 To finance capital investment the Council has used a mixture of capital receipts, New Homes Bonus and monies generated through business rate pooling, S106 contributions and other external funding, and prudential borrowing.
- 11.3 Resources available to fund capital investment are limited, with the majority of capital receipts and reserves held already committed to the existing capital programme including anticipated items. The Council currently receives a regular stream of capital receipts through arrangements put in place following the housing stock transfer in 2007. These receipts are, however, subject to demand from Right-to-Buy applications which in the current economic climate have seen a marked slowdown. The Council also has other potential capital receipts which are expected to be generated from the disposal of interest in land or through granting of rights to third parties. These receipts are subject to satisfactory planning consents and the exercise of options by third parties and therefore carry risk.
- 11.4 A review of the capital programme, including bids for new investment, alongside the available and projected resources will be undertaken as part of the budget process. This will include an assessment of the revenue impact from any prudential borrowing.

12. Developing the Budget and Council Tax for 2024-25 and rolling forward the MTFs for 2024-25 to 2027-28

- 12.1 The budget process and updating of the MTFs will be undertaken in the context of other ongoing work across the authority:
- 12.2 **The Investment & Development Programme (IDP)** – continues to draw together various workstreams including Asset Management, Commercialisation and Organisational Efficiency, and Operations, all of which are aimed at delivering projects and changes that will help close the budget gap.
- 12.3 **Corporate Strategy Review** – the Corporate Strategy is at the heart of everything the Council does. It steers the strategic direction and helps to shape services and influences budget planning. The current strategy comes to an end in March 2024, and work is being carried out to develop a new strategy through to 2028, including undertaking public consultation which

includes some budget related questions. The Cabinet will be considering feedback received at its October Strategy Workshop at the same time it considers the Council's financial position and looks to develop initial budget proposals for 2024-25 ahead of the first scrutiny review in November.

- 12.4 **Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)** - a CPC is planned to be undertaken during October which is a recognised improvement and assurance tool that is managed and provided by the Local Government Association. The review will be wide ranging and should help the Council to determine some of its priorities. The previous CPC was instrumental in the investment programme that that was subsequently delivered by the Council.
- 12.5 **Transformation** – it has been recognised that fundamental changes to the organisation and the way it works is needed that involve a systematic organisational approach and redesign of service delivery. The budget for 2023-24 approved funding to support a transformation programme that by necessity will be wide and varied. Already work is underway exploring opportunities for closer collaboration and shared services with authorities across Essex. Agile and flexible working and the digital strategy will support many of the changes that are required. A fully developed transformation agenda over a three-year period will allow the Council to set targets and help move progressively towards closing the MTFS gap whilst prudently using balances and reserves in a tapered approach.
- 12.6 **Annual Service Budget Review** – all Heads of Service and Senior Managers have been asked to review their service areas as part of preparatory work in compiling an updated revenue budget position and MTFS. As in previous years the focus is on identifying deliverable savings and additional income and providing options for Members to consider. The review is also intended to highlight where there are unavoidable cost pressures and potential growth where this clearly demonstrates that it supports the Council key priorities.
- 12.7 **Capital Investment Requirements** – running alongside the review of revenue budgets, managers have also been asked to consider any capital investment requirements and to provide an appropriate business case. A number of items were already identified during the 2023-24 budget process, and these will need to be considered alongside any new bids.
- 12.8 On 27th June 2023, the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance wrote to all councillors inviting capital bids. Any bids received will also be considered alongside other competing requirements, taking account of the available capital resources.
- 12.9 **Fees & Charges Review** – an annual review of fees and charges will be undertaken. The general principle applied by the Council for discretionary services has been that service users should make a direct contribution to the cost of providing services at their point of use. Whilst a guideline increase will be provided based on estimated inflation, services are expected to

consider other factors such as market competitiveness, contract provisions, and, if appropriate, any need for concessionary rates. For some activities there are statutory cost recovery limitations and therefore it is essential that the Council identifies the full cost of providing a service.

- 12.10 Through the Commercial workstream of the IDP an external review and benchmarking of several service areas has identified scope for increasing fees above an inflationary allowance. The relevant service areas are considering this review and will reflect as appropriate in any proposed charges for 2024-25.
- 12.11 **Finance Review of Staffing and Other Specific Budgets** – as part of the annual budget process the central finance team will update the staffing budget requirements based on a snapshot of the establishment and to reflect planned incremental progression along with the assumed annual pay award. Other central budgets such as energy, business rates, insurance premiums, will also be updated. The budget process also allows inflation to be added to certain budget heads where the cost is unavoidable or contractual. Other budget heads are effectively cash limited unless the service identifies an unavoidable cost pressure.
- 12.12 The base budget includes a £300k efficiency factor which is included to reflect normal staff churn during the year that creates an in-year staffing budget variance. For 2023-24 an income allowance of £125k was also included in the base budget recognising that for many years the Council has overachieved on its income budgets. As budgets are aligned more with expectations these central targets will need to be reviewed.

13. Budget process Timetable

- 13.1 Key dates for the proposed budget process for 2024-25 are provided in the table below:

2023		
1 st Sept	Councillors/ Services	Budget submissions returned including capital bids
25 th Sept	Cabinet	Budget process and timetable and emerging issues
Sept-Oct	Management Board & Corporate Management Team	Review budget submissions and position
Oct	Announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (tbc)	Autumn Statement
20 th Oct	Cabinet Strategy Workshop	Corporate Strategy/ Budget and MTFS
9 th Nov	Member Finance Training	Training available to all Members ahead of budget scrutiny process

22 nd Nov	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Initial Budget proposals and MTFS (All Members invited)
27 th Nov	Cabinet	Initial Budget proposals including consideration of feedback from CSC
11 th Dec	Council	Budget related early decisions (if any)
Mid/ Late Dec	Govt. announcement	Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS)
Mid- late Dec	Cabinet Strategy Workshop (tbc)	Impact of LGFS on initial budget proposals
2024		
January	Business Community	Statutory consultation via Jan edition of business bulletin
17 th Jan	Governance & Audit Committee	Draft Treasury Management Strategy
31 st Jan	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Final Budget proposals MTFS and Council Tax recommendation (All Members invited)
Early Feb	Govt. announcement	Final Local Government Finance Settlement
5 th Feb	Cabinet	Final Budget proposals and Council Tax recommendation
19 th Feb	Council	Budget approved and Council Tax Resolution

- 13.2 As more information becomes known and detailed work progresses on the budget and updating of the MTFS, it may be necessary to modify the process and timetable set out above.

14. Corporate Objectives

- 14.1 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; and delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers. The report demonstrates that the Council adopts a comprehensive and transparent approach to reviewing its financial position ahead of determining its final budget proposals for the forthcoming year. The report also highlights how the Council is working towards addressing the MTFS financial challenges faced by the Council.

15. Options

- 15.1 The report outlines the approach to the budget setting process for 2024-25 and context in which this is being undertaken. It also recommends an approach to dealing with the in-year budget variance on services that will be

created by the staff pay award and the additional legal costs being incurred in relation to the Council's challenges against the Home Office over its proposed use of the former Wethersfield airbase for asylum accommodation. The Cabinet may determine that changes are required to the approach being proposed.

- 15.2 The report also seeks delegated decision to the Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance to agree the Council's participation in a business rate pool. If the delegation is not granted this could jeopardise the Council's participation if it cannot meet the timelines for decisions to be made.

16. Financial Implications

- 16.1 The report sets out a proposal to deal with what would become a budget overspend for services if an adjustment to their budget is not made for the staff pay award by using the windfall gains on treasury management income. The report also seeks approval to meet estimated legal costs in relation to the Council's challenges against the Home Office for its proposed use of the former Wethersfield airbase for asylum accommodation from General Fund balances.
- 16.2 A robust and planned financial strategy is required to ensure that the Council is able to deliver its key priorities whilst also addressing its financial challenges and maintaining resilience.

17. Legal Implications

- 17.1 The Council is required to set a balanced budget. The MTFs sets out the framework for this to be achieved.

18. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 18.1 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.
- 18.2 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).

18.3 It has not been necessary to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment at this stage, however, equalities and/or diversity implications will be considered, as necessary, for all budget related proposals as they are prepared through the budget setting process.

19. List of Appendices

None

20. Background Papers

20.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 to 2026/27 report agreed by Council on 20th February 2023.

Report Title: Corporate Policy Committee Programme of Works	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: To Note
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/34
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Kim Mayo, Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer kim.mayo@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve the programme of works for the Corporate Policy Development Committee (the Committee) for 2023/24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Cabinet approves:
- (a) the draft programme of works; and
 - (b) and mechanism through which policies will be brought before the Corporate Policy Development Committee.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 On 25th May 2023, Braintree District Council (the Council), at its Annual General Meeting agreed to establish the Committee, with its terms of reference set out within the Council's Constitution. This Committee forms one of the three Scrutiny Committees within the Council.
- 3.2 As part of its broader scrutiny function, the Committee is also authorised to conduct reviews of the Council's policies, services and aspects of services where there is an identifiable need, by itself or through the establishing of a Task and Finish Group. In doing so, the Committee can make recommendations on the development of future policies, as well as suggest new policies where appropriate.
- 3.3 It is important to note that in exercising the above function, the Committee is not permitted to review matters which relate to planning or licensing policies, or those matters which are reserved to Council.
- 3.4 Previously the Council has sought to establish member Forums through which Members are invited to take part in the consideration of key issues and new policies. In line with the Committees terms of reference, where

there is a need to have Member engagement in the review of an existing policy or the consideration of establishing a new policy, Members of the Committee will be invited to consider the relevant policy either in whole or in part or by bringing forward specific questions for the Committee's consideration.

- 3.5 On 21st June 2023, the Committee met on an informal basis to consider policies that are currently in place within the Council and identify those which it considered could be subject to a future refresh, and those areas where they considered the Council may benefit from having a policy in place. To support Members during their deliberations, the Chief Executive was in attendance alongside Governance Officers.
- 3.6 The initial programme of works identifies that the Committee will be engaged in the Council's review of the Corporate Strategy 2024/28 and the Policy for Household Waste and Collections.
- 3.7 The engagement of the Committee on the development of the Corporate Strategy 24-28 received widespread support from both Members of the Committee and Officers. The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's objectives and priorities for the district and therefore broader engagement in the drafting of it would be beneficial to the Council given the longer-term impact the document will have on policy development across the Council's Services.
- 3.8 The Household Waste and Collection Policy will be the first new policy to be considered by the Committee. Lead Officers will provide the committee with the relevant support to help inform the Committees consideration of the policy and will consider any suggestions brought forward by the Committee ahead of its formal adoption by Cabinet.
- 3.9 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.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Cabinet may decide not to adopt the draft programme of Works. In doing so this will remove a significant function of the Committee and would limit the Committee's ability to carry out scrutiny effectively.
- 4.2 In agreeing to the Programme of Works and the mechanism through which future policies can be brought forward for consideration, it will ensure that the Council continues to have an effective scrutiny function. This is the recommended option.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Committee will proceed with the Programme of Works as part of the Council's wider policy review programme.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no implications arising out of the recommendations set out within this report. Any financial implications arising from the Committee's recommendations following their review of a policy, will be considered at the time the recommendations are put forward, and the Policy is considered for approval.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no implications arising out of the recommendations set out within this report. Any legal implications arising from the Committee's recommendations following their review of a policy, will be considered at the time the recommendations are put forward, and the Policy is considered for approval.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 There are no implications arising out of the recommendations set out within this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to key areas as part of their formal decision making. This report relates to the approval of the programme of works, concerning the future review of Council policies. The Council will consider fully any implications arising out of the Equality Act 2010 at the point those individual policies come forward for consideration and approval.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A - Proposed Programme of Work.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Corporate Policy Development Committee – Report dated 26th July 2023.

CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

1. Purpose

The Corporate Policy Development Committee will perform the following functions in line with a work programme agreed with Cabinet:

- (a) To conduct reviews of policy, services and aspects of services where there is an identifiable need, by itself or through the establishing of a task and finish group;
- (b) To make suggestions on the development of policies and suggest new policies where appropriate; and
- (c) To work with or appoint representatives to work with other local authorities to carry out joint scrutiny.

The work programme will not include matters relating to planning or licensing policies or such matters reserved to Council.

2. Draft Programme 2023/24

- (a) Corporate Strategy 2023/24; and
- (b) Policy for Household Waste and Recycling Collections.

3. Review mechanism

The engagement and review of existing or new policies may take place at:

- (a) A scheduled meeting of the Committee; or
- (b) Through Task and Finish Groups where appropriate.

In the event that the Committee are engaged through the second route, a report will be taken to the next available meeting of the Committee to note the policy considered, and report on the discussion and any recommendations put forward by the Committee.

4. Future inclusion

This is a rolling Work Programme and will as such be subject to review and updated accordingly throughout the duration of the Civic Year.

Any additional items to be included within the Programme of Works, will be identified by either:

- (a) The Lead officer for the relevant policy; or
- (b) The relevant Cabinet Member.

Report Title: First Quarter Performance Report 2023/24	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 25 th September 2023	For: To Note
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/32
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance	
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 first quarter (April 2023 to June 2023).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet to note the performance of the Council for the first quarter (April 2023 to June 2023).

3. Summary of Issue

- 3.1 The Council keeps a record of its performance which is reported to cabinet every quarter for consideration and noting.
- 3.2 The performance in the first quarter is broadly in line with expectations with the majority of projects now underway and progressing well. Three projects have an amber status and the reasons for the delays vary from costings coming in over budget to planning recommendations requiring additional work.
- 3.3 Eight performance indicators have met or exceed target and six performance indicators have missed target; two by less than 5% and four by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the number of stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale (<5%), collection rates for business rates (<5%), cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (>5%), recycling rates (>5%), percentage of DFG's dealt with in timescale (>5%), enquires resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre (>5%).
- 3.4 Some key areas of the business are experiencing an increase in demand on their services and we will continue to monitor these areas and our performance to focus our resources and achieve our corporate objectives.

- 3.5 The Finance section of the report sets out the current budgetary position, information on capital spending and resources, details of treasury management activity and the estimated movement on General Fund unallocated balances.
- 3.6 The review of income and expenditure against budget and forecast for the year indicates a net overall positive variance of £218k.
- 3.7 Staffing expenditure is currently projected to be underspent at service level and achieve the corporate efficiency target; however, the latest Employers' annual pay increase offered from April 2023 is estimated to cost an additional £568k over budget. At this current time, the pay award has not been settled with the trade unions and therefore final cost is still to be determined.
- 3.8 Other expenditure is forecast to be £500k over budget, and the Council is also accruing legal costs in relation to the Wethersfield asylum centre appeals.
- 3.9 Offsetting the projected additional staffing cost and other expenditure, is an overachievement of income currently forecast to be £1.4m, which is mainly attributable to treasury management investment income.
- 3.10 Details of the main variances are set out in the Finance Section of the report.
- 3.11 Capital spend to the end of the first quarter was £595k, mainly incurred on the disabled facilities grant programme. Capital spend typically increases in later quarters. Currently there is an estimated positive variance against capital projects of £126k.
- 3.12 The estimated movement on the General Fund unallocated balances is a net withdrawal of £547k.

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 next available Corporate Scrutiny Committee after Cabinet for consideration.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The report provides an update as to the financial position as at the end of the first quarter 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 – First Quarter Performance Management Report 2023/24

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>



FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1 APRIL 2023
TO 30 JUNE 2023

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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 first quarter of 2023/24 in relation to our Annual Plan 2023/24. 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 first quarter

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




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	0	14	2	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	1	14	0	0	0
Supporting our Communities	0	9	0	0	0
Promoting Prosperity	0	5	1	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	0	10	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	52	3	0	0

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 first quarter

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

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	1	0	1	0
Enhancing our Environment	2	0	1	0
Supporting our Communities	1	0	1	2
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	3
Delivering and Innovating	4	2	1	1
TOTAL	8	2	4	6

KEY:

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

Summary Position

The performance in the first quarter is broadly in line with expectations with the majority of projects now underway and progressing well. Three projects have an amber status and the reasons for the delays vary from costings coming in over budget to planning recommendations requiring additional work.

Eight performance indicators have met or exceeded target and six have not met target. For the performance indicators that have not met target, two have missed target by less than 5% and four have missed target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the number of stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale (<5%), collection rates for business rates (<5%), cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (>5%), recycling rates (>5%), percentage of DFG’s dealt with in timescale (>5%) and enquires resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre (>5%).


Some key areas of the business are experiencing an increase in demand on their services and we will continue to monitor these areas and our performance to focus our resources and achieve our corporate objectives.

Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy












Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Complete the physical improvements to Witham and Halstead town centres to improve public realm		
A contractor has been appointed to carry out the improvement works to Witham and Halstead town centres. Initial meetings and site surveys have been carried out and the contractors are creating a revised programme for the works, consulting with Essex County Council on any necessary areas of the works. The improvements planned are the result of a number of consultation events and further engagement with the High Street businesses will take place prior to the works starting.	December 2023	
Improve the district's housing stock by addressing energy efficiencies and exploring best practice to tackle empty homes		
Meetings between registered housing providers have been set up and the first networking meeting took place in May. The sustainability team presented to the group on energy efficiency opportunities. Eastlight Community Homes have submitted a bid for improvements to 150 homes to the second round of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.	March 2030	
An Empty Homes Working Group has been established to focus on best practice approaches and methodologies in managing the empty homes process. The empty homes in the district are currently being mapped and research has been carried out with other local authorities regarding empty homes processes and private rented sector incentive schemes.	March 2025	
Develop a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2028		
The evidence for the revised strategy is currently being collated. This will help to inform the priorities over the next four years.	March 2024	
Improve our health and leisure facilities by replacing the studio and sports hall floors at Braintree Leisure Centre and refurbishing the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre		
The works to replace the sports hall floor at Braintree sports and health leisure centre is awaiting the completion of a grant agreement to confirm Loxford Academy's commitment regarding the capital funding required.	March 2024	
The works to replace the studio floor at Braintree sports and health leisure centre is awaiting the completion of a grant agreement to confirm Loxford Academy's commitment regarding the capital funding required.	March 2024	

The works required to refurbish the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead leisure centre are being reconsidered in line with a revised budget as the initial designs and costings came in over budget.	March 2024	
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Actions carried out in partnership with others




Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Engage in the pre-application and examination processes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in and around the district		
Longfields Solar Farm – The secretary of state has consented to the Development Consent Order and the Council is now awaiting the developer to confirm the next steps and the timeline.	December 2026	
A12 Widening scheme – Consultation has taken place regarding proposed changes to the Development Consent Order and the results are being analysed. Further surveys and ground investigations are taking place to provide technical information ahead of the next phase of more detailed scheme design.	December 2028	
Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement – The Planning Inspectorate has accepted an application from National Grid for development consent. The pre-examination process has now started and anyone with an interest in the project needs to register by the 18th July 2023.	November 2028	
Norwich to Tilbury – National Grid launched a second non-statutory public consultation in June running until 21st August 2023 on the latest preferred draft alignment and anything that needs to be considered as they develop proposals further.	March 2030	
Rivenhall IWMF and Energy Centre – Public consultation launched in June 2023 on the plans to increase electricity generation. The consultation closes on the 23 rd August 2023 and the feedback will be taken into consideration when preparing the Development Consent Order application.	December 2025	
Develop our plans to introduce walking and cycling networks across the district		
The Council has been working with consultants to identify network routes which the consultants are now auditing before public consultation takes place.	December 2025	
Enable the delivery of a new build, multipurpose community centre in Witham bringing people together to socialise, learn and access key services		
The previous planning application submitted resulted in queries that are being looked into regarding the transfer of the freehold. Indicative costs have been received from the construction consultants.	November 2024	
Continue to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham		
The Integrated Care Board are awaiting sign off from NHS England on the increased costs for the outline business case before this can move forward. It is hoped this will be signed off in the second quarter.	October 2023	
Work with the Integrated Commissioning Board to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing services at the Victoria Square development		
Provide have been contracted to manage the facility at Victoria Square and have moved some of their services into the building. Conversations are taking place with Mount Chambers practice regarding moving over to the site but are yet to fully sign the legal documents.	March 2024	

ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT








Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Enhance biodiversity by refurbishing the wildlife garden in Halstead Public Gardens		
The Council has started working on the specification to refurbish the wildlife garden.	November 2023	▶
Improve the facilities in our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham		
The Council has appointment consultants to project manage the implementation stage of the skateparks and a detailed programme of works is expected to be received in the summer.	November 2024	▶
Deliver improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road, Halstead		
The improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road consist of a skate park, extension to the play area and soft and hard landscaping. The council has appointed consultants to project manage the works and a detailed programme is expected to be received in the summer.	July 2024	▶
Respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 in relation to air quality, biodiversity, water and waste reduction		
National Strategy was published in May 2023. A National strategy and methodology review for air quality briefing has been shared with Management Board and the recommendations in the report will now be actioned.	March 2024	▶
The Council continue to work at an Essex wide level to prepare for the introduction of biodiversity net gain in November.	March 2024	▶
The Council is still waiting for the release of guidance regarding the legislative changes required to the household collection methodology to inform a review on the consistency of collections to contribute to a reduction in waste.	March 2024	▶
Protect our communities by implementing the requirements of Martyn's Law		
The Bill is currently in the Pre-Legislative scrutiny phase and is likely to become Law later this year. In the meantime, the Council is developing a list of Council owned properties that come into either the Standard or enhance Tier alongside developing a list of event venues or buildings not owned by Council.	March 2024	▶
Deliver campaigns and work with our communities to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise food waste to help households save money and avoid unnecessary waste • Improve awareness and understanding of climate change 		
The campaign to report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles is currently being designed	March 2024	
The Council continues to support the Love Essex Campaign on minimising food waste which runs until December 2023. The Love Essex campaign in the first quarter included a shopping list challenge with the chance to win £60 supermarket vouchers. 126 residents in the Braintree district signed up to the challenge.	March 2024	
The Climate Change Action Plan is currently being reviewed and regular climate change campaigns will be identified once this plan is finalised. In the meantime, regular climate change communications are ongoing including Environment newsletters to just under 7,000 recipients and promotion of external support for residents and businesses including the programme to support young entrepreneurs with a green business idea and Essex County Councils climate change app. Social media activity includes encouraging planting to support bees, Heddingham School's Eco status, national bike week, linking to Essex County Councils consultation on the new Essex Electric Vehicle Charging point strategy, £2 bus fare cap extension and the chance to grab a discounted water butt and composter.	March 2024	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Deliver projects in our Climate Change Action Plan to contribute to our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district such as working with communities and businesses to build climate resilience, developing baseline data for a tree strategy, piloting the ECC green accreditation scheme (before rolling out to businesses) whilst continuing to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels		
Details of the projects being delivered in our Climate Change Action Plan are detailed in the next section of this report. The Climate Change Action Plan is currently being revised to include any new projects for 2023/24.	March 2030	
Develop opportunities for increasing the renewable energy and fuel security within the district		
The Council is in discussion with Essex County Council in relation to joint funding a renewable energy project in the district. Central Government has stated that it is likely that on-shore wind planning restriction will be removed/reduced and the Council is awaiting further information around the anticipated timeline for this and the relaxation of planning requirements.	April 2025	
Increase biodiversity and the attractiveness of the district by re-wilding open spaces and wild seed highway verges		
Rivenhall Parish Council have permission for the rewilding work to take place on the verges and the rewilding areas adjacent to The Albert Moss playing field. Hatfield Peverel and Castle Heddingham have also left areas uncut ready to rewild. The next areas for Sustainable Planting are programmed in for the Autumn of 2023 at Braintree Cemetery and Braintree Leahurst (opposite St Michaels's Fountain). Sustainable Planting will replace all summer and winter bedding, apart from paid graves and possible partnership working with Halstead in Bloom for Halstead Public Gardens.	December 2025	
As part of a two-year safer streets programme, tackle enviro crime in the focused area of Witham		
The Councils Grounds Maintenance team continue to regularly review the environment of Cut Throat Lane to ensure it is maintained. No works were	March 2024	

required in the first quarter.		
The official launch of the Dog Watch Scheme took place on 15th April 2023 in Witham with over 200 visitors. The aim of the event was to encourage local residents to sign up to the Essex Police led Dog Watch Scheme where local dog owners will become guardians for the local area while exercising their dogs, reporting criminal damage or ASB. A total of 65 people signed up to the Dog Watch scheme on the day.	April 2023	



CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

In the first quarter, focus has been on collating the performance of all the 2022-23 Climate Action Plan actions and on collecting data for The Council’s carbon emissions in preparation of completing the 2022/23 final performance report. Carbon emissions have been recorded to date and we await the carbon value from DESNZ for our final reporting.

The Climate Action Plan is classified under seven themes and individualised progress on these themes is outlined below:

Resources

Ricardo have completed modelling of three options around co-mingled collections with twin stream which includes glass and have produced a draft report. Draft documents have been developed with Essex County Council for a Sustainable Procurement and Social Value policy – once approved, the Council will then consider how to embed this within our own Procurement Policies. Continuing promotion of several schemes to residents have taken place on social media and via the Environment Newsletter, including the promotion of the Love Essex food waste campaign and the subsidised water butt scheme.

Energy Conservation

A report is being drafted on the principles for transitioning from diesel powered vehicles to HVO and/or Electric vehicles (climate change v affordability) and start the procurement process for replacing 34 vehicles as part of the 2023/24 vehicle replacement programme. A funding bid has been submitted for the HUG2 scheme and £3.6m of funding has been allocated to the Council to deliver support to off gas areas. At the first Registered Social Landlord (RSL) forum organised by Housing, partnerships were strengthened and discussions are now underway to support some smaller RSL’s with developing Climate Action Plans which included energy saving measures for households.

Built Environment

The adopted Local Plan includes policy support for renewable energy on new developments. Essex County Council guidance on how to install renewable on listed buildings has now been completed as part of the Essex Design Guide and a viability study to confirm the costs of net zero for new homes has been completed and published.

Transport

Essex County Council have successfully secured bids from bid OZEV & LEVI for developing a programme of electric vehicle charging installations across the county. The Council took part in Essex County Council's Green Travel Plan survey- the survey was shared several times with staff

including frontline staff. The Green Travel Plan is reaching completion. Alongside this, an information page has been created for staff awareness within Climate Change Communication – this includes the promotion of salary sacrifice for bikes and promoting walking to work. A number of cycling films and content were published on our social media channels to coincide with National Bike week. The Council continues to work with Community 360 to promote organised walks across the district and the uptake remains positive. The revised taxi policy is currently being drafted and shall be ready for approval by the Licensing Committee later in 2023.

Business and the Green Economy

Two officers attended the day-long networking and working group meeting led by Essex Rivers Hub and hosted by Anglian Water. The meeting was very successful in securing future partnership work and partners are very keen to access the data from the Tree Canopy Survey once published. Partners discussed sharing environmental asset mapping to identify grant-funded and match-funded projects.

Early scoping work has begun on the Council's new galaxy website for Climate Change and opportunities for signposting businesses to carbon footprinting tools (as well as other Climate related tools) has been identified as useful content. Meetings have been held with Essex County Council regarding 'A Great Start' which is Essex County Council's new sustainable business accreditation scheme. The Council and Uttlesford Council will both be the pilot councils for 'A Great Start'. Essex County Council have a consultant looking at whether 'A Great Start' can potentially be aligned or amalgamated with the Levelling Up for businesses and the Green Skills programme.

Natural Environment

Rivenhall Parish Council have permission for the rewilding work to take place on the verges and the rewilding areas adjacent to The Albert Moss playing field are now being left to rewild. Hatfield Peverel and Castle Hedingham have also left their areas uncut ready to rewild. Castle Hedingham, Bures and Steeple Bumpstead were allocated £5k each of UK Shared Prosperity funding for community garden projects. The Council and Essex County Council have reached an agreement for Essex County Council to plant and maintain ten trees for flood alleviation in Bradford Street, Braintree. The Treeconomics Tree Canopy Survey has now been completed and is due for presentation to Management Board in July 2023. A meeting with Essex County Council is scheduled for July 2023 to discuss opportunities to offer grant funding to communities for Community Orchards. The secondary legislation from the Environment Act relating to air quality has now been published by central government and we now have an understanding of the requirements of Central Government's revised Air Quality Strategy 2023 published in May 23.

Adapting to Climate Change


Summer resilience communications are ongoing to include residents dealing with heat and drought occurrences. Creation of Beat the Heat messages have gone out through socials and e-newsletters including yellow weather, thunderstorm warning messages. A meeting with the lead officer at Essex County Council who manages the Water Strategy was held and the Council offered their skills with local knowledge regarding flooding, drought and water management. The Corporate Risk Register is up to date. Regular meetings with the ERF continue.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES









Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

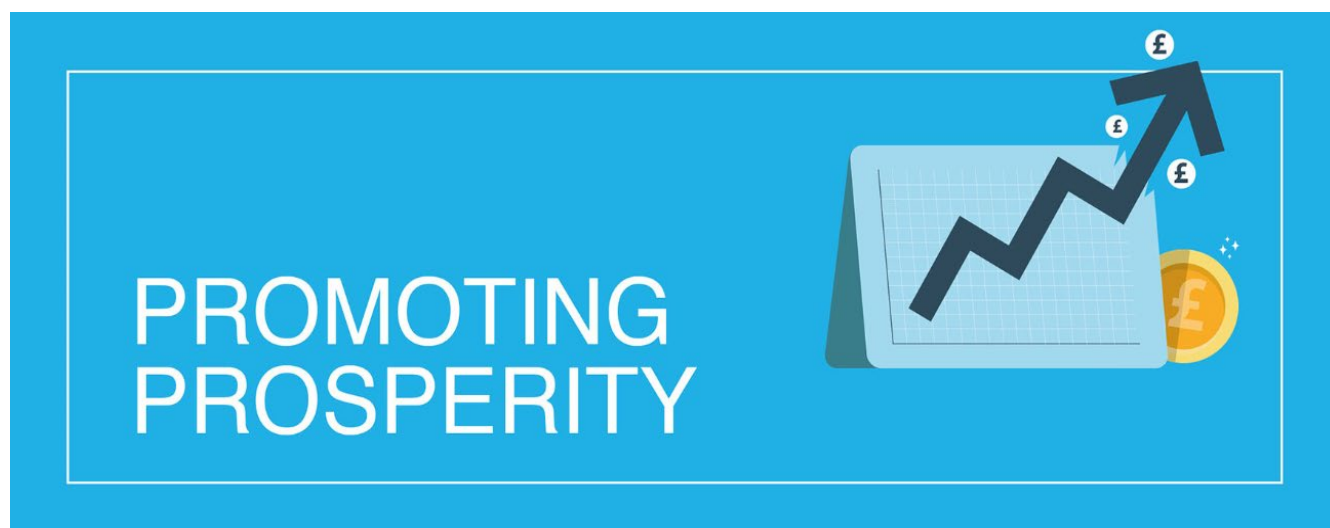
Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<p>Over a two-year period, use £1m of New Homes Bonus to support residents of the district through the continued cost of living crisis by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing food security and access to essential goods across the district • Helping community groups and organisations provide additional support to our most vulnerable residents • Enabling physical and emotional health and wellbeing support with a focus on young people who find it difficult to access these services 		
<p>The cost of living partnership continues to meet every other month with representation from a wide range of statutory and voluntary partners, the meeting focuses on the key themes and enables partners to share information on the current issues being faced by residents. As part of the £1million investment, the Council has provided Braintree Area Foodbank with £98,951 to develop its offer to Braintree residents and ensure those who need access to food and essentials the most receive this support. This includes enabling additional open days for a food collection service in Braintree and recruitment of more staff to deliver food parcels and increase deliveries in rural areas of the district. Alongside this, Braintree Area Foodbank received a donation from a resident of the district which has enabled them to purchase a second van to carry out the delivery service. In May, a further foodbank parcel collection point was launched in Hedingham in partnership with Hedingham Baptist Church. To support the voluntary and community organisations across the district, current considerations are being given to the possibility of a grant scheme for the group sector, where they can apply for funding for schemes that will mitigate the impact of the cost of living for our most vulnerable residents. The council also continues to work with partners including the Active Braintree Foundation, Fusion Lifestyle and the Braintree District Museum Trust to enable physical and emotional health and wellbeing support for residents. A meeting has been held to discuss options to expand the 'keep moving scheme' to support individuals and families to continue sport and physical activities as well as expanding the holiday activity scheme across the district particularly in rural areas.</p>		▶
<p>Support local projects and initiatives through the Councillor Community Grants scheme</p>		
<p>Following the elections, each ward member has been allocated £1,250. In the first quarter, 10 grants have been awarded to the value of £6,080. Projects supported so far are range from planting for Silver End Secret Community</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	▶

Garden, contributing towards costs of running a play day for children during the school holidays, contributing to faith groups for community activities and a coronation woodland project and an energy audit on a village hall to help make it more energy efficient.		
Support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on their pathway to independent living through supported housing and move-on accommodation		
This is a partnership project with Peabody to deliver 3 self-contained units of accommodation, with visiting support. Additional funding is required to secure the shortfall in funding required to enable contractors to redevelop and convert an empty property in the district.	December 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build more resilient communities to response to emerging issues		
This is funded through UKSPF with a budget of £30k to support people accessing basic skills to respond to issues that commonly arise and the actions to support this are being scoped out for delivery in 2024.	March 2025	
Equip young people with the skills required to face challenging situations by delivering crucial crew workshops to schools across the district in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership		
Three crucial crew events have been organised to take place in the first week of July 2023. 16 primary schools have confirmed their attendance.	March 2024	
Review our Livewell Strategy to support the changing needs of our residents and wider health and care priorities		
The health team are compiling the evidence to better understand the priorities of the Livewell Strategy moving forward. A stakeholder engagement session will be held in August/September.	December 2023	
Address the health inequalities of the district through the Mid-Essex Alliance partnership by designing integrated health services in local communities and neighbourhoods		
The Council is working with the Mid Alliance partners to develop the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams approach with three workshops taking place during the first quarter, focusing on the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams across Mid Essex. The current timeline is for these to be fully operational by October 2024. The Integrated Neighbourhood Teams philosophy is based on a 'no wrong door approach' for residents to access support via multiple agencies working closer together under the Mid Essex Alliance banner. The Council is also working with the Mid Essex ECC Childrens Commissioner to develop the Mid Essex Feel Well subgroup, focusing on collaborative approaches to supporting children, young people and parental health & wellbeing.	October 2024	
Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night-time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham		
Various community engagement events have taken place in the first quarter including the Dog Day event at Guithavon Green, the Community Safety Impact Night in Witham Town Centre and train station and two Essex Police football tournaments. Tournament attendees were asked about their views of safety and a total of 85 people shared their views. Steering group meetings have taken place in April and June and the next meeting is in August 2023.	March 2024	
Deliver two changing places toilets in Witham and Halstead allowing people with complex needs to have greater access to public places to take part in everyday activities		
Macegreen are the appointed consultants overseeing the management of the project and have provided the Council with the JCT contract for feedback and signing. Plans for the changing places toilets have been submitted to Muscular	March 2024	




Dystrophy UK for approval by the Council. A pre-start meeting will be held with the consultants and contractors carrying out the works in August and it is hoped to be able to start on both sites at the end of the second quarter/start of the third quarter.		
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Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build on the current success of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park by selling the remaining site plots and promoting the development of the phase 2 land		
A planning application has been submitted following the outcome of a valuation report stating the potential for improved capital receipt.	November 2023	
Continue to develop the Witham Enterprise Units to bring forward new business premises for SME's		
It has been agreed to carry out a further feasibility based on the recommendations from Planning on the design and build.	October 2024	
Develop and deliver a business support programme based at the Plaza to help District businesses start, grow and increase productivity, especially in key sectors		
<p>A Sole Trader Support Scheme has been drafted to offer 40 funded annual memberships to access The Hatchery at The Plaza, through shared prosperity funding. The aim of the project is to create jobs and increase productivity of lone workers, of which 40 new users of The Hatchery will create an organic coworking and networking experience for sharing ideas, collaborations and new leads. A reduced rate has been agreed and an application form has been approved and the scheme will be launched shortly.</p> <p>In June, a breakfast business networking event was held at the Plaza where speakers from various sectors shared information on grants, business support, cyber security, green accreditations, sustainable transport and health and wellbeing in the workplace. The Council also unveiled its economic strategy and the priorities set to support and grow the local economy over the next five years.</p>	March 2024	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<p>In partnership with NEEB, deliver a shared prosperity funded programme of support focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and debt management support and advice alongside signposting to other areas of financial support to create and safeguard jobs across north Essex Digital skills support to businesses across the district enabling them to grow digitally 		
<p>The North Essex Economic Board is funding a two-year business support programme with Let's Do Business Group to help businesses in North Essex by delivering high-quality, independent advice to businesses either looking to start or established businesses looking to take their next step and grow. Let's Do Business Group, offers not only 1-2-1 advice and workshops and webinars to help, but are also an accredited delivery partner for a number of business loan providers. Early take up proving successful, especially 'Starting my biz' workshop.</p> <p>Tech Talent is delivering support, offering a level 2 qualification in cloud security. We Are Digital are continuing to offer support to residents without access to data or equipment and to date over 40 tablets and 1000GB in data have been provided.</p> <p>The NEEB Strategy has been approved by the Members Board and will start the process of being ratified by the individual districts.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	
<p>Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/workshops to introduce students to new industries and sector course pathways</p>		
<p>Officers have been preparing to support the Hedingham School Enterprise Challenge taking place in July which provides year 12 students with the opportunity to develop skills by working on an organisational project gaining insight into the way decision making impacts on a business and providing them with an opportunity to gain more of an understanding of the roles available within the public sector. Officers are also preparing for an apprenticeship event taking place in George Yard, Braintree in August and a Jobs Fair in October.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	
<p>Support productivity and prosperity in our rural areas through the allocation of grant funding from the Rural England Prosperity Funding</p>		
<p>The Council has been awarded £589,191 of Rural England Prosperity Funding to spend on rural areas between April 2023 and March 2025 and a report to agree the decision-making process for allocating the funding will be taken to Cabinet in July.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	





DELIVERING AND INNOVATING



Actions carried out by Braintree District Council







Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Develop plans to sustainably close our budget gap by capitalising on commercial opportunities to increase our income stream and identifying a deliverable efficiencies programme		
The Council commissioned a review by Commercial Gov to look at opportunities to increase income across the Authority. A number of opportunities have been identified with three taken forward around reviewing fees and charges, increasing existing traded service income and acquiring new business.	March 2024	▶
Develop an Asset Management Strategy to implement a more coherent approach to all property interests across the district		
It has been agreed to twin track the development of the Asset Management Strategy with the development of the Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028. Work on this will start later in the year.	March 2024	▶
Consider an operating model for residents and businesses to potentially subscribe to the garden waste collection service		
A report will be taken to Cabinet in July 2023 regarding the options for the Garden Waste Service	March 2024	▶
Continue to develop our online and digital services to support changes in customer demand and expectations		
Officers from the Digital Services team are meeting with services to better understand individual requirements, how we inform customers and how customers in each service engage with and transact with our services. This phase of the project is expected to be completed in July 2023 and the information from this will be used to inform the development of an online platform and roadmap for future improvements.	March 2024	▶
Understand the impacts of the reforms to national planning policy and mainstreaming biodiversity net gain in the planning system		
The Council continues to work with other Essex authorities to prepare for Biodiversity Net Gain being introduced in November for large sites. An internal working group will meet for the first time in July.	January 2024	▶
Provide fit for purpose car parking machines across our car parks		
Quotations have been received to provide eight machines to be installed in George Yard Multi Storey Carpark.	March 2025	▶









Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Inform and influence negotiations with Government around a Greater Essex Devolution deal to ensure the benefits are felt locally for residents and businesses		
The second negotiation meeting with officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) has taken place. A summary was provided as to the Greater Essex position in relation to the governance arrangements being considered for any new Combined County Authority. Officials were very happy with the work being carried out to ensure fair representation and influence from all local authorities, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and others in any new institution that would be created.	November 2023	
Deliver on the plan for North Essex Authorities to work more closely together on shared priorities and improving resilience		
Leaders and Chief Executives from across Essex have been discussing how we can build on the strong relationships we built through Covid and explore potential options to share support services.	March 2025	
Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including the rural pilot with Essex County Council		
Tricordant consultants have been appointed to facilitate conversations through community engagement events, the first of which was held on 22nd June 2023 at the Plaza with attendees from statutory organisations, voluntary sector, organisations and local community representatives. The purpose of the event was to come together and discuss where we currently stand and what we hope to achieve. A range of data was presented looking at pay and employment, achievement levels of children at key stage 2, public transport connectivity and broadband coverage. Results from the resident's survey asking what could be improved in their local area were also shared with the top 3 areas for improvement being road & pavement repairs, public transport and access to health services. Two further engagement events will be held in July and September and in between these events, community reference groups will be established to deeply engage with and hear from those living and working in rural Braintree with the aim of building a plan of action that provides real impact.	March 2025	
Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex		
An update on the draft Strategy was given to the Essex Waste Management Member Advisory Board in June. Further meetings are planned with Chief Executives Group in early July and Leaders and Chief Executives prior to formal public consultation which will start in the second half of the year.	March 2024	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2023/24						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	77				63		
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	140				199		<i>The breakdown between full and outline permissions are as follows: Full – 85 Outline - 55 The annual target is 795 and when divided by the four quarters, the quarterly target has not been met. As we progress through the year, the annual target should be achieved.</i>
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT							
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.73%				60%		<i>The recycling target is an aspirational target set by the Essex Waste Partnership. At the time of writing, the outturn figure is awaiting validation by ECC. The recycling performance in this quarter reflects the fact that the volume of residual waste was lower than in the previous quarter by 52 tonnes, and recycling was 3,415 tonnes higher mainly due to the increased tonnage of green waste collected following the winter suspension. The seasonal conditions in the first quarter resulted in a 'spring flush of growth with an additional 1,000 tonnes of green waste collected compared to the same quarter in 2022/23.</i>
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	110kgs				117kgs		
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported (number of flytips in brackets)	100% (309)				100%		
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES							
Percentage of DFG's approved within timescale	62.5%				80%		<i>In the first quarter, the team dealt with 40 DFG's with 25 approved within the timescales. The team are looking at how to improve the time from referral to live which will greatly improve overall performance. The average waiting time is currently 134 days for substantial and simple DFG's against the target of 130 days.</i>

Performance Indicator	2023/24						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
Participation levels across all our sports centres	177,126				170,951		
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						
Number of measures carried out through the Handyman scheme	79				n/a	n/a	
Number of homelessness cases prevented	53				n/a	n/a	
PROMOTING PROSPERITY							
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.7%				n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups across the district	271				n/a	n/a	
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	63				n/a	n/a	
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING							
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre	64%				70%		<i>The Customer Services Team dealt with 12,475 calls out of 19,516 calls at first point of contact. In the first quarter there has been a higher than normal volume of calls requiring a more in-depth answer mainly relating to the Elections in May, Housing Options and Assessment calls, Planning enquiries, licensing enquiries and Council tax enquiries</i>
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	98.50%				97%		
Number of people transacting with us online	33,995				n/a	n/a	
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	17.13 days				18 days		
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	2.89 days				5 days		
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	88.61%				90%		<i>Represents 70 out of 79 stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale. Delays in responses occurred in Planning and Operations due to additional time required to investigate the complaint.</i>
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.50%				30.10%		
Collection rate for Business Rates	30.12%				31.26%		<i>Marginally under target and expected to improve over the course of the year.</i>

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the first quarter of 2023/24 is detailed below. This is compared with 2022/23 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q3 2023/24	Q4 2023/24	TOTAL
Justified	43 (40)	(87)	(45)	(57)	(229)
Not Justified	23 (61)	(65)	(32)	(39)	(197)
Partially Justified	13 (27)	(15)	(28)	(29)	(99)
Not known	0 (0)	(0)	(1)	(0)	(1)
Total	79 (128)	(167)	(108)	(125)	(526)

Comments

In comparison to the previous quarter and the preceding year, the Council has seen a decrease in the number of complaints received during the first quarter of this year. No complaints were escalated to stage 2 or stage 3 of the complaints process in the first quarter.

The Operations service area continues to receive the highest number of complaints, primarily related to missed waste collections due to access issues, contaminated waste, and missed assisted collections. The additional bank holiday for the Kings Coronation was announced after the waste collection calendars were printed resulting in a higher number of missed collections around this time. The Council continues to promote and encourage customers to sign up to the text messaging service to notify customers of changes in collections to ensure customers put their bins out on time when collection days are moved.

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the first quarter of 2023/24, the LGO received no new complaint enquiries.

In respect of other complaints already being dealt with by the LGO, a decision notice was issued for a complaint against the planning service which the LGO declined to investigate.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	482				- 4	-
Total staff FTE	435.98				- 1.69	-
Level of employee turnover	3.94%				+0.65%	-
Number of leavers	19				+ 3	-
Number of starters	15				+ 7	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.34 days				- 0.96 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	84.56%				N/A Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1078				- 437	-
Number of delegates	200				- 509	-
Number of apprentices **	19				-	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2023/24
	466	481	492	499	492	486

** 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	
	<i>(2022/23 figure in brackets)</i>				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13 (13)	(5)	(15)	(13)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (12)	(5)	(15)	(13)	<i>The most common causes of accidents/incidents to employees in the first quarter are injuries whilst handling and lifting.</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (1)	(0)	(0)	(0)	<i>A visitor cut their finger whilst cutting a cake at the Plaza</i>
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	14 (37)	(35)	(16)	(1)	<i>The 14 days relates to one incident where a waste operative was left with a swollen knee when a car drove into the waste vehicle.</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	1 (3)	(2)	(1)	(5)	<i>Member of staff in the Cemeteries service was verbally abused by a member of the public</i>
Number of near miss incidents	2 (1)	(1)	(2)	(0)	<i>The near miss incidents relate to a wire sparking and a burst hydraulic pump</i>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	(1)	(0)	(0)	
Number of claims settled	0 (4)	(0)	(1)	(1)	

Financial Performance: First Quarter Review and Projected Year End Position

Background

Full Council agreed a net budget of £17.5m. 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 for the year by service as forecast at the end of Q1.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Forecast Spend for the year £'000	Current Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,814)	(2,407)	407	R
Community & Leisure	772	798	26	A
Corporate Management Plan	1,619	1,611	(8)	G
Economic Development	231	211	(20)	G
Environment	912	970	58	R
Finance	1,261	6	(1,255)	G
Governance	1,307	1,280	(27)	G
Housing Services	921	925	4	A
People & Performance	1,003	991	(12)	G
ICT & Facilities	2,009	1,960	(49)	G
Marketing & Communications	642	660	18	A
Operations	7,214	7,087	(127)	G
Strategic Investment	36	-	(36)	G
Sustainable Development	1,448	1,449	1	A
Service Total	16,561	15,541	(1,020)	G
Corporate Financing	1,334	981	(353)	G
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	-	162	162	
Est. Impact of Proposed Pay Award	-	568	568	
Efficiency & Income Allowance	(425)	-	425	
Net Total	17,470	17,252	(218)	G

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

¹see below for commentary on Strategic Investment Team

General Notes:

- **Staffing Changes** - projections are based on known changes at the end of Q1 and include allowance for changes in current vacant posts as advised by the relevant service. Vacancies and other staffing changes are likely to occur during the year and will be reflected in subsequent updates to projections.
- **Staff Pay Award** – a central provision has been made at this stage that reflects the latest National Employers' proposed offer. The estimated increase in pay costs for the year is c6% against the budget provision of 3%. The Trades Unions have rejected the pay offer and are currently consulting their members. There is a risk that the final pay award settles at a higher amount than provided.
- **Efficiency & Income Allowance** – the budget includes an allowance of £300k for staffing and £125k for income to reflect that historically staffing costs are lower than originally budgeted due to churn and changes in hours, grades & scale points, etc; and fees & charges income has over recent years been overachieved.
- **Wethersfield Legal Challenge** – costs are those incurred to date (£10k was accounted in 22/23 – total £172k). There will be further costs incurred which will be picked up in future updates.

The table below breakdowns the forecast variance:

Business Plan Service	Forecast £'000	Variance by Category		
		Staffing	Other Expenditure	Gross Income
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	407	(110)	262	255
Community & Leisure	26	6	(11)	31
Corporate Management Plan	(8)	(9)	1	-
Economic Development	(20)	(20)	-	-
Environment	58	150	-	(92)
Finance	(1,255)	(46)	170	(1,379)
Governance	(27)	(68)	7	34
Housing Services	4	-	7	(3)
People & Performance	(12)	(11)	(1)	-
ICT & Facilities	(49)	(17)	(32)	-
Marketing & Communications	18	(16)	49	(15)
Operations	(127)	10	(48)	(89)
Strategic Investment	(36)	28	0	(64)
Sustainable Development	1	(206)	48	159
Service Total	(1,020)	(309)	452	(1,163)
Corporate Financing	(353)	(19)	49	(383)
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	162	-	162	-
Est. Impact of Proposed Pay Award	568	568	-	-
Efficiency & Income Allowance	425	300	-	125
Net Total	(218)	540	663	(1,421)

Commentary on the Main Service Variances (+Adverse/ -Positive)

Asset Management

- The Plaza – Net operating cost higher than budget provision (+£33k) with a shortfall of income being offset by having a lower staffing establishment than was assumed in the original business case. The main area of reduced income is from the Maker Space (+£95k).
- Victoria Square – additional site operating costs (+£125k) primarily due to unrecoverable service charges, including charges in respect of units currently unlet. Other costs include a backdated business rate adjustment and increased insurance premia. Reduced lease rent income due to void units (+£64k).
- Staffing variance is net of additional cost of interim management arrangements and additional surveyor engaged to complete outstanding rent reviews (+£49k).

Environment

- Building Control net additional agency costs due to ongoing difficulties in recruitment combined with continuing high service demand (+£192k), partially offset by increased fee income (-£25k) and additional income from a new fees and charges schedule for non-statutory ancillary building control services (-£58k). The service is investigating potential partnership working to mitigate costs but will need to address position as fee earning activity is subject to statutory trading account requirements.
- Net underspend from vacancies within Environmental Protection and Carbon Management Unit (-£52k).

Finance

- Net underspend on employee costs due to vacancies, reduced hours and staffing starting at lower scale points than budget (-£46k).
- Local tax and housing benefit cost recoveries are lower than budget reflecting recent outturns (+£111k). The cost-of-living crisis is impacting on recovery as most of the liabilities relate to low-income households.

- Housing Benefits net cost of benefits paid (+£107k) – due to increasing number of claimants in temporary/ bed & breakfast accommodation used by Housing, and claimant in supported housing schemes.
- Unbudgeted new burdens grant funding in relation to DWP grants and Energy Rebates / Household support payments (-£86k).
- Treasury Management investment income due to higher interest rates / cash balances (-£1.4m)

Governance

- Difficulties with recruitment into legal services has led to underspends in the first quarter (-£59k), partially offset by costs incurred via the Local Legal Partnership (LLP) where extra capacity has been provided (+£19k).

ICT & Facilities

- Corporate ICT systems maintenance (-£49k) and staffing variances (-£18k).

Operations

- Savings from vacancies has meant that the additional waste collection costs from catch-up after the extra public holidays in this financial year has largely been mitigated (Net +£10k)
- Other expenditure is lower across waste management and street cleansing due a combination of a reduction in the market price of diesel; and changes in tonnages of material collected; diversion of waste disposal to alternative site from Cordons Farm; and additional vehicle hire and maintenance costs (Net -£182k)
- Other expenditure variances across Operations (+£134k) include: provision for dilapidation costs at Unit 4; statutory parking order advertisement; and car park & cemeteries maintenance; and delay in the transfer of community assets which was included as a budget saving.
- A reduction in income from dry recycling material due to a fall in market prices has been offset by higher income from glass collected from the recycling banks where market prices remain significantly higher than was allowed in the budget.
- Increase in income due to higher demand for the bulky waste collection service (-£45k)
- ECC recycling credits are lower due to reduced tonnage being collected (+£100k).
- Increase in waste management income under the Inter-Authority Agreement from ECC (-£43k)

Sustainable Development

- Majority of the staffing variance due to current vacancies within the service (including enforcement roles/ landscape services (-£206k).
- Overall, planning income is forecast to underachieve by £165k. A shortfall of planning application income is forecast (+£250k). Planning Performance Agreement income is projected to exceed budget by (-£100k), partially offset by lower Pre-application income (+£20k). Application income can be variable and subject to economic conditions.

Strategic Investment Team (SIT)

- Staffing cost higher than allowed in the original budget to reflect the extended arrangements for interim staff with partial mitigation through a vacancy. A higher proportion of staff time and therefore costs has been charged to capital projects. The net variance for the service is offset by a reduction in use of reserves.

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax sharing agreement –Council Tax collection performance at Q1 results in a forecast for the year that is better than the scheme baseline leading to a projected increase in share-back from preceptors (-£208k).
- Business Rate income is projected to be higher due to taxbase growth (-£200k)

Capital Programme

Capital programme totals £12.8m (excluding prior year spend) of which £6.6m is profiled into 2023/24:

	Budget Profiled 23/24 £000	Actual Spend 23/24 £000	In-year Variance 23/24 £000	Slippage (-or deduction from future budget) £000	Forecast Project Variance 23/24 £000	Expected Remaining Spend 23/24 £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	501	87	414	0	0	414
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	282	0	282	0	-92	190
Manor Street regeneration	142	0	142	0	0	142
Maltings Lane Community Facility	200	6	194	0	0	194
Town Centre improvements	619	0	619	0	0	619
Industrial estate improvements	58	0	58	0	0	58
Property planned maintenance	485	3	482	0	-14	468
Information technology systems & equipment	630	18	612	0	0	612
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	792	7	785	0	-9	776
Cemetery improvements	95	3	92	0	0	92
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	60	0	60	0	0	60
Operational equipment	429	18	411	0	-5	406
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	435	0	435	0	0	435
Climate change initiatives	21	0	21	0	0	21
Shared / Rural Prosperity Fund	180	0	180	0	0	180
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,357	370	987	0	0	987
Capital salaries	329	83	246	0	-6	240
Total	6,616	595	6,020	0	-126	5,894

Capital Resources

- Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – 3 sales were completed sales in the first quarter generating c£195k. A further 14 applications are in progress; however, with recent increases in interest rates, together with wider economic uncertainty, sales have slowed down. Receipt from the VAT shelter £60k.
- Better Care Funding received £1.06m which is used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Other minor receipts totalling £45k.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity for the year		Amount Invested at end of June
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£47.1m	£27.0m	£10.1m	£64.0m
Average amount invested for the year to date			£67.5m
Highest amount invested in the year to date			£71.2m

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.

Dividend income earned to the end of the quarter was £313k and interest on short-term investments was £479k, a total of £792k, or an annualised return of 4.97%.

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

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

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

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

	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	8,093
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(644)
Funding for one-off investment	(121)
Forecast variance	218
Sub-total Net Budget Variance	(547)
Balance at 31 March 2024	7,546

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

- The Budget for the year was approved based on using balances of £644k.
- An anticipated reduction in balances for the initial net operating costs of the Plaza (£121k) – the actual amount used will depend on the final operating position for the centre.
- The projected outturn variance for the year at Q1 is an overall positive variance of £218k.