

CABINET AGENDA

Monday 1st July 2024 at 7:15pm

**The Plaza, Enterprise & Innovation Centre,
Rutherford Park, Horizon 120, Braintree, CM77 7AU**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

Councillor G Butland

Councillor R van Dulken

Transformation, Performance and Delivery

Finance, Resources and Performance

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor K Bowers

Councillor J Coleridge

Transformation, the Environment and

Customer Services

Councillor T Cunningham (Deputy Leader)

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor D Garrod

Connecting People, Places and Prosperity

Economic Growth and Infrastructure

Planning

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor F Ricci

Councillor G Spray

Councillor P Schwier

Supporting Communities

Housing, Health and Wellbeing

Deputy Cabinet Member

Stronger Communities

Deputy Cabinet Member

Councillor L Bowers-Flint

Councillor B Taylor

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.

Please note that this meeting of Cabinet is being held at a venue which is unable to accommodate remote attendance for public question time. All registered speakers will be required to attend in person.

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.

Further information on Public Question Time is available on the [Council's website](#).

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Documents

Agendas, Reports and Minutes may be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

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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 20th May 2024 (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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7	Procurement of 7 Light Commercial Vehicles Autumn 2025	16 - 19
8	Lease for land and buildings North of Perry Road, Witham	20 - 23
	This Item has a confidential appendix. Any discussion of the information within the confidential appendix will require Cabinet to move in to private session.	
9	Lease for Units 3 and 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree	24 - 27
	This Item has a confidential appendix. Any discussion of the information within the confidential appendix will require Cabinet to move in to private session.	
10	Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2025	28 - 46
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16 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

17 Discretionary Services Options Appraisal

Report Title: Framework Agreement for Digital Website Solutions and Associated Services	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/32
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Lili Roqueta, Procurement Support Officer lili.roqueta@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To obtain delegated authority to award the Digital Website Solutions and Associated Services national framework agreement for a period of 4 years from 7th October 2024 until 6th October 2028.
- 1.2 Once let, this framework can be used by public sector bodies around the UK to call off for Digital Website Solutions and Associated Services. The expected (though not guaranteed) total framework value is up to £1.2 million. Based on this level of usage, Braintree District Council (the Council) would receive rebates from suppliers of approximately £18,000 over the lifetime of the framework.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 For delegated authority to be given to the Corporate Director (Support Services) to award the framework agreement once the tender process has concluded and enter into the framework agreements.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council, acting on behalf of the Essex Procurement Partnership (EPP) (which includes the Council, Epping Forest District Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Essex County Council and Tendring District Council), procures framework agreements for a range of goods and services. This will both meet the Council's own supply needs and generate income for those members of the partnership that were previously hub members to offset the cost of the procurement function.
- 3.2 The current framework agreement for Website Design, which consisted of 3 Lots and six suppliers in total, expired in March 2023. The income from this framework was £15,281.21.
- 3.3 The Council has published a notice in Find a Tender Service (FTS) inviting companies to tender for a place in a National Framework Agreement available to all UK public Sector Bodies for the supply of Digital Services.

This will be done via a Restricted Procedure due to the market size as established during Market Engagement. At stage 1 of the Restricted Procedure, Tenderers will be invited to submit a Selection Questionnaire (SQ). On completion of the deadline for submission of the SQ and their evaluation, the eight (8) highest scoring SQ's per Lot/Sub-Lot that have passed the minimum score requirement in the SQ, will be invited to the tender stage. At stage 2, tenders received from the suppliers shortlisted at SQ stage, will be evaluated and Successful Tenderers will gain a space in the relevant Lot/Sub-Lot of the framework.

- 3.4 The Framework will be for a period of 4 years from 7th October 2024 until 6th October 2028; the detailed timeline is below:

Issue Tender – Stage 1 (SQ) Selection commences	20 May 2024
Deadline to submit clarification questions relating SQ only	14 June 2024
Deadline for BDC to respond to clarification questions relating SQ only	18 June 2024
Stage 1 SQ submission deadline date/time	Thursday 20 June 2024 at 12:00 hours
SQ Evaluation period	21 June to 5 July 2024
Notification of unsuccessful and shortlisted tenderers	8 July 2024
Stage 2 Tender commences	9 July 2024
Deadline to submit clarification questions	30 July 2024
Deadline for BDC to respond to clarification questions	6 August 2024
Tender submission deadline date/time (for framework and for EPP0124 BDC call-off)	Wednesday 14 August 2024 at 12:00 hours
Tender Evaluation period	15 to 30 August 2024
Anticipated Provisional Award	2 September 2024
Anticipated Standstill period	3 to 12 September 2024
Anticipated Final Award	13 September 2024
Execution of agreements	By 4 October 2024
Framework start	By 7 October 2024
EPP0124 BDC call-off start	By 30 October 2024

- 3.5 The Council are anticipating that the throughput through the framework would be in the region of £1.2 million based on a growth of 10% of the current throughput. This would be achieved through further promotion of the framework and the fact that it has been scoped more inclusively. However, the Council propose to advertise this framework at a value of £2 million (66% growth) given the significant interest shown through Market Engagement, including from framework users. This will prevent the Council from having to

reprocure the framework within its duration if the throughput goes beyond the estimated £1.2m.

3.6 Suppliers under the framework must be able to provide digital solutions and associated services relevant to the lots for which they apply.

3.7 The framework agreement will consist of 3 Lots/Sub-lots as follows:

Lot 1 – Software Solutions

Sub-Lot 1a – Full digital service solution (Automatic Entry for Tenderers awarded a place in both Lots 1b AND 1c)

Sub-Lot 1b – Website and online form solution only

Sub-Lot 1c – Case management solution/CRM only

Lot 2 – Professional Services

Lot 3 – Multidisciplinary (Automatic Entry for Tenderers awarded a place in both Lots 1a AND 2. Bidding for Lot 3 is not required)

3.8 It is envisaged that the framework agreement will be established as follows:

Lot	Lot 1 - Software Solutions			Lot 2 – Professional Services	Lot 3 - Multidisciplinary
Sub-Lot	Sub-Lot 1a	Sub-Lot 1b	Sub-Lot 1c	N/A	N/A
Lot/Sub Lot description	Full digital service solution <i>(Successful Tenderers from both Lots 1b AND 1c)</i>	Website and online form solution only	Case management solution/CRM only	Professional Services	Multidisciplinary <i>(Successful Tenderers from both Lots 1a AND 2)</i>
Maximum places available	6 <i>(Automatic entry)</i>	6	6	6	6 <i>(Automatic entry)</i>

3.9 Suppliers would need to be able to deliver all aspects of each Lot/Sub-Lot. Limiting the number of suppliers will make the framework responses more manageable to evaluate, less time consuming for the framework suppliers to be managed and will simplify the procurement process that other public sector bodies need to undertake when using this framework agreement.

3.10 Customers will be permitted to Direct Award or conduct a mini competition under this framework to call off for their individual requirements.

3.11 The current Council call-off contract in respect to Website Content Management System (CMS) and Customer relationship Management System (CRM) is being procured through this framework and a mini-competition has been published alongside this. A decision regarding this call-off contract is not required as part of this report. This paper only relates to obtaining delegated authority to award the national framework agreement.

A separate Decision Report will be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the call-off contract at a separate Cabinet meeting in due course.

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

- Prosperity – our people prosper

3.13 The call-off contract for the Council which will be procured through this framework will support the above corporate objectives through better engagement with residents and improved BDC Website image. The Council will also be able to achieve better pricing and deliver savings, as well as provide social value through this contract.

3.14 Additionally these corporate objectives are supported through the rebate income generated by the framework helping to offset the cost of procurement to the Council and other EPH members and so support the Council to deliver value for money and reducing cost to taxpayers.

4. Consultation

4.1 The Council consulted a number of Framework users via a questionnaire ahead of completing the procurement documents, as well as other similar frameworks currently in place let by reputable framework providers.

4.2 As part of the Councils Market Engagement exercise, the Council had meetings with all framework suppliers from the previous framework. Additionally, we published a Prior Information Notice (PIN) on the Find a Tender Service website (FTS - an e-portal) on 14th February 2023 to engage new suppliers, who were given 30 days to respond to a questionnaire that would provide details to inform the specification and tender documents. The Council engaged with the responding suppliers further regarding the above timeline and ability to respond on this basis.

4.3 The Council has researched similar frameworks available in the market, including CCS' G-Cloud 13, BOS (Back Office Software) and YPO's Technology Hardware Software and Services framework, to understand typical length of call-offs allowed, rebate levels, how Direct Award was approached, etc.

5. Options

5.1 **Option 1 - Recommended** - To provide the Corporate Director (Support Services) with delegated authority to approve the award of the framework to the successful suppliers once a robust procurement process has taken place. This will ensure that the Framework can be established quickly. This will enable service users to start calling off contracts promptly and allow for the Council to receive any rebates payable.

5.2 **Option 2** - To not award the framework agreement, would result in the Council, and others, to source digital solutions and associated services from an alternate source and losing potential rebate income of up to £18,000. This option would, however, free procurement time to focus on procuring other contracts.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Below are the figures in relation to the usage of the last 2 editions of this framework and its projected value for the next edition from 2024 until 2028, as well as the Council's spend and projected spend for the same periods:

Digital Solutions and Associated Services Framework Agreement (previously known as Website Design)	March 2019- March 2023 Framework (Actual)	2024-2028 Framework (Projected)
Usage by Customers including the Council	£1,018,747.33	£ 1,200,000.00
Rebates at 1.5%	£15,281.21	£18,000.00
BDC specific spend	£235,324.18	£310,000.00

6.2 From the expenditure under the Framework, the Council could receive up to £18,000 (1.5% of the £1.2m value) of income over the life of the framework in the form of rebates paid by suppliers every time a public sector body calls-off from the framework. Whilst coming to the Council, this income would be shared between the original members of EPP.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 The procurement process to be followed is a Restricted Procedure, which is a 2-stage process in accordance with Regulation 27 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and in accordance with the Councils own Procedure Rules. Early Market Engagement has identified the market is large and a Restricted Procedure would be more appropriate in this case.

7.2 At the conclusion of the procurement exercise, the Council will enter into a Framework Agreement, which will establish the framework for the four-year period. The Council will be required to keep the framework under review and will monitor its usage going forward. The Framework will include a call off contract for use by other public sector bodies.

7.3 The Council will be entitled to call off from this framework, and any requirement to do so will be subject to the Council's usual governance processes and approval.

8. Other Implications

8.1 The Council is committed to environmental improvement through integrating environmental protection and sustainable development into its decision-making processes in respect of both the execution of its core functions and

responsibilities, and the management of day-to-day operations. As part of this framework, suppliers are expected to cooperate with the Council's policies and strategies as far as is reasonable and practical.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

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

10. Background Papers

10.1 EIA

Report Title: Microsoft Enterprise Agreement	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/12
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Paul Reid, ICT & Facilities Manager paul.reid@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To award a new 3-year contract (Microsoft Enterprise Agreement) with an option to extend by one year, for the provision of the Microsoft licences and related services required by Braintree District Council (the Council).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To award a new 3-year contract (Microsoft Enterprise Agreement) with an option to extend by one year, for the provision of Microsoft Licences and related services, to Ultima with a total contract value of £500,000.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council agreed in 2021 to move to a new subscription-based Microsoft licencing model (O365). This was due to the previous perpetual licencing model that provided the legacy Office 2013 product suite being discontinued. This ensured that Microsoft Office continued to be supported for all users.
- 3.2 A decision was also taken in 2021 to move to an enhanced security model that added enterprise mobility products to increase the protection available to support remote and hybrid working.
- 3.3 This migration to the subscription based licencing model enabled the implementation of upgraded software and enhanced security features that has ensured that the Council:
- Has maintained an appropriate licencing model for the current use of hardware and software
 - Has created a secure cyber environment where council data stored on remote devices (laptops, phones and tablets) is protected and can be remotely wiped from devices.

- Has reduced the possibility of data loss, theft, breach or damage for which the authority could be liable under GDPR legislation. This is pertinent to officers' workstations as well as members' devices used to access council information and data.
- Has provided a more secure method for logging onto and accessing remote devices.

3.4 Further adoption of Microsoft technologies available to the Council such as as Sharepoint, OneDrive, Teams and Telephony are now a fundamental tool for staff operating in an agile, flexible and collaborative environment.

3.5 The Council's existing 3-year Microsoft Enterprise Agreement is due to expire on 31 July 2024 and the Council now needs to consider its renewal to ensure that the Council can continue to use the Microsoft products compliantly.

3.6 The current licencing requirements for the Council are outlined below:

Product	Quantity
Enterprise Mobility + Security E5	14
Exchange Online Kiosk	10
Microsoft 365 E3 Extra Features	400
Microsoft Intune Plan 1	49
Microsoft Intune Plan 1 Device	54
Microsoft Teams Phone Resource Account	25
Phone System Shared Server All Language Subscription 1 Licence with Skype for Business 20	400
Teams Shared Devices Sub Per Device	2
Office 365 E1	49
Power BI Pro	5
Skype For Business Plus CAL Shared Server All Language Subscription Per User - Licence	400
Win Server Standard Core ALng LSA 2L	28

3.7 The Essex Procurement Partnership advised that the most appropriate procurement route was an aggregated procurement via Crown Commercial Services (CCS).

3.8 This aggregated Procurement established a Supplier Contract(s) for the purchase of NFC174 Provision of Microsoft Licenses and related services. The contract(s) will be for an initial three (3) year period with an option to extend by one (1) year (3+1).

3.9 The Contract(s) are being offered under RM6098 Technology Products & Associated Services 2 (TePAS 2): Lot 3: Software and Associated Services Standard Terms and Conditions for Goods, the terms of which will govern any resultant Contract(s). The procurement commenced on 27 March 2024,

with a Tender Deadline of 19 April 2024. Ultima Business Solutions were identified as the winning supplier on 14 May 2024.

3.10 The Tender was evaluated based upon a pass/fail criteria for qualification envelope, Technical Envelope (10%) and Commercial Envelope (90%).

3.11 The tender results are shown below:

Supplier Name	Commercial Score	Weighted Commercial Score (90%)	Technical Total (10%)	Total Score	Ranking
Ultima	100.00	90.00	10.00	100.00	1st
Supplier 2	99.26	89.33	10.00	99.33	2nd
Supplier 3	98.53	88.68	10.00	98.68	3rd
Supplier 4	98.00	88.20	10.00	98.20	4th

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

- Prosperity – our people prosper.

4. Options

4.1 Option 1 – Enterprise Agreement

4.1.1 An Enterprise agreement is a Microsoft agreement taken by customers who need to licence certain products including, Windows, Office 365, the Enterprise Mobility Suite, or their combined form “M365” estate wide. An Enterprise Agreement will benefit from the discounted pricing on all products within the agreement with further discounts negotiated for Public Sector organisations

4.1.2 One key benefit of the Enterprise agreement is the price lock. The price of licences is locked in for the duration of the agreement at the point of adding it. This means that licences within the enterprise agreement are protected from any Microsoft price increases until the end of the agreement.

4.1.3 An Enterprise Agreement allows for additional products to be added and for an increase in quantities at any time. There is also the flexibility to reduce products and licences at each anniversary to ensure currency of the software in use.

4.1.4 An Enterprise Agreement is the recommended option.

4.2 Option 2 – Business Standard Licencing

4.2.1 Business Standard is an alternative licencing vehicle to an Enterprise Agreement. This option is generally used by organisations who are unsure

of their medium term licencing requirements (next 4 years). The Councils existing Microsoft partner has confirmed that there are not any discounts or reduced prices for public sector organisations who choose to opt for this licence model. It is only possible to renew licences annually, or to add new products or licences for a minimum term of 1 year from the date of order, which can make ongoing maintenance more complicated to administer.

- 4.2.2 Business Standard is not recommended for the Council by its Microsoft partner due to the higher costs associated with this option and the expectation that Braintree Licence requirements are unlikely to change substantially in the medium term (next 4 years)

4.3 Option 3 – Do not award the contract

- 4.3.1 This option is not recommended due to the business-critical nature of Microsoft products in use across the organisation

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The total contractual costs of £500,000 are based on the initial 3 Year term + 1 Year option to extend for a final year. These costs are within the existing ICT base budget allocated for Microsoft licensing.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council has complied with its requirements under its procurement procedure rules and those set out in the relevant procurement legislation.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

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

Report Title: Procurement of 7 Light Commercial Vehicles Autumn 2025	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/16
Report Presented by:	Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Transformation, the Environment and Customer Services
Enquiries to:	Debbie Bezzina, Transport Manager debbie.bezzina@braintree.gov.uk

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek delegated authority to award contract(s) for the replacement of 7 light commercial vehicles following the conclusion of the procurement exercise and to determine the most appropriate financing options.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Transformation, The Environment and Customer Services, to award all associated contracts for the purchase of 7 light commercial vehicles (LCV's), at the conclusion of the procurement exercise and provided to do so is within budget allocation.
- 2.2 To delegate to the S151 Officer the decision to determine the most appropriate method of financing the vehicles in line with the Council's treasury management practices.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Braintree District Council (the Council) has traditionally had a Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) over a rolling 7-year period. Vehicles that require replacement are procured and funded in a variety of ways including outright purchase (Capital), Lease or Contract Hire. The method of financing is carefully considered to secure the best option(s) available in terms of value for money.
- 3.2 In November 2022, the Council appointed The Link Group (a qualified and experienced vehicle finance company) to review the Council's Vehicle Replacement Strategy and make recommendations to enable the Council to procure the required vehicles and transition its existing commercial fleet to new Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV's), where it is operationally practical and financially viable to do so.

- 3.3 The Link Group recommended that the Council should continue to review its VRP on an annual basis considering the latest ULEV technology available and assess the whole-life costs of each vehicle or vehicle type. This reflects the fact that currently ULEV's are more expensive than conventional diesel operated vehicles: in some cases, the technology is still evolving and so adopting a complete ULEV replacement programme may not represent best value for money to the taxpayer, albeit ULEV'S would contribute to the Councils target of achieving net zero by 2035.
- 3.4 The LCV sector is one where the EV (Electric Vehicle) technology and pricing has developed more quickly and the Council identified that 14 of the 28 vehicles that were included in the last procurement were suitable for electrification. This meant that an electric vehicle was available on the market, it met the Councils specification and was within budget. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the 7 vehicles due for replacement within this procurement. Whilst they are LCVs, and electric versions are being developed, the Councils requirement to tow Horticultural equipment to site, and the need for combined tipping and towing, means that the battery range, along with costs, do not meet the Councils required specification on this occasion and is outside of the Councils budget. Therefore, it is recommended that for these 7 vehicles ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) models should be procured.
- 3.5 The current fuel contract has been amended to allow for the immediate introduction of HVO should the Council wish to opt for this fuel as a way of mitigating CO2 emission in the future.
- 3.6 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:
- Prosperity – our people prosper
 - Environment – our environment is cherished

4. Procurement Process

- 4.1 The Procurement Partnership Ltd (TPPL) will manage the tender process via their own e-tendering portal under the direction of the Essex Procurement Partnership (EPP). The Council will be using the TPPL Framework to source the 7 vehicles required, across 5 different specifications as follows:

Lot No.	Specification Required	Quantity	To replace
1	7.5tn Dropside Flat Bed	1	3H24 LX67O EZ
2	7.5tn Cage Tipper	1	3H25 LX67OFA
3	3.5tn Dropside, Taillift, Day Cab	3	3M73 EX18NHL 3M70 E018GYU 3M74 EX18OZH

4	3.5tn Dropside Crew Cab Tipper	1	3M71 EX18LHZ
5	3.5tn Dropside Day Cab Tipper	1	N/A

5. Tender Evaluation Panel

5.1 The panel for the quality evaluation will be represented by officers as follows:

- Transport Manager, Braintree District Council
- Operations Manager, Braintree District Council
- Street Scene Supervisor, Braintree District Council

The process will be moderated by EPP, Braintree District Council.

6. Options

6.1 **Option 1 – Not to grant the use of delegated powers.** This is not recommended as it will not allow for the Council to make decisions on the award of contracts in a timely manner. This could expose the Council to a significant price increase.

6.2 **Option 2 – Approve the use of delegated powers (Recommended Option)** This would ensure that the Council is able to award the contracts for all vehicles in a timely manner, ensuring that the Council is able to secure the best price and avoid the risk of price increases being incurred.

7. Next Steps

7.1 Subject to Cabinet approving the recommendations within the report, the Council will issue the tender via the TTPL Framework

7.2 At the conclusion of the procurement exercise, the Cabinet Member for Transformation, Environment and Customer Services, will undertake the decision to award in line with the delegations set out in this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The 7 LCV's have an estimated purchase price of £500,000 (subject to the tender outcomes). The Council's approach to financing operational vehicles has been to assess the optimum funding arrangement on delivery which typically involves consideration of leasing, contract hire, or some other form of borrowing. Where leasing (or similar) is proposed a separate tender process will be undertaken to obtain the most competitive financing rates.

8.2 The annual financing cost for operational vehicles is funded through service budgets and the Vehicle Replacement reserve, the requirements for which are reviewed as part of the annual budget process. Additional funding requirements have already been identified and provisioned in the current

Medium-Term Financial Strategy to meet the cost of the planned vehicle replacements, including these LCVs.

- 8.3 Under accounting rules, the cost of the vehicles will be added to the Council's capital investment programme for the year and Balance Sheet, and a financial liability recognised where leasing or other borrowing is applied.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 This procurement exercise will be conducted in accordance with the Council's Constitution, Procurement Procedure Rules and all relevant legislative provisions. The Council is intending to use a legally compliant Framework which is open to the public sector to use. In doing so the Council will ensure that it adheres to the requirements of the relevant framework agreement.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

11. Appendices

- 11.1 None.

Report Title: Lease for land and buildings North of Perry Road, Witham	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/26
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance.	
Enquiries to:	Edwina Crowley, Head of Property and Asset Management, Edwina.crowley@braintree.gov.uk

Confidential Appendix

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

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report is to consider the surrender of a long ground lease and the grant of a new ground lease, to the same tenant, to give them longer security in the site which will promote the value of the investment.
- 1.2 The ground lease is held on the investment portfolio for the purposes of earning revenue to support service delivery so the terms must represent best consideration.
- 1.3 The Asset Management Service, together with procured property consultants, have negotiated market terms to enable Cabinet to consider fully the request from the tenant, and the impact the transaction would have on capital and revenue.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the tenants request for a new ground lease which will provide them with longer security of tenure and support their investment into their unit.
- 2.2 To agree the market terms for the new ground lease as detailed in the confidential appendix.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The long leaseholder, Trojan Investments Ltd, currently holds a full repairing and insuring (FRI) ground lease with Braintree District Council, (BDC) dated and commencing on 22nd May 2001 for a term of 125 years. There are currently 102 years unexpired. Details of the current ground rent and the main terms of this lease are in the confidential appendix.
- 3.2 The property asset is located towards the southern end of the Freebournes Road Estate. It comprises a self-contained site with an area of 1.82 acres (0.739 hectares) which has been developed into 35,095 sq ft/2,981.70 sq m of small industrial warehousing units. The site is clearly identified with the valuation report referred to within the background papers at 11.1.
- 3.3 The long leaseholder has approached the Council seeking to extend the current term of the lease to 152 years unexpired. This will support their investment into the business by providing certainty for a longer period of time as required by commercial lenders. To facilitate their investment, it will be necessary for the current lease to be surrendered and a new lease granted for a 152 year term.
- 3.4 In recent years, the Council has received similar requests from leaseholders to extend their long ground leases. This assists lessees to secure future funding for business expansion or improvements to the asset. Likewise, the Council benefits from improved lease terms including a market review of the ground rent payable, and in this case, the proposed terms include an improved rent review pattern.
- 3.5 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:
- Prosperity – our people prosper.

4. Options

Option 1:

- 4.1 To accept the proposed surrender of the current ground lease and approve the grant of a new 152-year ground lease on the terms contained within Appendix A. This would enable the lessee to invest in the property asset for the longer term and generate a both a revenue and capital increase for the Council's long-term investment.

Option 2:

- 4.2 To decline the request to surrender the current ground lease and grant a new longer term ground lease. This would be inconsistent with the investment holding of the asset which is to maximise income which is used to support service provision.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Heads of Terms for the transaction, as reported in the Confidential Appendix, have been negotiated between the parties' representatives, and represent best consideration.
- 5.2 The agreed transaction will generate for the Council an increased ground rent revenue, together with an improved rent review pattern during the term of the new ground lease, as set out in the Heads of Terms reported in the Confidential Appendix.
- 5.3 The consultant's report confirms the capital asset book value will be increased by this transaction.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The recommended terms are market terms and therefore the transaction meets the 'best consideration' requirements of Section 123, Local Government Act 1972.
- 6.2 Legal Services will complete the conveyance.

7. Other Implications

- 7.1 The long leaseholder, Trojan Estates Ltd, will benefit from the additional security of tenure of an extended lease term and be encouraged to invest into the business which secures employment in Braintree District.
- 7.2 There are no environmental, climate change, safeguarding or community engagement issues arising from this decision.

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) and (c) although it is relevant for (a).

- 8.3 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this decision. Commercial and industrial property management is neutral in this regard.

9. List of Appendices

- 9.1 Confidential Appendix

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Valuation Report dated 16th February 2024 compiled by Derrick Wade Waters.

- 10.2 Lease dated 22nd May 2001 between Braintree District Council, (Landlord) and Trojan Investments Ltd (Tenant) dated and commencing on 22nd May 2001.

Report Title: Lease for Units 3 and 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: Yes	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/35
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Mike Shorten, Surveyor and Valuer micheal.short@braintree.gov.uk	

Confidential Appendix

This report has a **confidential appendix** which is not for publication as it includes exempt information falling within paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to a lease surrender and regrant arrangements for Units 3 and 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree as set out in the Confidential Appendix.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the lease surrender and regrant arrangements for Units 3 and 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree which will secure a letting on open market rent terms.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Units 3 and 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, is a detached two storey office building purchased by the Council in 2016 as an investment and currently let as follows:
- 3.2 Ground Floor and First Floor Unit 3 – let to It's Lolly Ltd (a card payments processing company) on the terms of a 5-year lease from August 2020.
- 3.3 First Floor Unit 4 – let to It's Lolly Ltd on the terms of a 3 year lease from July 2022.
- 3.4 Ground Floor Unit 4 – currently vacant.

- 3.5 The Council retains the responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the building fabric together with management of the common areas including the car park.
- 3.6 In accordance with good practice guidelines for the letting of commercial property, the vacant office on the ground floor at Unit 4 has been offered on the open market by the invitation of rental offers.
- 3.7 The Council has received a proposal from It's Lolly Ltd to take a surrender of their two current leases and for a regrant of a new 5 year lease for the whole building (Units 3&4) on the proposed terms set out in the Confidential Appendix. On this basis the responsibility for the repair and maintenance of the whole building will transfer to the Company and the common areas will be incorporated into the leased area.
- 3.8 No other rental proposals were received during the marketing exercise.
- 3.9 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the Corporate Priority of prosperity by providing an opportunity for business growth.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The property is held as an investment and therefore community and Ward Member consultation is not required.

5. Options

- 5.1 Option 1 – to complete the proposed lease surrenders and regrant of a new 5 year full repairing lease for the whole building (the Recommended Option).
- 5.2 Option 2 – to decline the proposal and seek to relet the vacant ground floor office suite (No. 4) to an alternative tenant.

This option would not be conducive with the asset holding category which is as an investment to secure rental income and the Council would continue to incur the management and void costs of unit 4.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The vacant unit has been widely marketed through local agents, inviting rental offers in accordance with good practice guidelines for the letting of vacant property.
- 6.2 The proposed terms set out in the Confidential Appendix are considered best consideration.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Legal services are appointed as legal advisors in the negotiations to protect the Council's interests.

7.2 The opportunity has been widely marketed to ensure the Council complies with S.123 Local Government Act 1972 to obtain best consideration.

8. Other Implications

8.1 No other implications

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 These are no equality or diversity issues arising from this decision. Property transactions are neutral in this regard.

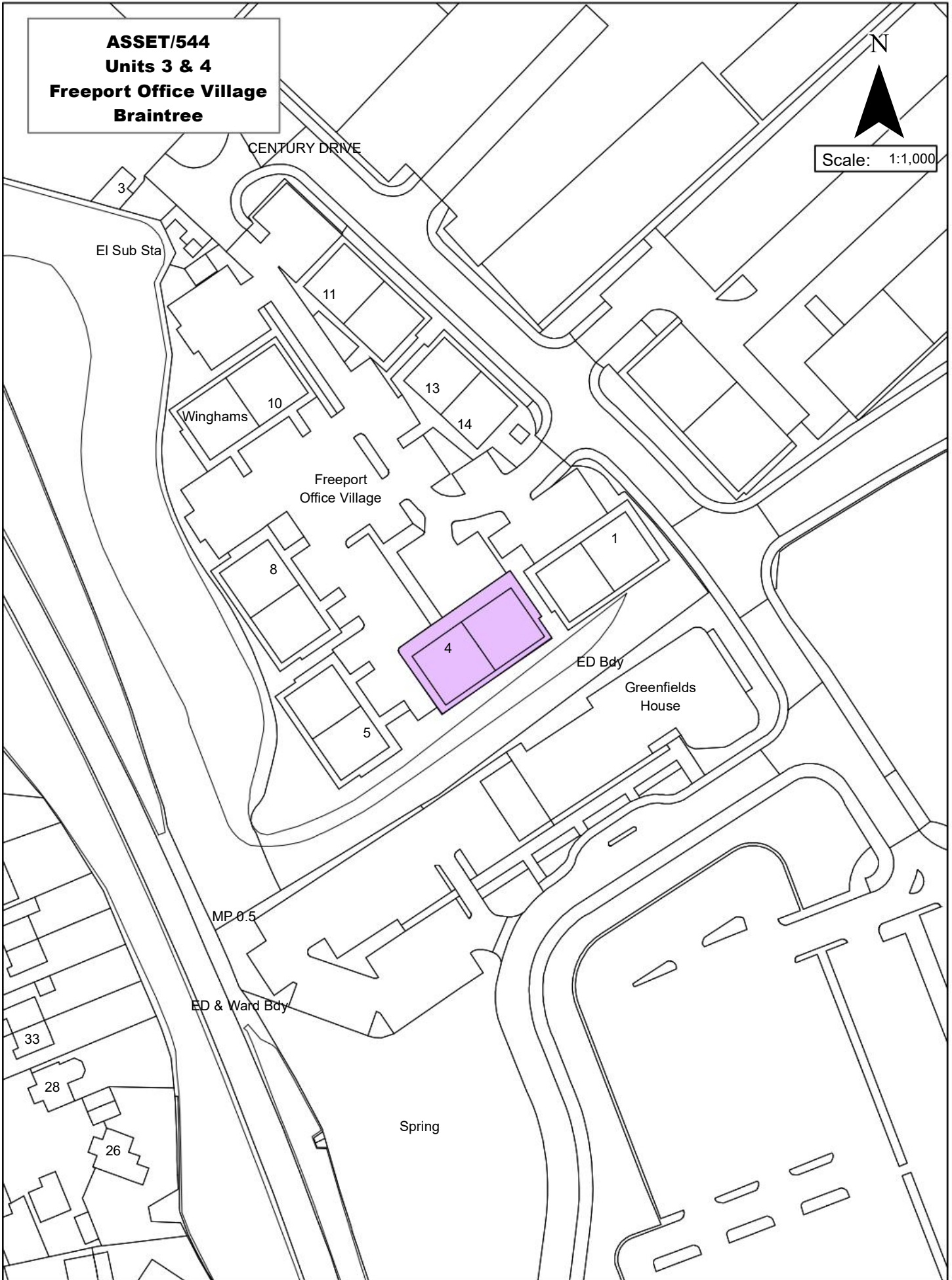
10. List of Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – Property Location Plan

10.2 Appendix 2 – Confidential Appendix

11. Background Papers

11.1 Asset Management Property file: Units 3 & 4 Century Drive, Freeport Office Village, Braintree (Asset/544).



Report Title: Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2025	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/30
Report Presented by: Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Transformation, the Environment and Customer Services	
Enquiries to: Josie Falco, Head of Environment josie.falco@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve the Climate Change Action Plan 2024/25.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet to approve the Climate Action Plan 2024/2025 as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Background

3.1 In July 2019 Braintree District Council (the Council) declared a Climate Emergency with the aim to make “Braintree District Council activities, as far as practical, carbon neutral by 2030”.

3.2 In September 2021 at Full Council the Climate Change Strategy and its first associated Climate Action Plan was adopted. As the first Climate Action Plan was adopted mid-year the first Climate Action Plan reporting period was to cover the period of September 2021 to March 2023.

3.3 In July 2022 the Council approved Key Performance Indicators for the Council and Activity Indicators for the district that would be used to monitor and report on the progress of the Climate Change Strategy and its associated Climate Action Plans. It was agreed at that time that an Annual Climate Action plan would be produced.

3.4 In November 2023 the first Climate Action Plan end of year report for the Climate Action Plan 2021/2023 was presented to Cabinet along with the new actions that had been included into the first annual 2023/2024 Climate Action Plan.

3.5 A Climate Strategy Annual Report with key performance indicators that updates the progress made on the Climate Action Plan 2023/2024 will be presented to Cabinet later this year. The annual report is dependent on the

Department of Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ) publishing the national carbon conversion tables in late Autumn which the Council needs to calculate its carbon emissions.

2024/2025 Annual Climate Action Plan

- 3.6 The 2024/2025 Climate Action Plan has been compiled as part of the Annual Business Plan process of the Council.
- 3.7 The Council included climate impact on the Service Annual Business Plan 2024/2025 templates. Once all Departmental Business Plans were submitted to the Performance Team, they were shared with the Climate Change Project Manager who co-ordinated with the project leads for each service to compile new actions into the Climate Action Plan for the coming year.
- 3.8 All actions on the Climate Action Plan are added to the in-house performance system “Pentana” in accordance with the monitoring and reporting mechanism agreed by Council in July 2022.
- 3.9 An internal Officer Climate Change Delivery Board will monitor delivery of the annual Climate Action Plans and the Climate Change Project Manager will produce a quarterly published performance update summary. An annual performance report on the 2024/2025 Climate Action Plan will be prepared once DESNZ publishes its carbon conversion tables in late autumn.
- 3.10 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:
- Environment – our environment is cherished.

4. Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to approve the Climate Action Plan – there is a risk that without actions added each year the Council will not achieve its ambition of becoming carbon neutral as far as practicable possible by 2030.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 That the Council works to deliver the Climate Action Plan 2024/2025

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Council agreed to create a reserve fund of £500,000 as part of the 2021/22 Budget to meet the cost of delivering projects of the emerging Climate Change Strategy. A further £116,000 was later added to the reserve from combining the balances held on a number of earmarked reserves.
- 6.2 The balance on the Climate Change Reserve at 1st April 2024, was £271,000. The Budget for 2024/25 allocated a further £200,000 from balances. Climate Change projects in 2024/25 allocated funding from the

reserve include: installation of a Solar Array at Witham Leisure Centre (also part funded by Sports England); and installations of EV charging at Lakes Road to allow for electric vehicles to be purchased. The uncommitted balance on the reserve is currently £204,000.

- 6.3 The approval decision process for drawdown from the Climate Reserve Account was approved by Council in September 2021:

Value of Project	Process and sign off
£ - Low - between £0 and £25,000	Business Case approved by Corporate Director
££ - Medium - between £25,000 and £100,000	Business Case approved by Cabinet Member (Environment) in conjunction with Corporate Director (S151)
£££ - High - between £100,000 and £250,000	Business Case approved by Cabinet
££££ - Very High - Over £250,000	Business Case approved by Council

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no identified legal implications arising from the items to note in this report. Legal implications for individual Climate Change Actions will be identified through the business case process of individual actions and projects.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 There will be a number of implications to the Council, residents and businesses of actions identified in the Initial Action Plan. These are detailed in each business case as it is developed.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

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

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

9.4 Equality Impact Assessments would be undertaken for individual actions in the Climate Action Plan where needed as part of the Business Case.

10. List of Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 - Climate Action Plan 2024/2025

11. Background Papers

11.1 Climate Change Strategy

Climate Change
Action Plan
2024-25



Climate Change Action Plan: April 2024 - March 2025

The Climate Change Action Plan builds upon many years of work already undertaken and reductions in emissions already achieved. It sets out our areas of focus in each of the work streams from the Climate Change Strategy to identify how we will deliver our objectives. The Action Plan will be a living document and we will revise our plans as the climate and environmental emergency develops, targets are met, funding becomes available and new technologies emerge.

The projects in this action plan reflect work undertaken for The Council itself and also in a supporting role for the district. Braintree District Council continues to work on projects that reduce our own carbon emissions and reduce our impact upon natural resources and the wider environment. The Council and Partners are also committed to adapting to the impacts of Climate Change - to protect and prepare our residents, communities and businesses. Projects at district level reflect the support we aim to give to partners and our communities to tackle climate change.

All projects are monitored against one or more outcomes and it is recognised that projects may have wider benefits beyond one single outcome.



Climate Change and Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028

We need to protect our environment to safeguard it for current and future generations. Through our Climate Change Strategy, we will work with people, partners, developers and other businesses across the district to help them fulfil their responsibilities and be mindful of their impact on the local environment.

What we heard from our residents, communities, businesses, members and stakeholders:

- The importance of protecting our countryside.
- The need for green space which is clean and safe.
- The need for developments to consider the environmental impacts and the need for healthy spaces.
- The importance of continuing to address the impacts of climate change.
- The importance of tackling recycling behaviours and reducing littering across our district.
- The need to educate people on caring for the environment in which they live and work.



Our Key Priorities:

- Protect and enhance our built and natural environments across the district, providing good access to open spaces and Increasing biodiversity.
- Continue to deliver a cohesive and Integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts.
- Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents



FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Outcomes of The Climate Actions





Outcome	Definition
Carbon Reducer	An action that results in a calculable carbon reduction
Biodiversity Increaser	An action that results in the diversification and/or protection of habitats, species or vegetation
Developing the Green Economy	An action that supports the development of a low carbon, resource efficient, socially inclusive, sustainable local economy
Climate Effect Mitigation	An action that protects against the impact of climate change on the built or natural environment
Climate Behaviour Change Influencer	An action that engages with individuals or businesses to reduce their carbon and environmental footprint



Co-Benefits of Climate Action

-  **Mental and Physical Health Improvement**
-  **Reduction in costs for Residents and Businesses**
-  **Improved Attractiveness of District**
-  **Local Economic Development**
-  **Innovation**
-  **Reducing Inequalities**

Seven Themes of The Climate Action Plan



Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Conserve our Natural Resources							
Continue with campaigns to raise the profile of local food producers by promoting shop local and seasonal foods including plant based substitutes	Developing of the Green Economy Increased awareness of produce that can be sourced locally and the benefits of buying seasonal produce and swapping to plant based produce Increased support for local businesses	Environment / Marketing & Communications	District		March 2030	CC/001	On track
Create a learning and development programme for staff and members to increase their awareness on climate change and how they can reduce their own carbon emissions and contribute to those that can be achieved corporately	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase awareness of climate change issues Improved consideration of climate change issues across all services, projects and policies	Environment	BDC		March 2024	CC/003	Project deadline extended
Review the Councils sustainable Procurement Policy to strengthen the procurement process ensuring environmental considerations are made when procuring goods and services	Carbon Reducer Procurement specifications developed that supports carbon reduction and sustainability. Council is more aware of the environmental credentials of the contractors it works with Encourage more businesses to consider climate change credentials	Finance	March 2026		Medium Term	CC/005	On track
Create and launch revised Climate Change pages to The Council's website	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase awareness of climate change issues Improved access to partnership support	IT / Environment	District	 	March 2025	CC/075	On track



Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Identify opportunities across the Council's assets for water reduction	Carbon Reducer Reduction in the use of water	Environment	BDC		March 2027	CC/076	On track
Reduce Waste, Increase Recycling							
Work with the Essex Recycling Forum and the Essex Waste Partnership on Countrywide campaigns and initiatives to encourage people to reduce their waste and to maximise recycling	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Reduction of total waste collected Reduction in tonnage of residual waste and increase in percentage of waste recycled	Operations	District		March 2030	CC/007	On track
Review the waste management service to identify future working models and respond to the outcomes of the Environment Bill, including impacts on kerbside collections. Phase 2: Develop a plan to support the Essex Waste Strategy and phase in changes arising from legislation e.g. Simpler Recycling initiatives.	Carbon Reducer A waste delivery model that underpins the Essex Waste Strategy and legislative changes. Improved service delivery model implemented providing more sustainable ways of working. Reduce residual waste and increase recycling Ensure outcomes of the Environment Bill are understood and fed into the service review of the waste management service	Operations	BDC		March 2027	OP/21/004	On track
Reduce use of non-renewable resources							
Investigate opportunities to reduce paper and printing use across internal and external communications	Carbon Reducer Reduction in the use of carbon used by printing resources Biodiversity increaser	Marketing & Communications move to Environment as Climate Change Behaviour project? Sits with Agile and Flexi Cherie	BDC		March 2027	CC/077	On track






Energy Conservation

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Reduce energy use and improve energy efficient infrastructure							
Switch the Councils energy use to non-fossil fuel green energy tariffs	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions	Finance / Operations	BDC		March 2027	CC/012	On track
Increase energy efficiency and renewable technologies across Council equipment, assets and estates	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Finance/ Environment	BDC		March 2030	CC/016	On track
Install a new control panel and thermostats at Causeway House to better regulate temperature and reduce unnecessary heating	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Facilities	BDC		March 2025	FM/24//001/K	New Project
Complete a baseline audit of all meters (water, electric and gas) across the entire BDC property portfolio to investigate opportunities of resource efficiency	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment / Asset Management	BDC		March 2027	CC/078	On track
Commission street lighting repair contract to include LED replacement (including Halstead Public Gardens)	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	BDC		March 2025	ES/23/009/K	On track
Conduct an energy efficiency audit of all BDC buildings and investigate additional opportunities for renewable energy installations	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment / Asset Management	BDC		March 2027	CC/084	On track

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Replace the existing internal lighting at Witham Leisure Centre with LED lighting (Sports England Funded)	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	BDC		March 2025	ES/24/004/K	New action
Increase the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources							
Consider use of robust certified carbon credit schemes to offset any residual organisation emissions	Carbon Reducer Reduce Carbon Impact of organisation	Environment	BDC		March 2030	CC/018	On track
Increase renewable energy and fuel security for the Council and across the district by developing opportunities for renewable energy schemes with public/private sector partners	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	BDC		March 2030	C/016/ES/23/005E	On track
Offer advice to parish councils and community groups wishing to invest in solar	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/087	On track
Introduce a solar canopy in the car park and additional solar pv roof panels to Witham Leisure Centre (Sport England Funded)	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	BDC		March 2025	CC/016.1	New action

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Improve energy efficiency of existing housing stock							
Continue to work with partners to address the complex challenge of fuel poverty through targeted campaigns and signposting to grant funding and areas of support	Carbon Reducer People in fuel poverty have access to affordable, low carbon warmth. Improved energy efficiency in homes and reduced costs for residents Reduction in CO2 emissions	Environment (should we include Michael in H&C?)	District		March 2030	CC/019	On track
Continue with campaigns providing information to residents on saving energy measures to help reduce emissions, including promotion of retro fit schemes for homeowners	Carbon Reducer District emissions reduced. Campaigns successfully delivered. Increase in residents sign posted to grants	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/020	On track














Built Environment














Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Reduce the carbon impact and improve biodiversity of new developments							
Review and evaluate the potential of an offset fund (106 agreements) or allowable solutions mechanism for developers to pay into when a certain high level of energy efficiency of buildings is not able to be met in the development and use this money for carbon saving projects	Carbon Reducer Reduced CO2 impact from new developments	Environment / Planning	BDC		March 2030	CC/028	On track
Reduce household water consumption and maximise installation of sustainable drainage systems, water reuse and grey water harvesting technologies							
Work with partners to encourage residents and businesses to reduce their water use	Carbon Reducer Reduction in the use of water	Environment & Economic Development & Planning	District		March 2030	CC/090	On track
Reduce energy use in existing households by retrofitting energy efficiency measures							
Work with registered housing providers and registered landlords to progressively increase the energy efficiency of social housing stock	Carbon Reducer Reduces CO2 emissions from homes Reduced cost of energy for residents	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/031	On track

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Deliver the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 Scheme in off gas areas to improve energy efficiency	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment/ Marketing & Communications	District	 	March 2027	CC/079	On track
Promote The Energy Company Obligation Scheme (ECO4) and ECO Flex scheme offering energy efficiency measures	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	District	 	March 2030	CC/080	On track
Work in partnership with iChoosr to deliver the Essex Energy Switching Scheme by holding auctions	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	District	 	March 2030	CC/081	On track
In partnership with Groundworks, deliver the extended Green Doctor Service, advising residents on energy efficiency	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment/ Marketing & Communications	District	 	March 2025	CC/082	On track
Deliver Solar Together scheme to support the installation of solar energy in residential and business premises	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment/ Marketing & Communications	District	 	March 2025	CC/085	On track
Support the Community with grants from community infrastructure projects to reduce carbon emissions funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Carbon Reducer Reduces CO2 emissions from community buildings Reduced cost of energy for community groups	Environment	District	 	March 2027	CC/091 now ES/23 /007/C	On track

Transport








Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Grow electric vehicle network and infrastructure areas							
Continue to research and evaluate ultra-low emission alternatives for the Council's fleet of vehicles as they require replacement	Carbon Reducer Identify opportunities to reduce the impact of the Council's impact on emissions	Operations	BDC		March 2026	OP/20 /005	On track
Procure 14 electric light commercial vehicles for The Council's fleet	Carbon Reducer Reduce the impact of the Council's impact on emissions	Operations / Environment	BDC		March 2025	OP/21 /012/C	New action
Support ECC to continue to build up the onstreet charging infrastructure across our District for electric vehicles	Carbon Reducer Improved infrastructure and accessibility for electric vehicle charging	Environment	District		March 2026	CC/033	On track
Install electric rapid charging points in the Council's car parks and continue to install additional chargers in BDC assets	Carbon Reducer Improved infrastructure and accessibility for electric vehicle charging	Environment	BDC		March 2027	CC/092	On track
Explore the opportunities around a EV salary sacrifice leasing scheme for staff .	Carbon Reducer Improved infrastructure and accessibility for electric vehicles	Human resources	BDC		March 2025	CC/094	On track










Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Conduct a feasibility study for the expansion of DigiGo into rural areas, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund	Carbon Reducer Improved infrastructure and accessibility for electric vehicle charging Improved access to sustainable public transport	Economic Development	BDC	  	March 2026	ED/24/004/K	New action
Continue to support Essex County Council with the e-scooter scheme trial	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Reduction in CO2 emissions Improvement in air quality	Economic Development	District	  	March 2025	ED/S4/002/K	New action
Increase cycling and walking in the District							
Continue to work with LiveWell partners to encourage people to get active and walk more	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase active travel Reduce car journeys Reduce CO2 emissions from travel	Housing & Communities	District	   	March 2030	CC/035	On track
Produce an LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) for Witham and environs	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase active travel Reduce car journeys Reduce CO2 emissions from travel	Economic Development	District	  	March 2025	ED/23/005/C	On track





Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Engage with ECC on Braintree LCWIPs (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan)	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase active travel Reduce car journeys Reduce CO2 emissions from travel	Economic Development	District	  	March 2025	CC/097	On track
Partner with ECC on the proposal for a County wide LCWIPs (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan)	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase active travel Reduce car journeys Reduce CO2 emissions from travel	Economic Development	District	  	March 2025	CC/098	On track
Encourage greener transport choices							
Continue with campaigns to reduce engine idling targeting specific high traffic areas	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Reduction in CO2 emissions Improvement in air quality	Marketing & Communications	District	  	March 2030	CC/038	On track
Work with Essex County Council to improve the quality and availability of low carbon public transport	Carbon Reducer Increase in use of more sustainable travel options Reduces CO2 emissions from public transport	Marketing & Communications /Environment	District	  	March 2026	CC/041	On track
Review the Council's Driver and Vehicle Standards and Policies to create a greener fleet of taxis in the District	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions from taxi fleet and pollution Reduction in fuel costs from taxi fleet.	Environment	District		March 2026	CC/042	On track complete? ?



Business and the Green Economy











Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Developing the Green Economy							
Deliver the Green Skills Program, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund	<p>Developing the Green Economy Increase employability of our residents in the green economy and advanced manufacturing to help improve the productivity in the production of goods and services that support the sustainable agenda</p> <p>Attract new business in the green economy and encourage green sector companies to cluster in the North Essex local economy</p> <p>Increase overall awareness of climate change issues and how to tackle them</p>	Economic Development	District	  	March 2027	SPF/23 /008K	New action
Work with landowners, DEFRA and ECC to encourage sustainable land stewardship practices on land across the District, including rewilding and tree planting.	<p>Biodiversity Increaser Increase awareness and consideration Climate Change issues for those developing Neighbourhood Plans</p>	Environment	District	   	March 2030	CC/45	On track





Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Encourage businesses to reduce energy use							
Continue to encourage businesses to switch to ECO heating and reduce energy use	<p>Carbon Reducer Increase in the number of referrals to support and take up of funding. Reduction in energy use</p>	Economic Growth / Environment	District		March 2030	CC/048	On track
Continue to promote carbon footprint tools to businesses	<p>Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Improvements identified and implemented by businesses to reduce carbon impact</p>	Economic Development / Environment	District	 	March 2030	CC/49	On track
Provide support to businesses across the District on the development and implementation of green travel plans	<p>Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase in number of businesses implementing a green travel plan Reduction in CO2 emissions from travel</p>	Economic Development	District		March 2030	CC/050	On track
Introduce a Climate Change/ Green Environmental Accreditation Scheme or Business Award scheme to recognise and showcase initiatives that can be adopted as best practice and to encourage businesses to become carbon neutral.	<p>Developing the Green Economy Increase awareness of opportunities to become carbon neutral</p> <p>Increased sharing and recognition of best practice across businesses</p>	Economic Development / Environment	BDC	 	March 2026	CC/051	On track
Support Essex County Council with the delivery of decarbonisation planning to businesses through the Lean 2 Green ECC funded Business Support Package	<p>Developing the Green Economy Increase awareness of opportunities to become carbon neutral</p>	Economic Development / Environment	District	  	March 2025	ED/24/ 003/K	New action




Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Host a Green Skills Expo for businesses for local businesses to learn and share best practices to address climate change, funded through the Shared Prosperity Fund	Developing the Green Economy Increase awareness of opportunities to become carbon neutral Increased sharing and recognition of best practice across businesses	Economic Development	District	 	July 2024	ED/24/001/C	New action
Encourage businesses to build resilience							
Collaborate with the voluntary sector and business sector across Essex to share learning, data, best practice and, to look at joint initiatives to tackle climate change	Developing the Green Economy Successfully sharing knowledge and resources to increase our opportunities to collaborate for grant funding Reduction in carbon impact of businesses and voluntary sector organisations	Economic Development	BDC	 	March 2030	CC/052	On track



Natural Environment





Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Improve biodiversity and green spaces							
Continue to deliver campaigns to support a reduction in littering and fly-tipping	Biodiversity Increaser Reduction in fly-tips Reduction in littering Cleaner District	Operations / Marketing & Communications	District	 	March 2030	CC/053	On track
Plant wildflower areas across the District, including mixture of ornamental and native wildflowers and areas which are left with minimal maintenance to increase bio-diversity.	Biodiversity Increaser Increase biodiversity Improve attractiveness of District	Operations	District	 	December 2025	CC/56	On track
Work with ECC and Housing Associations to increase biodiversity by reviewing maintenance regimes, refine grass cutting, consider more sustainable planting schemes consistent with the highest biodiversity standards and promote rewilding/naturalisation of areas.	Biodiversity Increaser Increase biodiversity Improve attractiveness of District	Environment	District	  	March 2027	CC/58	On track
Deliver grants to community organisations to bring underused spaces back into beneficial use to include community gardens and orchards, funded through Shared Prosperity Funding	Biodiversity Increaser Increase biodiversity Improve attractiveness of District Improve attractiveness of District Increase opportunities for communities to grow fruit and veg Increase community engagement in enhancement of local areas	Housing & Communities	District	  	March	CC/23/006/K	On track




Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
With the support of ECC, produce soil carbon and biodiversity potential maps for the district	Biodiversity Increaser Increase soil quality Increase carbon sequestration Increase richer habitat creation	Planning & Environment	District		March 2027	CC/104	On track
As a supporting authority, support Essex County Council with the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Biodiversity Increaser Increase biodiversity Increase richer habitats Improve attractiveness of District	Planning	District		March 2027	CC/105	On track
Introduce signage around Horizon 120 Business Park to inform visitors of biodiversity	Biodiversity Increaser Increase biodiversity Improve attractiveness of District Increase community engagement in enhancement of local areas	Strategic Investment / Operations	BDC		March 2026	SI/24/001/K	New action
Increase tree and shrub planting							
Use the findings of the tree canopy survey to inform the future Tree Strategy	Biodiversity Increaser Increase tree canopy cover Increase carbon sequestration Improve attractiveness of District	Planning	District		March 2027	CC/102	On track
Use the findings of the tree canopy survey to 1) inform tree planting projects 2) assist ECC with their sustainable stewardship in the Climate Focus Area 3) protect existing tree canopy 4) use the baseline data to support partnership groups such as water companies and the North Essex Farm Cluster with their environmental stewardship projects	Biodiversity Increaser Increase tree canopy cover Increase carbon sequestration Improve attractiveness of District Increase partnership opportunities	Planning	District		March 2027	CC/103	On track

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Improve water quality, flood resilience and habitat							
Work with the Environment Agency/Anglia/Essex Suffolk on the management of watercourses to enhance their flow and storage capacity and deliver wider biodiversity benefits	Biodiversity Increaser Improve water quality Improve biodiversity Reduce flooding	Environment	District		March 2026	CC/063	On track
Work with Partners to support raising the profile of maintenance / caring for waterways bisecting the district with residents	Biodiversity Increaser Species protection Access to baseline data to develop improved water quality Improved public engagement for waterway	Environment Marketing & Communications	District		March 2030	CC/106	On track
Improve air quality							
Develop an Air Quality Strategy	Biodiversity Increaser Improved air quality for residents and biodiversity	Environment	District			ES/24/003/C	New action



Adapting to Climate Change

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Support communities to improve resilience							
Continue to provide advice for residents on how to reduce health risks during severe weather events such as heatwaves/extreme cold	Climate Effect Mitigation Increased accessible information available to residents on health risks from climate change Increased resilience of communities to climate change	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/064	On track
Work with Town and Parish Councils to develop their emergency plans, ensuring the plans reflect the changing risks of their communities	Climate Effect Mitigation Increase in number of Parish and Town Council with Emergency plans developed. Successful collaboration on climate emergency related areas of work Increased resilience to climate change impacts in our communities	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/065	On track
Support registered social landlords in developing a Climate Strategy and delivering Climate Action Plans	Carbon Reducer Reduction in CO2 emissions Reduced cost of energy consumption	Environment	District		March 2027	CC/089	On track
Work with town and parish councils to advise and support with advising on adapting to Climate Change; declaring a Climate Emergency and writing a Climate Change Action Plan	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across the district	Environment	BDC		March 2030	CC/109	On track

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Support the delivery of an Eco Event for Young People in the district, delivered by Braintree District Cultural Education Partnership (19th April 2024)	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across the district	Housing & Communities	District		March 2025	CS/24/001/K	New action
Improve flood alleviation for communities that flood							
Work with Essex County Council and other partners to manage climate change-related flood risks and mitigate the number of homes and businesses across the District that are exposed to the risk of flooding	Climate Effect Mitigation Reduction in flood risk Increased resilience in communities to impacts of climate change	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/066	On track
Prevent the impacts of climate change disproportionately harming the most vulnerable							
Monitor and seek to mitigate emerging risks and their impact on vulnerable people in the community with ERF partners	Climate Effect Mitigator Increased resilience of communities to climate change impacts	Environment	District		March 2030	CC/073	On track

Delivery and Monitoring

Action	Outcome	Lead Service	BDC or District	Co-Benefits	Projected Completion Date	Internal Project Code	Status
Support communities to improve resilience							
Ensure relevant internal strategies and policy documents are reviewed and amended to embed the work of the Council in its commitment to tackling climate change	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across The Council All strategies and policies are reviewed and updated to take climate change impacts into account	Environment	BDC		March 2026		On track
Support the establishment of the North Essex Climate Partnership through the North Essex Councils	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across Local Authorities	Environment	BDC / Local Authorities		March 2025	ES/24/002/C	New action
Deliver Climate Change Learning and Development to Members	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across The Council	Environment	BDC		March 2025	ES/24/005/K	New action
Deliver extended Climate Change Learning and Development to Managers	Climate Behaviour Change Influencer Increase opportunities for climate change actions across The Council	Environment	BDC		March 2025	ES/24/006/K	New action

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Report Title: Fourth Quarter and Year End Performance Report 2023/24	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: To Note
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/14
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance	
Enquiries to: Tom Williams, Corporate Performance Coordinator tom.williams@braintree.gov.uk	

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 fourth quarter of 2023/24 (January 2024 to March 2024), including a summary of the full financial year.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the performance of the Council for the fourth quarter and financial year (January 2024 to March 2024, and April 2023 to March 2024 respectively).
- 2.2 To agree to set aside General Fund balances of £459,000 resulting from the improved financial outturn position for 2023/24 into the Risk Management Reserve.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council keeps a record of its performance which is reported to Cabinet every quarter for consideration and noting.
- 3.2 Across the projects undertaken in this financial year a total of 21 projects have been completed. 30 longer term projects remain on track to be completed into the next year and beyond. A number of projects have been through the appropriate change management process to amend the end date due to being re-prioritised or re-scoped as necessary to accommodate new and competing demands on the Council.
- 3.3 The year concludes with six projects at amber status, with no projects having been cancelled throughout the year. Amber statuses reflect budgetary constraints and delays, amongst other challenges which are detailed in the report.

- 3.4 As at the end of the year nine performance indicators have met or exceeded target. Two missed target by less than 5%, The collection rate of council tax and collection of business rates. Three missed target by more than 5%, the number of homes granted planning permission, recycling rates, and enquiries resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre.
- 3.5 This year is the last year of the 2020-2024 corporate strategy, with a new corporate strategy agreed to take the Council through to 2028 focussing on Communities, Prosperity, Environment and Equality.

Finance Performance

- 3.6 The finance section of the report sets out the budgetary outturn for 2023/24, information on capital spending and resources for the year, and details of treasury management activity and the movement on General Fund unallocated balances.
- 3.7 The report shows that there was an overall positive variance of £1.1 million on the General Fund Revenue Account for the year after approved budget carry forwards. The main reason for the variance was overachieved income, particularly from treasury management where the rapid rise in interest rates provided windfall gains on short-term investments. Whilst staffing budgets were underspent, there were additional service costs incurred, including that in relation to the Wethersfield asylum centre legal challenges.
- 3.8 On 15th May 2024, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Performance approved requests for the carry forward of unspent budgets and the addition to earmarked reserves, which have been reflected in the outturn position.
- 3.9 There is a net increase in the General Fund unallocated balances of £459,000, resulting in a closing balance on 31st March 2024 of £8.5 million.
- 3.10 Details of the main variances are set out in the Finance Section of the report.
- 3.11 Capital spending for the year totalled £5.1 million against a profiled budget of £7.8 million. Expenditure included £1.6 million on housing improvement and disabled facilities grants, with the balance of spend incurred across a mixture of community projects, planned property maintenance, investment into ICT infrastructure and systems, and operational vehicles and equipment. Capital budgets totalling £2.7 million have been carried over into 2024/25 as the respective projects remain to be completed.
- 3.12 The financial performance will be subject to audit by KPMG LLP as part of their external audit work on the Final Accounts for the year.
- 3.13 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:
- Communities – our communities can thrive

- Prosperity – our people prosper
- Environment – our environment is cherished

4. Options

- 4.1 The report seeks approval to setting aside £459,000 of General Fund balances into the Risk Management Reserve recognising the ongoing financial risks faced by the Council from external influences. The sum proposed is from the improved financial outturn and therefore does not impact on the 2024/25 Budget approved by Full Council. Cabinet may agree/not agree to the proposal.

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 fourth quarter covering the revenue and capital outturn for this period. As the revenue financial outturn represents an improvement over the original budget, it is proposed to set aside the resulting increase in General Fund balances into the Risk Management Reserve, set-up as part of the 2024/25 Budget. This recognises the ongoing and potential significant financial risks that could materialise from external influences. The proposal does not adversely impact on the assumptions and estimates in the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy nor the 2024/25 Budget. The total amount held in reserve will be £1.08million and will be subject to regular monitoring and review.

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 – Fourth Quarter and Year End Performance Management Report 2023/24

11. Background Papers

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

FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1 JANUARY TO 31 MARCH 2024

and

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024

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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 fourth quarter of 2023/24 and the end of the financial year 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 financial year

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




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	1	11	4	-	-
Enhancing our Environment	10	5	1	-	-
Supporting our Communities	4	5	-	-	-
Promoting Prosperity	1	4	1	-	-
Delivering and Innovating	5	5	-	-	-
TOTAL	21	30	6	-	-

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 financial year

The following table shows the performance for the end of the financial year in relation to key performance indicators.

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	1	-	1	-
Enhancing our Environment	2	-	1	-
Supporting our Communities	2	-	-	2
Promoting Prosperity	-	-	-	3
Delivering and Innovating	4	2	1	1
TOTAL	9	2	3	6

KEY:

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

Summary Position

Across the projects undertaken in this financial year a total of 21 projects have been completed. 30 longer term projects remain on track to be completed into the next year and beyond. A number of projects have been through the appropriate change management process to amend the end date due to being re-prioritised or re-scoped as necessary to accommodate new and competing demands on the Council. As a result the year concludes with six projects at amber status, with no projects having been cancelled throughout the year. Amber statuses reflect budgetary constraints and delays, amongst other challenges which are detailed in the report.

As at the end of the year nine performance indicators have met or exceeded target, two missed target by less than 5% and three missed target by more than 5%. The collection rate of council tax and collection of business rates ended the year less than 5% below target. Performance indicators missing target by more than 5% were in relation to the number of homes granted planning permission, recycling rates, and enquiries resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre.




This year is the last year of the 2020-2024 corporate strategy, with a new corporate strategy agreed to take the Council through to 2028 focussing on Communities, Prosperity, and Environment.

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		
<p>The revised licence applications required for the works on Essex County Council land have been submitted and are awaiting approval. Braintree District Council (BDC) continue to work closely with both town councils to keep them updated on the progress of the project.</p> <p>BDC are working with Essex County Council on the next steps to progress the proposed road layout changes.</p> <p>A change control notice has been actioned, revising the end date from December 2023 to July 2024.</p>	July 2024	▶
Improve the district's housing stock by addressing energy efficiencies and exploring best practice to tackle empty homes		
<p>The council continues to explore ways to address energy efficiency with the private rented sector and social housing partners, targeting grant schemes and initiatives, working towards the long term goal of 2030.</p>	March 2030	▶
<p>The Empty Homes policy was approved at Cabinet in January. Since approval, 77 engagement letters have been sent to owners of empty properties in the district, encouraging them to provide an update to the Council of their intentions for the property.</p> <p>26 responses have been received so far, and work continues to engage with more property owners.</p>	March 2025	▶
Develop a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2028		
<p>The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was presented to Cabinet in January, following which a public consultation was launched which ran from February to April. The evaluation of the consultation will be provided alongside a full Cabinet report for adoption in May 2024.</p> <p>The target date has been amended from March to May 24 to allow time for the public consultation and return to Cabinet.</p>	May 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		
Work continues on the specifications and the logistical requirements to replace the studio floor. Since the initial scope for this project was agreed there has been a significant increase in financial pressures on the leisure industry, in addition to the growing cost of construction materials. The Council need to assess whether the original budget agreed for the replacement of the floors is sufficient to complete the works to the desired standard. To ensure the viability of this project both financially and operationally, the timelines for this project require extension to fully consider the options available.	March 2025	
Work continues on the specifications and the logistical requirements to replace the sports hall floor. Since the initial scope for this project was agreed there has been a significant increase in financial pressures on the leisure industry, in addition to the growing cost of construction materials. The Council need to assess whether the original budget agreed for the replacement of the floors is sufficient to complete the works to the desired standard. To ensure the viability of this project both financially and operationally, the timelines for this project require extension to fully consider the options available.	March 2025	
The scope of the works has been agreed, and the tender process is nearing completion to identify a contractor to complete the construction. The target date has been amended from March to September 2024, to allow the works to take place over the summer to minimise disruption.	September 2024	

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 – Landscaping works at the site have commenced, planting trees and hedgerows ahead of construction on the main site. This is intended to allow the trees and hedgerows to establish early on in the development.	December 2026	
A12 Widening scheme – In January the Development Consent Order (DCO) was approved by the Secretary of State for Transport. However, a legal challenge has been made to the Secretary of State challenging this decision. This is at a very early stage, and the High Court have not yet considered whether to progress with the challenge. Until the challenge is resolved, work on the scheme cannot commence, reflected in the amber status.	December 2028	
Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement – The Examining Authority has completed its examination of the application for development consent. The Examining Authority now has up to three months to prepare a recommendation report for the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. The Secretary of State will then have up to a further three months to decide whether to grant consent, meaning a decision is to be made before the end of September.	November 2028	






Norwich to Tilbury – Pre-planning application discussions continue and a statutory consultation is anticipated in Spring 2024. The Development Consent Order is expected towards the end of 2024, with construction not due to start until 2027.	March 2030	
Rivenhall Integrated Waste Management Facility (IWMF) and Energy Centre – The Development Consent Order application has been accepted and is now in the pre-examination stage. The preliminary meeting is scheduled for April. This stage is where the examination is planned out and is anticipated to take up to 3 months.	December 2025	
Develop our plans to introduce walking and cycling networks across the district		
The consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan (LCWIP), hosted by Essex County Council (ECC) concluded in January. Braintree District Council are now awaiting the report summarising the consultation so that the feedback generated can be considered, prior to our opportunity to adopt the LCWIP.	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 Planning Committee has granted permission for the community centre, with conditions. The tender for the project is nearing completion, and preparation of a consultation is underway regarding the transfer of open public space. The project remains at amber status as the budgetary requirements will not be clear until the construction tender is completed.	June 2025	
Continue to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham		
The Integrated Care Board (ICB) approved the business case for the Sible Hedingham Medical centre in March. Due to the length of time taken to make a decision on the full business case, the target date has been amended to allow for the transfer of the site, which could not take place whilst the approval of the business case was outstanding. This is anticipated to be completed by the end December.	December 2024	
Work with the Integrated Care Board to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing services at the Victoria Square development		
The Hub is now operating at capacity and mainly providing clinical services. Bi-monthly meetings will continue to explore further opportunities for the development.	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		
New flower beds have been successfully installed in the wildlife garden. This project is now completed.	November 2023	✓
Improve the facilities in our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham		
In February user feedback sessions took place, which provided valuable and positive feedback on the designs. Improvements to the designs have been made based on the feedback received in these sessions. A decision to fund an additional mini-wheels ramp at Spa Road is being presented to Cabinet in May.	July 2024	▶
Deliver improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road, Halstead		
In February user feedback sessions took place, which provided valuable and positive feedback on the designs. Improvements to the designs have been made based on the feedback received in these sessions. However, there is a requirement to undertake sewer surveys which will need to be considered in the delivery timeline, resulting in an amber status.	July 2024	▲
Respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 in relation to air quality, biodiversity, water and waste reduction		
The review into the Council's air quality monitoring methodology was undertaken, and the independent review of Braintree District Council's air quality monitoring methodology confirmed that the Council was monitoring in accordance with best practice and legislation. Actions from the review are now underway.	March 2024	✓
The introduction of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% was introduced in February and this now being implemented, with the first application liable for BNG already received. Work on training staff continues as they gain experience dealing with these applications.	March 2024	✓
A baseline audit of the Council's water usage identified a substantial leak. Rectifying the leak has prevented further water wastage. The facilities team continue to monitor for leaks and other areas within the estate which present immediate opportunities to reduce water waste. The Council has also investigated various approaches to reducing water use and recycling water across the estate. However, these measures would require	March 2026	▶

<p>substantial investment with no financial return. As a result, the findings of these investigations whilst considered are not planned to be progressed at this stage.</p> <p>The Council plans to meet with Anglian Water in April to identify any support that may be available to the organisation and to discuss how both parties can work in partnership to improve education, engagement and behavioural changes for residents and businesses.</p>		
<p>The Council responded to the formal consultation issued by DEFRA, and has provided its views on the legislation set out within the Environment Act. Further changes to the Council's recyclable waste collection will be implemented in line with the fundamental waste collection review ahead of the legislative requirements in 2026.</p>	March 2024	
<p>Protect our communities by implementing the requirements of Martyn's Law</p>		
<p>The Council has finalised its preparations for the implementation of Martyn's Law, confirming all properties and venues covered by the proposed legislation.</p> <p>Following the scrutiny phases of the legislative process, significant changes are being made to the bill prior to its return to Parliament. The Council has responded to the consultation hosted by central government, however until such a time the detail of the legislation is made known to The Council no further work can take place and this project is complete as far as possible. Once legislation is published, a new project will be created to track the implementation of the specific requirements.</p>	March 2024	
<p>Deliver campaigns and work with our communities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles • Minimise food waste to help households save money and avoid unnecessary waste • Improve awareness and understanding of climate change 		
<p>The 'See it – Report it' campaign will continue to be a marketing campaign to encourage members of the public to submit dashcam footage of people littering from their vehicles.</p> <p>In February, Cabinet supported an increase in the fine amounts for fixed penalty notices for littering. Digital posts and a press release were published to inform the public of the change. This was also published in the Council newsletter.</p>	March 2024	
<p>The 'Love Essex' campaign ran until the end of December 2023, and with the support of Braintree District Council was hugely successful. The campaign reached nearly 3,000,000 residents, three times the target, and saw engagement of over 230,000, over three times the target.</p> <p>Residents pledged to reduce their food waste in 2023, entering a competition to win £60 of supermarket vouchers available each month. Following a boost in December, Braintree District placed first in the number of pledges received by residents finishing ahead of all other waste collection authorities in the county.</p>	March 2024	
<p>In the fourth quarter six bimonthly newsletters were sent reaching 7,825 subscribers by the end of the quarter, up from 7,680 at the start of January. Two double page spreads were published in the Council's printed publications, Contact Magazine and the Business Rates leaflet on water saving measures at home and writing a green staff travel plan.</p> <p>Partner organisations' climate change projects were promoted on our social media channels, website and newsletter including; Essex County Council (ECC), Halstead and Witham Town Councils, and Solar Together. We also promoted community action including: Hatfield Peverel Wildlife Champions, community</p>	March 2024	

<p>action in the Great British Spring Clean and our litter picking volunteers the Green Heart Champions.</p> <p>Support continued for local food suppliers, running case studies on Blackwells and Spencers farm shops on all our channels, as well as Veganuary reels and a cookbook giveaway in collaboration with local vegan cafe, The Natural Way. Regular promotion of our street markets and local shops was also published.</p> <p>The Community Infrastructure Grants scheme launched at the start of March, offering funding for carbon reducing projects in publicly accessible buildings through a press release picked up by two local channels, our website and our newsletter.</p> <p>An ECC funded project, Lean2Green, launched offering free carbon cutting advice with a consultant to 20 businesses, to support the green economy. The upcoming Green Business Expo for Economic Development was also publicised.</p> <p>The Council supported green travel choices by promoting walking with Walk to Work day on social media, cycling with Bikeability training and public transport with DigiGo expansion information in our environment newsletter.</p> <p>Support was given to recycling with post-Christmas food waste messaging, promotion of the garden waste subscription service and changes around electrical item recycling. Stories also ran in our environment newsletter encouraging people to report flytipping.</p>		
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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.	March 2030	
Develop opportunities for increasing the renewable energy and fuel security within the district		
<p>The Council has successfully received funding from the application for Sport England's Shared Prosperity Fund "Swimming Pool Support Fund" grant. £64k was received for replacing internal lighting with LED lights and £313k for solar panels on a solar canopy in the car park of Witham Leisure Centre.</p> <p>A Carbon Mapping and Forecasting tool has been created, allowing The Council to understand the measures it would have to take to be Carbon Neutral by 2030 and the associated costs; outlining many alternative options. Renewable energy projects would make up a large part of this.</p>	April 2025	
Increase biodiversity and the attractiveness of the district by re-wilding open spaces and wild seed highway verges		
Planting was suspended over the winter months and is set to resume in the second quarter.	December 2025	
As part of a two-year safer streets programme, tackle enviro crime in the focused area of Witham		
The Council's Grounds Maintenance team continue to regularly review the environment of Cut Throat Lane to ensure it is maintained. Environmental improvement of Cut Throat Lane was completed in December.	December 2023	

<p>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 anti-social behaviour. A total of 65 people signed up to the Dog Watch scheme on the day.</p>	<p>April 2023</p>	
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CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

Introduction

In the fourth quarter 2023/24, the Climate Action Plan 2024-25 was created in draft format. Projects within the current Climate Action Plan were scrutinised for progress to date and closure. Early preparation work was started for the Climate Action Plan 2023-24 Annual Report.

The online Climate Change Awareness course continued to be delivered through the online learning platform The Learning Hive. The training for frontline staff has now been scheduled for early in the first quarter 2024-25.

The first meeting of the North Essex Climate Partnership was hosted on 18 March at The Plaza to host eight North Essex local authorities and Essex County Council (ECC). The council hosted the event and the nine Councils discussed potential future collaboration projects.

The Council undertook a desktop exercise to map all Climate Change Partnerships across service areas in order to understand the wider scope of all portfolio holders with projects across the Climate Action Plan.

The Climate Action Plan is classified under seven themes and individualised progress on these themes is outlined below:

Resources

Two Officers represented The Council at the ECC Climate Summit on water where Essex County Council's Water Strategy was launched. The Council's Spring edition of Contact Magazine featured a two-page article on water reduction in the garden. The Council have continued to promote the subsidised water butt scheme through Essex County Council. The Council have a meeting scheduled with Anglian Water to discuss behavioural change initiatives for the reduction in water use.

The Council have continued to support the food waste campaign run through Love Essex.

The Council promoted Veganuary in January and continued to promote local food producers including Blackwells Farm Shop in Coggeshall.

Energy Conservation

The Council was awarded funds through the Sport England Grant in the amount of £375,350 for solar panels on the roof and on a solar canopy in the car park at Witham Leisure Centre and for the replacement of current lighting to LED lighting. The projects jointly shall reduce carbon emissions by an anticipated 50.5 tonnes annually.

The Community Infrastructure Grant was launched on 1 March 2024. The guidance notes, application form, press release and other communications have been published, alongside direct emails to parish councils. Expressions of interest have been received and further support has been offered.

Communications were shared regarding Essex Climate Commission's Carbon Cutting application across channels and Braintree have now secured second place in Essex for sign-ups to the app.

The Sustainability Team and The Waste Reduction Team attended Halstead Town Council's Climate Change and Community Energy Event where The Colne Valley Community Energy Project was presented to residents. We promoted our Climate Strategy at the event.

An audit exercise for all street lighting managed by the Council is underway to understand the costs for converting all of our street lights to LED heads. An email was sent to all parish councils to enquire as to their managed street lights and the responses to this have been collated and followed up. With the support of The Council, Rayne Parish Council received pre-used LED lamp heads from Essex Highways for replacing within the parish.

Built Environment

The Home Upgrade Grant was launched, offering eligible Braintree residents in off-gas areas part of £2.466m for energy efficiency home improvements. 900 targeted letters have been sent to eligible residents in off-gas areas. The original benchmark for eligibility was for households with a maximum household income of £31,000 and this has now been increased to £36,000.

Referrals are actively being sent through to the Managing Agent Warmworks. 41 Applications have been made on the portal since the launch of the scheme.

The Council have begun to investigate the opportunity to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain site at Witham at the A12 replacement land from National Highways.

The Council submitted a Statement of Intent for the ECO Flex scheme for approval by OFGEM. The scheme is open to residents living in energy inefficient properties, with EPC ratings of D or below, living on a low income and/or vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

iChoosr launched a Spring energy switch auction on 9 January 2024. Data by 8 February shows that there were 999 registrations for the January's Energy Switch with 49 accepted so far. Although the savings for residents have been quite low, at approximately £50 saving on annual energy bills, this does still offer residents reassurance to know their energy tariff is fixed and priced below the OFGEM Price Cap during this ongoing Cost of Living Crisis.

Transport

Site visits have been made to Lakes Road to continue preparations for the electric charging infrastructure required for 14 new electric vehicles. The tenders for the installation work have been released and legal documents are being drafted. Work has begun on the livery for these vehicles which are scheduled for delivery in September 2024.

A Licensing Committee report was presented on 25 January which had an option to issue 8 taxi licences and an option to allocate 4 to Electric vehicles. This was agreed at the committee meeting and a set of questions have been written for distribution to the trade in order to understand the level of interest in electric vehicles. Investigations are underway for rapid charging points at or near taxi ranks. The 4 charging points at the White Horse Lane Car park in Witham, which is close by to the rank, has been identified as a potential site for the trade to use at present.

Business and the Green Economy

The Council has been chosen to pilot Essex County Council's green business support initiative "Lean 2 Green" to support businesses to write decarbonisation plans. The support package is worth £500 and support is offered to Braintree and Uttlesford businesses. The initiative has been launched through various media channels including the Business Newsletter.

Preparations continue for the Green Business Showcase at The Plaza in June 2024 to provide support for businesses interested in developing sustainable practice.

A Green Travel article was published in the Business Rates booklet.

Natural Environment

The Council published a story on our social media channels on the council's Street Scene Protection Team tackling illegal waste carriers.

An Officer represented The Council at the Essex Rivers Hub meeting, with partners including the Environment Agency, Anglia Water, Essex & Suffolk Water, Natural England and Essex County Council. The Council are looking to secure opportunities to support water quality, biodiversity and flooding projects on the Rivers Pant and Blackwater. The Council has offered support with facilitating Citizen Science work through the Essex Rivers Watch scheme.

Ten standard trees were planted through the Essex Forest Initiative at Bradford Meadows.

The Woodland Trust have now established a quarterly meeting with The Council to understand how we can develop partnership work.

The Council attended Hatfield Peverel Wildlife Champions tree planting event on 23 February and followed this up with external comms and a story for the Climate Change pages of the website.

Adapting to Climate Change

The Council have continued to publish and promote severe weather warnings, including Yellow Weather warnings, flood warnings and winter ready preparation communications.

Storm Henk occurred on 2 January 2024, Storm Isha occurred on 19 and Storm Jocelyn occurred on 22-23 January 2024

The Council have continued to take an active role in the Essex Resilience Forum to monitor and plan for extreme weather events amongst other emerging risks.

The Council continues to engage with town and parish councils both on a one-to-one basis and through regular wider meetings such as the Supporting Communities webinar.

Work continues with partners on the management of watercourses across the district, including continued discussions with Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust to investigate and develop a Nature-Based approach to flood alleviation.

The Environment Newsletter continues to be published on a 2-3 monthly basis. In February 2024, the newsletter had 7,748 subscribers.



Climate Change case studies and stories have been published across all available media channels including Contact Magazine, wider electronic newsletters and the Business Rates magazine as well as on the Climate Change pages of The Council's website. In March, The Council uploaded an information story onto the Climate Change pages of the website to inform residents of flood alleviation and blue-green infrastructure at Horizon 120.

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>In the fourth quarter the Council has recruited 12 volunteers to assist in running the food bank. As a result there is consideration to open on Saturdays with the view to expand to another day in the week. Work continues to recruit volunteers through the Council's comms network and utilising partnership networks.</p> <p>A report covering the period 01 November 2023 to 31 January 2024, for the food bank was published, highlighting 198 deliveries made feeding 537 people and 81 interventions made by the Outreach Worker.</p> <p>Internal staff training for food bank referrals has resulted in over 2,000 referrals between the first three quarters, with training now being extended to our Housing Options team.</p> <p>Work continues with partners to identify opportunities for a community supermarket.</p> <p>The small grants scheme launched in February and received applications from trusted partners, these included: a fridge for Community Fridge in Halstead, funds to pay for collectors' costs to pick up food for First Stop, food for a new Men's Talking Group at Witham Hub, food pantry stock for Witham United Reform Church, and a fridge for Wethersfield Community Pantry. The scheme remains open until mid-April for grants up to £10,000. The microgrants scheme for grants up to £1,000 will remain open until the pot of £15,000 has been depleted.</p> <p>Further applications for the small grants scheme have been received from Witham Hub, Tori's Pure Health & Wellness Centre, Witham All Stars Majorettes, Witham Town Lunch Club, Witham Boys & Girls Brigade, and House of Grace in Witham.</p> <p>Two staff members have attended training and are now able to issue Fuel Vouchers for people in need.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>▶</p>

<p>A Data Bank has been created to help with proving sim cards with data allowances for residents, to strengthen people's ability to find and apply for jobs.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with Active Braintree about funding a Holiday Activity and Food programme extension, as they are able to expand with more funding. Consideration will be given to what opportunities for expansion exist. These include:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Camp for Champs - whole family support to include & host Family Celebration Events. This includes fun activities for children and a marketplace with local organisations coming to speak with the families.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Making it Mindful - a 6-week Food Education Programme which gives families the knowledge and skills to make healthy, nutritious meals. The families also get to take home the equipment, recipes and skills to embed in their everyday lives.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Alphabake - whole family cooking and activity days which will allow families the time to create something together, play together and eat together.</p> <p>The Council is working with Active Essex to investigate opportunities to run the Pedal Power programme. Free Bicycles, helmets, locks, lights, safety courses & maintenance lesson are provided to those most in need. Targets are set for recipients to use their bicycle, which is tracked through the programme, and if the targets are achieved the bike is gifted to the recipient for free.</p>		
Support local projects and initiatives through the Councillor Community Grants scheme		
<p>In the fourth quarter 19 grants were made totalling £9,750.</p> <p>St Mary's Church in Bocking received £500 and Kelvedon URC received £300 to help make available a place for people to go, stay warm and have refreshments as well as finding some company.</p> <p>Halstead Community Shed received £500 towards the purchase of office furniture. White Cone and Great Yeldham Parish Councils, Halstead Cricket Club, and Little Chestnuts Pre-School were among other recipients in the fourth quarter. In total this year the sum awarded is a total of £33,154, which is 54.1% of the funding available.</p> <p>Eight members have used their full allocation. It has been agreed that members are able to carry forward any underspend from this financial year into the 2024/25 financial year.</p>	March 2024	
Support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on their pathway to independent living through supported housing and move-on accommodation		
<p>The Council have been working closely with Peabody to deliver this project and have been receiving regular updates over recent weeks. All work for completion of refurbishment works are on track to be delivered by early April.</p> <p>Dates for connection of electricity and water supply are still to be confirmed, with gas connection scheduled for mid-May.</p>	June 2024	

Actions carried out in partnership with others


Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build more resilient communities to respond to emerging issues		
Work continues with Essex County Council to develop a business plan for the next stage of the Levelling Up rural pilot, which will include a request for resource to continue the community engagement work. A sponsors meeting has been held between Braintree District and Essex County Council and the Mid & South Essex Integrated Care System.	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 took place between 3 - 6 July 2023, delivering workshops to 289 children from 7 primary schools across the district.	March 2024	
Review our Livewell Strategy to support the changing needs of our residents and wider health and care priorities		
The Livewell Strategy was adopted at Cabinet in January. The strategic action plan priorities have been agreed and implementation of the plan will begin next year.	February 2024	
Address the health inequalities of the district through the Mid-Essex Alliance partnership by designing integrated health services in local communities and neighbourhoods		
Managers from across Housing and Communities have been participating in leadership group meetings with the NHS. Concerns were raised by The Council around the duplication of meetings within the current system, which prevents full attendance by council officers. Our Health and Wellbeing manager is working to develop the approach and explore synergies with existing forums.	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		
Wayfinding signage has been installed along River Walk with the intention of increasing footfall and navigational information to residents and tourists. The outreach sports programme aimed at young people in Witham, to promote mental health and wellbeing, saw 108 attendees in the fourth quarter and over 650 across the year.	March 2024	
The safer streets programme in Witham has now concluded, with 18 individual projects contributing to its success including the provision of personal safety alarms and the launch of the Ask Angela campaign. Partners including Witham Town Council, Fusion, Cara, Eastlight, Essex Police and Neighbourhood Watch have been asked for feedback on the project, and a final steering group meeting took place in March.		
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		
Work in Halstead has completed with the facilities now open at Halstead Leisure Centre, allowing those with complex disabilities to access the swimming pool, which would not have been possible before.	May 2024	
Planning permission was granted for the additional works required at Witham Town Hall in February. Work on site has commenced, with particular attention paid to the beams in the listed part of the structure, with the support of a structural engineer. The works are anticipated to complete by the end of May 2024. A change control notice has been issued to amend the end date, reflecting the delays encountered.		

PROMOTING PROSPERITY






Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

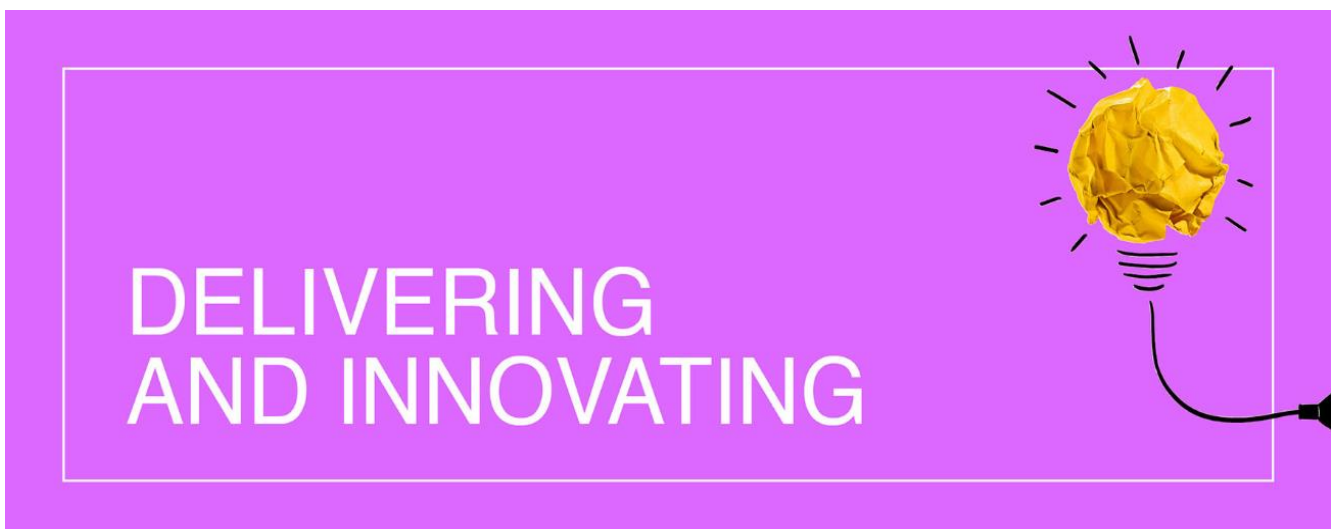
Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build on the current success of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park by selling the remaining site plots and promoting the development of the phase two land		
<p>It is anticipated the decision to approve the transfer agreement between The Council and the developer for the phase two land will be presented to Cabinet in May.</p> <p>A survey and volume estimate of the soil on the remaining phase one plots has been undertaken, and work has since begun to understand the budgetary and ecological implications of the work. A plan to undertake the groundworks will be devised during the first and second quarter of 24/25, with work anticipated to complete in the third quarter.</p> <p>The target date has been amended from March to December 2024 to allow for the approval and other subsequent arrangements to be made with respects to the phase two development, and for groundworks to be completed over the autumn with respects to the remaining plots.</p>	December 2024	▶
Continue to develop the Witham Enterprise Units to bring forward new business premises for SME's		
<p>Work continues to explore options for the delivery of the Witham Enterprise Units. Given increases in construction cost and changes to the demand for certain property types subsequent to the Covid pandemic, the viability of the project is an important aspect to confirm before progressing with the chosen design.</p> <p>The current design proposal has pre-application planning approval and the financial viability will now be considered before moving forward.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a way forward for the project will be confirmed in the next quarter.</p>	September 2026	▲

Develop and deliver a business support programme based at the Plaza to help District businesses start, grow and increase productivity, especially in key sectors		
37 members have enrolled on the scheme, with 3 places left.	March 2025	
To date, 29 businesses have advised that as a result of this intervention, they have taken up offers of non-financial business support. 29 have adopted new-to-the-firm technologies or processes. 34 have seen an increase in their revenue. 19 new businesses have been created, 14 jobs have been created, 15 jobs have been safeguarded, and 14 businesses have progressed from pre-start to business ready.		


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 (NEEB) 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.</p> <p>Support offered is categorised into four key areas: Businesses in Rural Areas supporting businesses specifically outside our urban hubs, Blueprint for Business offering workshops and 1:1 events to help drive growth, Development of New Products supporting businesses with a new product or service to bring to market, and Externally Funded Innovation Support to assist businesses utilise other funding to support growth and innovation.</p> <p>The partnership has delivered support across multiple areas throughout the year and achieve 3 of the 5 targets set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses receiving non-financial support – 177 (target 150) Jobs created – 27 (target 20) Jobs safeguarded – 22 (target 30) New businesses created – 7 (target 20) Training courses delivered – 28 (target 6). <p>The business support program will continue into the 24/25 financial year.</p>	March 2025	
<p>Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/workshops to introduce students to new industries and sector course pathways</p>		
<p>1,500 year 10 students from 8 schools attended the Apprentice Fair in February. The fair showcased apprenticeship schemes from employers and training providers across the Braintree District. Braintree District Council funded the transport for all students to enable attendance.</p> <p>The objective of the fair was to raise career aspirations and attainment, in addition to creating more awareness of alternative post 16 vocational options and career pathways available to students.</p>	March 2024	

The Council continues to work with employers and training providers to offer apprenticeships in other capacities and connect employers directly with schools to raise aspirations further. There is work ongoing to facilitate a visit to Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult in Stevenage for a cohort of students, with transport costs again funded by the Council.		
Support productivity and prosperity in our rural areas through the allocation of grant funding from the Rural England Prosperity Funding		
All Rural England Prosperity Funding applications have been assessed and have been notified as to whether they have passed the threshold for acceptance. Year 1 projects have been sent grant agreements to sign and year 2 projects have been informed about their positions on the waiting list ahead of next year.	March 2025	







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		
<p>Commercial group meetings have taken place quarterly throughout the considering commercial ideas, the pipeline of projects, and traded service performance with those leading these activities. This group reviews this activity and the commercial programme as a whole in line with the response to the scrutiny report on Commercialisation.</p> <p>The Investment and Capital Programme group meetings have been developed with monthly officer meetings taking place to review project progress, capital and revenue project performance and shared services. The Investment and Development Board and Capital Programme Boards are alternated each month for Councillors to review, support and challenge this activity.</p> <p>The review of services conducted by Commercial Gov identified a number of potential opportunities for the organisation. Primarily a review of fees and charges, where each service was considered with charges benchmarked against other Authorities, to consider where charges were out of alignment with other Authorities. Changes were made in fees and charges across a number of areas, resulting in an increase in income of £123,000, with a plan to develop this further.</p>	March 2024	

The review also identified opportunities for new business and increasing our existing business. Consideration will be given to the resource required to implement these recommendations as a part of the Fit for the Future Programme.		
Develop an Asset Management Strategy to implement a more coherent approach to all property interests across the district		
The Council is working with CIPFA to produce an Asset Management Strategy, with supporting documents such as policy and action plan. The draft of the strategy is due to be delivered in May 2024, after which it will be presented to Cabinet for a decision to adopt the strategy. The target date has been amended from March to September, to allow review and approval of the strategy once the draft has been received.	September 2024	
Consider an operating model for residents and businesses to potentially subscribe to the garden waste collection service		
The garden waste collection service is now live with collections taking place. Over 35,000 residents signed up to the service, with 85% having taken advantage of the early-bird subscription offer. A second phase of this project will be developed next year to implement a resident portal, allowing residents to log in and pay for the renewal of their subscription into the 25/26 financial year.	March 2024	
Continue to develop our online and digital services to support changes in customer demand and expectations		
A further increase in My Account users was seen in the fourth quarter, taking the total number of users to over 3,550. This has allowed customers to access services online in a way which was not available previously, including quicker completion of online forms, progress saving of forms, and tracking completed forms. Additionally, the ability to subscribe to the garden waste collection service was included into this year's development. Functionality will continue to be improved into next year, with inclusion of Single Sign On integration for third party portals, mobile enhancements, push notifications and an improved online booking system.	March 2024	
Understand the impacts of the reforms to national planning policy and mainstreaming biodiversity net gain in the planning system		
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been implemented into the planning system, and the implications of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill are undergoing consultation and consideration at other legislative stages. Some changes have been enacted, but as many others require further consultation before implementation, a definitive end date for the bill cannot be put forward. The Council will await the outcomes of the consultations and other changes to be enacted and implement these accordingly as and when the details are made available.	January 2024	
Provide fit for purpose car parking machines across our car parks		
The installation of the remaining 14 ticket machines across 7 car parks in Braintree and Witham is due to take place in mid-April. The project is anticipated to be completed ahead of schedule by the end of April.	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		
<p>Progress has been made towards agreeing a devolution deal for Greater Essex, where the Government confirmed that Greater Essex would enter into negotiations with the aim of agreeing a deal by the Autumn Budget Statement on 22 November 2023. Unfortunately a deal has not yet been agreed. The Government remains geared towards devolution, and whilst a deal is still yet to be agreed, the work completed together in Essex has forged strong partnerships and deepened our understanding around what is needed to improve outcomes in an array of policy areas. A new strategic partnership has been established across North Essex along with a commitment to resourcing our collaborative work.</p>	November 2023	
Deliver on the plan for North Essex Authorities to work more closely together on shared priorities and improving resilience		
<p>North Essex Councils (NEC)'s Chief Executive Officers and leaders have continued to meet to discuss the priorities for the programme this coming year. NEC has appointed a new Director, who once in post, will lead the work on delivering the programme in 2024/25.</p>	March 2025	
Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including the rural pilot with Essex County Council		
<p>The draft business case for the project has been received and senior leaders from Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and the NHS Integrated Care Service (ICS) have met to discuss the plan in detail.</p> <p>Further discussion with the ICS have taken place in relation to on-going support and resources, whilst wider funding is considered within the business case.</p>	March 2025	
Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex		
<p>Following the public consultation on the strategy, the Essex Waste Delivery group reviewed the feedback and updated the strategy. It is anticipated that the strategy will be presented to Essex County Council's cabinet in June, and conditional to its adoption, will be presented to Braintree District Council Cabinet in July 2024.</p> <p>The timeline for this project has been extended to reflect the reliance on Essex County Council's cabinet process to take place prior to our adoption of the strategy.</p>	July 2024	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2023/24								
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Target for the end of the year	Status at the end of the year
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES									
Number of affordable homes delivered	77	90	162	95	63		424	250	
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	119	173	253	305	796		305	796	
<p><i>Comments: The submission of applications and therefore the rate of applications granted remains unpredictable. A further 52 applications were granted permission in the fourth quarter. The overall target for the year has been challenging, given changes in the market caused by cost-of-living issues (such as borrowing rates and build cost). Furthermore, the anticipated submission of some large applications to the Council have not yet been received. The planning department have been processing numerous speculative applications, however developers continue to be cautious given the current economic climate.</i></p>									
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT									
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	54.14%	53.88%	46.87%	41.44%	60%		49.08%	60%	
<p><i>Comments: The fourth quarter result includes months where garden waste collection was still suspended, returning a lower result. It is hoped that with the new garden waste subscription collections running year round, a more consistent figure should be returned over the winter months in 2024/25. The 60% target is an ambitious target set the Essex Waste Partnership, and the target will be amended in 24/25 to reflect an achievable goal for Braintree.</i></p>									
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	108kgs	108kgs	101kgs	111kgs	117kgs		424kgs	468kgs	
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (309)	100% (323)	100% (236)	100% (196)	100%		100% (1,064)	100%	
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						293	Data only	n/a
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES									
Percentage of Disabled Facilities Grants approved within timescales.	95.35%	100%	94.64%	93.33%	80%		95.51%	80%	
Participation levels across all our sports centres (# of attendees)	177,126	204,842	168,300	172,071	162,194		769,007	653,292	
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						66.7%	Data only	n/a
<p><i>Comments: There has been an increase of +3.6% compared to last year, and an increase of +16.6% to the baseline figure from 2015/16.</i></p>									

Performance Indicator	2023/24								
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	Yearly Outturn	Target for the end of the year	Status at the end of the year
Number of customers using out Handyman scheme	79	69	84	85	Data only	n/a	317	Data only	n/a
Number of homelessness cases prevented	54	67	50	34	Data only	n/a	205	Data only	n/a
PROMOTING PROSPERITY									
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.7%	2.7%	2.9%	2.9%	Data only	n/a	2.9%	Data only	n/a
Number of new business start-ups across the district	271	269	258	349	Data only	n/a	1,147	Data only	n/a
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	63	102	91	203	Data only	n/a	459	Data only	n/a
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING									
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre	64%	60%	56%	55%	70%		58%	70%	
<i>The calls dealt with at first point of contact by customer services are falling short of their target, primarily due to the shifting of simple and straightforward calls to online channels leaving customer services to handle more complex calls requiring transfer to the relevant service area. In 2023/24, a total of 52,812 calls were dealt with at first point of contact out of a total of 90,373 calls into the service.</i>									
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt (cumulative)	98.50%	98.60%	98.28%	98.44%	98%		98.44%	98%	
Number of people transacting with us online	33,995	55,634	41,222	43,982	Data Only	n/a	174,833	Data Only	n/a
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	17.13 days	16.31 days	15.47 days	16.18 days	18 days		16.27 days	18 days	
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	2.89 days	2.69 days	2.54 days	2.38 days	5 days		2.63 days	5 days	
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	88.61%	94.74%	91.96%	83.46%	90%		90.12%	90%	
<i>Comments: An increase in complaints regarding the garden waste subscription service in March lead to a number of overdue complaints, which resulted in 13 out of 70 complaints responded to outside of 7 working days in the fourth quarter.</i>									
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.50%	58.24%	83.81%	97.59%	97.71%		97.59%	97.71%	
<i>Comments: Collection rate for the year was marginally below target. Performance was above the Essex average of 97.1% for the year.</i>									
Collection rate for Business Rates	30.12%	55.37%	82.9%	98.13%	98.92%		98.13%	98.92%	
<i>Comments: Late Valuation Office Rating List adjustments and review of small business rate relief increased the collectable amount in the final quarter impacting collection rate by around 0.4%. The actual rate achieved was higher than the Essex average of 97.75%</i>									

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the third 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)	95 (87)	56 (45)	64 (57)	258 (229)
Not Justified	23 (61)	40 (65)	35 (32)	41 (39)	139 (197)
Partially Justified	13 (27)	17 (15)	20 (28)	20 (29)	70 (99)
Not known	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (0)	5 (1)
Total	79 (128)	152 (167)	112 (108)	129 (125)	472 (526)

Comments:

The fourth quarter saw a minor increase in complaints compared to the third quarter. In addition to complaints regarding missed bin collections, the Operations service saw complaints regarding the new garden waste subscription service following the start of the service in the fourth quarter. A small number of complaints were received for the Customer Service Centre, Governance and Environment.

This year there has been a 10% reduction in overall complaint numbers compared to the previous year. The total number of justified complaints has increased, and non-justified or partially-justified complaints decreased. This indicates that valid complaints are being recognised and remedied, whilst better information about our services and standards are better communicated to our residents.

In total for the year, three complaints escalated to stage 2 in 2023/24, with no complaints escalating to stage 3. This further indicates that we are effectively remedying complaints at the earliest stages of the complaints process.

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

One initial enquiry was received in February regarding noise nuisance and barking dogs caused by a neighbour. The matter was being dealt with and had not been considered as a formal complaint to the Council. The enquiry was closed by LGO in March as a premature complaint.

In total for the year, the Council received two complaints from the LGO, both of which were closed as premature complaints with neither having been presented to the Council to consider as formal complaints.

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	489	502	501	- 1	-
Total staff FTE	435.98	444.29	457.18	458.54	+ 1.36	-
Level of employee turnover	3.94%	1.84%	1.99%	3.39%	+ 1.4	-
Number of leavers	19	9	10	17	+ 7	-
Number of starters	15	16	23	16	- 7	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee*	1.34 days	1.73 days	5.87 days*	5.9 days*	+ 0.03 day	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	84.56%	68.30%	55.18%	48.7%	Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1078	617	751	833	+ 82	-
Number of delegates	200	235	347	379	+ 32	-
Number of apprentices **	19	20	20	21	+ 1	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	481	492	499	492	486	501

* From the third quarter, the council has moved to reporting working days lost to sickness on a rolling 12 month basis, to allow a more meaningful comparison going forward.

** 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	Notes
	<i>(2022/23 figure in brackets)</i>				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13 (13)	22 (5)	12 (15)	5 (13)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (12)	22 (5)	9 (15)	5 (13)	<i>Accidents were:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Slip/trip/fall.</i> • <i>Moved bin door and hurt shoulder</i> • <i>RIDDOR (explained below),</i> • <i>nail from waste - cut chest,</i> • <i>stood on black ice and slipped</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (1)	0 (0)	3 (0)	0 (0)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	14 (37)	9 (35)	45 (16)	19 (1)	<i>RIDDOR makes up the 19 days. Fell from waste vehicle and cracked ribs</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	1 (3)	4 (2)	2 (1)	5 (5)	<i>Verbal abuse and violent behaviour make up the 5 incidents.</i>
Number of near miss incidents	2 (1)	1 (1)	0 (2)	0 (0)	
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (0)	1 (0)	
Number of claims settled	0 (4)	1 (0)	3 (1)	2 (1)	

Financial Performance - Fourth quarter and end of year position:

Background

Full Council agreed a budget of £17.5m in February 2023. During the year budgets may be updated in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure.

On 11th December 2023, Full Council approved a budget transfer of up to £600k between Treasury Management income and all service staffing budgets to offset the in-year additional cost of the April 2023 pay award settlement. Full Council also approved the allocation of up to £300k for the Council's own legal costs relating to appeals against the use of the former Wethersfield air base for an asylum centre, costs to be met from general balances. Costs awarded against the Council would be additional to the agreed spend limit.

A further presentational change was made to the budget to reflect the switch in government grants from specific service grants to Revenue Support Grant. This resulted in an updated budget amount of £17.6m for reporting purposes only.

Executive Summary

The financial position for the year is as follows:

- **A net positive variance of £1.129m (after carry forwards)**, comprising overachieved income and underspends on staffing costs, partially offset by additional expenditure.
- The provisional outturn is being reviewed to ensure on-going variances have either been reflected in the 2024/25 budget or are taken into account when preparing for the 2025/26 budget and updating of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- An initial review of the savings and additional income indicates that c£1m included within the outturn position has already been reflected in the 2024/25 Budget. Further work is being undertaken including on the pressures that have impacted the position.
- The net change in the **General Fund unallocated balance** is an **increase of £459k**.
- **Capital spending** for the year totalled **£5.1m** including £1.6m on housing improvement and disabled facilities grants; with the balance spent on a mixture of community projects, planned property maintenance, investment into ICT infrastructure and systems, and acquisition of operational vehicles and equipment used in the delivery of front-line services.

General Fund Revenue Spending

The table below shows the outturn for the year.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Variance £'000	Carry Forwards £'000	Net General Fund £'000	RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,819)	(2,557)	262	0	262	R
Community & Leisure	800	877	77	0	77	R
Corporate Management Plan	1,498	1,533	35	0	35	A
Economic Development	237	230	(7)	0	(7)	G
Environment	944	1,013	69	16	85	R
Finance	660	(689)	(1,349)	50	(1,299)	G
Governance	1,325	1,279	(46)	22	(24)	G
Housing Services	958	944	(14)	0	(14)	G
ICT & Facilities	2,045	1,879	(166)	0	(166)	G
Marketing & Communications	648	620	(28)	0	(28)	G
People & Performance	1,027	889	(138)	77	(61)	G
Operations	7,518	7,164	(354)	0	(354)	G
Strategic Investment	36	36	0	0	0	G
Sustainable Development	1,500	1,746	246	0	246	R
Service Plan Total	16,377	14,964	(1,413)	165	(1,248)	G
Corporate Financing	1,691	1,009	(682)	142	(540)	G
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	0	234	234	0	234	
Efficiency Savings Target	(425)	0	425	0	425	
Net Total	17,643	16,207	(1,436)	307	(1,129)	G

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

- **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 budget due to in-year staffing changes; and fees & charges income has overachieved budgets.

Main Changes from Q3

The main changes from the position reported at Q3 relate to the following factors:

Treasury Management Income (+£209k) - Cash balances remained significantly higher than forecast allowing for additional short-term investments. The return on the Council's Pooled Funds was higher in the final quarter than previously expected based on historical returns.

Investment Property Income & Service Charges (+£136k) – Income achieved from commercial, and property rent reviews increased including backdated adjustments. Services charges in respect of H120 allocated to the Council was lower than previously forecast.

Sustainable Development (-£124k) – Planning application income was lower than forecast due to a delay in several major applications that had been anticipated at Q3. These were received in the first quarter of 2024/25.

Wethersfield Legal Challenge (+£156k) – £300k has been allocated in respect of the Council's own legal costs relating to legal appeals against the Home Office on the use of the former Wethersfield air base for an asylum centre. To date, £234k has been incurred (£10k in 2022/23). Further costs are anticipated in 2024/25.

The table below breakdowns the Total Variance:

Business Plan Service	Salaries			Other Expenditure			Gross Income		
	Updated Budget	Actual	Variance	Updated Budget	Actual	Variance	Updated Budget	Actual	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	594	509	(85)	1,088	1,359	271	(4,502)	(4,426)	76
Community & Leisure	998	1,002	4	1,019	1,054	35	(1,217)	(1,179)	38
Corporate Management	1,577	1,561	(16)	335	386	51	(414)	(414)	0
Economic Development	366	312	(54)	14	62	48	(142)	(143)	(1)
Environment	1,913	2,080	167	355	345	(10)	(1,324)	(1,412)	(88)
Finance	2,622	2,510	(112)	26,319	26,541	222	(28,281)	(29,740)	(1,459)
Governance	1,016	858	(158)	660	676	16	(352)	(256)	96
Housing Services	1,534	1,535	1	329	325	(4)	(905)	(916)	(11)
ICT & Facilities	1,009	925	(84)	1,040	958	(82)	(4)	(4)	0
Marketing & Communications	537	524	(13)	290	284	(6)	(180)	(189)	(9)
People & Performance	950	813	(137)	180	179	(1)	(103)	(103)	0
Operations	7,389	7,299	(90)	6,594	6,704	110	(6,465)	(6,839)	(374)
Strategic Investment	248	324	76	(148)	(153)	(5)	(64)	(135)	(71)
Sustainable Development	2,820	2,580	(240)	487	652	165	(1,808)	(1,487)	321
Service Plan Total	23,573	22,832	(741)	38,562	39,372	810	(45,761)	(47,243)	(1,482)
Corporate Financing	951	782	(169)	3,930	3,780	(150)	(3,190)	(3,553)	(363)
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	(300)	0	0	-	234	234	-	-	-
Efficiency Savings Target	(300)	0	300	0	0	0	(125)	0	125
Net Total	24,224	23,614	(610)	42,492	43,386	894	(49,076)	(50,796)	(1,720)

Commentary on Main Service Variances (+Adverse/ -Positive)

Asset Management

- Higher cost of interim management arrangements and additional surveyor to complete outstanding rent reviews (+£111k), however, these have been offset by a lower spend on staffing at the Plaza (-£196k).
- Victoria Square – additional site operating costs (+£113k) primarily due to unrecoverable service charges for void units, the bus park, and Eastlight service charge cap. Other costs include a backdated business rate adjustment and increased insurance premia. Reduced lease rent income due to void units (+£64k).
- Lower income from the Hatchery and Makerspace compared to the original business plan and increased estate costs (+£124k). Taking the underspend on staffing into account, the net position on the Plaza is positive variance of -£72k.
- Causeway House - £31k of reduced income due to un-let vacant space. Cost in relation to intervention at the PARC building in order to bring the property back into reasonable condition for re-occupation (+£30k)
- Additional cost of Industrial sites from back-dated rents paid that are sub-let (+£78k) & net increase in rental income from industrial units following rent reviews (-£84k).

Corporate Management

- Cost of recruitment for the Head of Operations and Head of Planning roles £40k.

Community and Leisure

- Casual bookings at the Town Hall lower than budget (+£38k) partly due to groups diverting to other venues. This is partially offset by an increase in wedding income (-£13k).

- Extra cost for interim strategic leisure support (+£48k)

Economic Development

- Economic Development is part funded from reserves. The budget assumed £241k of reserves being used compared to the outturn position of £137k. The difference is reflected in a contra movement in earmarked reserves. The reason for the lower use of reserves was due to staffing underspends (-£58k) and underspends in other service related expenditure (-£46k). There was a further variance on expenditure incurred on Business Support activities (-£7k).

Environment

- Building Control net additional agency staff costs incurred due to continuing difficulties in recruitment combined with a high service demand (+£220k), partially offset by additional income generated from new fees and charges schedule introduced for non-statutory ancillary building control services (-£33k).
- Net underspend from vacancies within Environmental Protection and Carbon Management Unit (-£60k)

Finance

- Net underspend on employee costs due to vacancies, reduced hours and staffing starting at lower scale points than budget (-£112k).
- Local tax and housing benefit cost recoveries are lower than budget (+£93k). The cost-of-living is considered to be impacting recovery as most of the liabilities relate to low-income households.
- External audit fees in relation to housing benefit subsidy claim (+£37k).
- Housing benefits net cost of benefits paid (+£155k) – due to an increasing number of claimants in temporary/ bed & breakfast type accommodation used by Housing; and higher rents charged in supported housing schemes.
- Unbudgeted new burdens funding in relation to DWP grants and Energy Rebates / Household support payments (-£85k).
- Treasury Management investment income due to higher interest rates / cash balances (-£1.2m). The variance is against the updated budget after the virement approved by Full Council. Dividends from Pooled fund investments exceeded budget (-£221k).

Governance

- Difficulties with recruitment in legal services led to underspends in the first half of the year (-£159k), partially offset by extra costs incurred via the Local Legal Partnership (LLP) where capacity was provided (+£28k).
- Land charges income from residential searches is lower than budget (+£74k) which reflects the slowdown in housing activity; however, this is partially offset from extra income from commercial searches and a reduction in payments to ECC (-£18k) for their input to searches.

ICT & Facilities

- Corporate ICT systems maintenance (-£54k) and staffing variances (-£51k).
- Causeway House maintenance is overspent (+£42k) whilst energy costs have been lower than budget (-£84k).

Operations

- Net saving on staffing costs due to vacancies (Net -£90k).
- Waste Management and Street Cleansing expenditure is higher due to additional vehicle hire and maintenance costs, partially offset by a combination of a reduction in the market price of diesel; less tonnages of material collected; diversion of waste disposal to

alternative site from Cordons Farm; and lower costs in relation to the Bartec in-cab system (Net +£165k)

- Other expenditure variances across Operations (+£41k) include: provision for additional dilapidation costs at Unit 4 (£35k); lower cost of the replacement of recycling caddies (-£24k); and non-achievement of saving from transfer of community assets (£21k).
- A reduction in income from dry recycling material due to a combination of less tonnage being collected and sharp fall in market price has been offset by higher income from glass where market prices remain higher than allowed in the budget (-£94k).
- Increase in income due to higher demand for the bulky waste collection service (-£61k) and trade waste (-£32k).
- ECC recycling credits are lower due to reduced tonnage being collected (+£58k).
- Increase in waste management income under the Inter-Authority Agreement from ECC (-£80k) due to annual inflationary adjustment from ECC.
- Income from Interments and other related cemetery income is higher and related expenditure (-£73k)
- Horticultural & Plant Workshop additional income (-£36k) from external contracts following a re-pricing exercise.
- Green Waste Charging net income from the new subscription service which started in early March 2024 (-£95k). Increased in credits from ECC due to additional green tonnage (-£31k)
- Car parking income variance (-£30k) reflecting usage continuing to improve with income offsetting the delay in the implementation of the new parking tariffs. Running and maintenance costs are higher including the statutory Parking Order (total £51k).

People and Performance

- Staffing and other variances largely due to recruitment delays, offset by agreed carry-forward (-£61k).

Sustainable Development

- Staffing variance due to current vacancies within the service in relation to the enforcement roles (-£142k)
- Additional costs from external contractors and ECC to cover staff shortages in Landscape services, consultancy, and reactive tree maintenance (+£161k) partially offset by vacancies within the service (-£67k)
- Overall, planning income underachieved by £323k. A shortfall of planning application income (+£419k) after making allowance for the recent uplift in statutory fees by government. At the third quarter, several major applications were expected to be received in the year; however, a number of these were delayed and received in the new financial year. Planning Performance Agreement has exceeded budget by (-£164k), partially offset by lower Pre-application income (+£70k).

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax Sharing Agreement – Council Tax collection performance for the Council and across other Essex authorities was better than the agreement baseline leading to an increase in share-back from preceptors (-£393k).
- Staff time charged to capital projects from service project managers is less than the budget allowed (+£40k).
- The Council's higher cash position resulted in delaying the need to externally borrow and instead use internal cash balances leading to a saving on interest costs. combined with a reduction in the Minimum Revenue Provision required (-£385k).
- The provision for corporate debt has increased (+£252k).

Wethersfield

- The Council's own legal costs relating to appeals against the former Wethersfield air base for an asylum centre for 2023/24 was £182k (£10k spent in 2022/23). Further costs are anticipated in the 2024/25 year out of the £300k previously agreed allocation. Third part costs currently stand at £52k.

Capital Programme

Current capital programme totals £14.6m of which £7.8m was 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	Remaining Variance 23/24 £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	501	263	238	-238	0
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	282	29	253	-253	0
Manor Street regeneration	142	35	107	-107	0
Witham Community Centre	200	75	125	-125	0
Town Centre improvements	619	43	576	-576	0
Industrial estate improvements	46	24	21	-21	0
Property planned maintenance	473	346	127	-116	11
Information technology systems & equipment	802	563	239	-239	0
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	1,088	669	419	-417	2
Cemetery improvements	95	93	2	0	2
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	77	62	16	-16	0
Operational equipment	1,119	877	242	-217	25
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	343	75	268	-268	0
Climate change initiatives	101	0	101	-101	0
Shared / Rural Prosperity Fund	180	31	149	-149	0
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,427	1,627	-199	179	-21
Capital salaries	351	337	14	0	14
Total	7,846	5,149	2,697	-2,665	32

Programme summary.

- Totals spend for the year was £5.1m against a profiled budget of £7.8m, resulting in a net variance of £2.7m.
- The updated programme and spend reflects the capitalised costs of recently acquired sweepers as part of the vehicle replacement programme (£645k) the longer-term financing of which is to be finalised e.g. by leasing or similar credit arrangement; and IT spending funded from revenue contributions (£91k).
- Additional S106 monies have been agreed for Witham Town Park improvements (£75k).
- Programme slippage into 2024/25 is £2.7m.
- The overall programme variance was a £32k underspend.

Capital resources generated.

- Eastlight Agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – 7 sales were completed, generating £735k (in 2022/23 10 sales were completed resulting in £1.6m); and VAT shelter £389k.
- Better Care Funding received of £1.2m which has been used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Capital grants received from the Shared Prosperity Fund (£33k) and Rural Prosperity Fund (£148k).
- Additional funding of £642k was received from SELEP for the Horizon 120 Plaza building – funding is conditional and has been used to reduce the overall project borrowing requirement.
- Other receipts totalling £170k.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity for the year		Amount Invested at end of March
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£47.1m	£124.3m	£114.5m	£56.9m
Average amount invested for the year to date			£68.0m
Highest amount invested in the year to date			£77.3m

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 for the year was £1m and interest on short-term investments was £2.4m, a total of £3.4m, equivalent to an annualised return of 5.06%.

The market value of shares and units in long-term pooled funds at the end of the quarter was £21.2m, representing an unrealised gain of £2.2m over the amount originally invested.

Investment portfolio

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

- Long-term pooled fund investments £19m (allocated: £3m property fund; £13m across four equity funds; and £3m in two diversified asset funds)
- Low volatility Money Market Funds (MMFs) (5 x £5m) £25m
- Variable net asset value MMF £4m
- Short Term Fixed Deposits £7.5m
- Lloyds current account £1.4m

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 outturn set out above, the net movement on the General Fund balances is an addition of £459k:

	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2023	8,093
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(644)
Funding for one-off investment / costs	(206)
Carry-Forward balance from 22/23 / Prior Year Adj.	180
Outturn variance (net carry forwards)	1,129
Sub-total Net Change	459
Balance at 31 March 2024	8,552

Movements shown on the General Fund balance include:

- The Budget for the year was approved based on using balances of £644k
- One-off investment costs include a contribution towards the operating costs of the Plaza £121k and Green Waste Service implementation £85k
- Unused Carry-forwards requests from 2022/23 returned to balances and a prior year adjustment, total of £180k

Report Title: Braintree District Council Productivity Plan	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/20
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director Support Services Suzanne.bennett@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the Braintree District Council (the Council) Productivity Plan (the Plan) to Cabinet for approval ahead of deadline for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 19th July 2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1.1. Approve the Plan at Appendix A for submission to DLUHC; and
- 2.1.2. Note the next steps for publication and reporting as set out in this report.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1. On 4th February 2024 the Communities Secretary published a written statement detailing the final Local Government Finance Settlement for financial year 2024/25. Within the statement was a requirement for local authorities to develop and share productivity plans that set out “...*how those authorities will improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure*”.
- 3.2. Local Authorities were informed that further guidance on the form and requirements of these plans would be provided by DLUHC. This was received on 16th April 2024, when the Minister for Local Government wrote to Chief Executives of Councils setting out guidance for Productivity Plans.
- 3.3. The guidance does not include a template for the Plans and sets out that the document should be three or four pages in length. The guidance sets out four themes with questions that can be considered under each theme. The four themes are:

- How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources
 - How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources
 - Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems
 - The barriers to preventing progress that Government can help to reduce or remove
- 3.4. The Council has been working for many years to deliver more with less and there have been considerable savings made in budgets whilst the quality of services has been maintained. Demand for most, if not all of the Councils services, has increased over the last decade whilst grant funding from central government has decreased.
- 3.5. At the meeting of Cabinet in March 2024, it was acknowledged that there is more to do to ensure that important services are protected into the future and to ensure that there is financial resilience in the organisation. As such the transformation programme, Fit for the Future, was launched. A key part of the programme will be to ensure that the Councils services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible, and the Council will be working with its partners to address this sector wide issue.
- 3.6. Officers have worked to develop the Plan that reflects both the gains that have been made in recent years and the plans in hand to optimise service delivery as we move forward.
- 3.7. Productivity Plans are required to be submitted to DLUHC by 19th July 2024 and uploaded to the Councils website so that residents can view it. Following submission, DLUHC will review the Plan to identify common themes and issues across the sector as well as highlighting best practice. Plans won't be scored or marked nor do the Council expect individual feedback on the Plan.
- 3.8. An expert panel is being set up to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the Plans. At time of writing there is no additional information on who will make up the panel or what the Terms of Reference for that panel will be.
- 3.9. The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:
- Making the authority Fit for the Future.

4. Options

- 4.1. Option 1: the attached Plan is approved, submitted to DLUHC in accordance with their stated timelines and published on the Councils website. This will ensure that the Council meet the expectations of the Secretary of State and provide an important update to our citizens on the work of the Council to ensure that taxpayers' monies are best utilised and provide value for money.

- 4.2. Option 2: a revised Plan is drafted for submission and publication. The current Plan captures the current position of the organisation and aligns with the plans for the Fit for Future programme. Any changes could mean that the Productivity Plan does not align with wider strategic plans for the organisation.
- 4.3. Option 3: do not submit or publish a Productivity Plan. The development of a Productivity Plan is not a statutory requirement and therefore Cabinet could choose not to submit a Plan. However, there would be high risk of significant damage to the reputation of the Council if this option was selected. The Secretary of State has been clear that there is an expectation that all Councils will submit this information and it would be a reasonable expectation of our residents to produce a Plan and this be published.
- 4.4. On this basis it recommended that Option 1 is the best course of action.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. If Cabinet agrees to approve the Plan it will be submitted to DLUHC ahead of the 19th July deadline. The Plan will also be published on the Council's website. The Council already have mechanisms in place to report on its performance and these continue as before.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. The activities in the Plan are already included in the Council's Annual Plan and Corporate Strategy or planned for through the Fit for the Future programme. On this basis there is no immediate impact on the financial position of the authority.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications arising out of the recommendations set out in this report.

8. Other implications

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

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3. The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. Further consideration will be given to any associated impacts as the action plan is prepared.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1. Appendix A –Productivity Plan

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Letter from the Minister for Local Government dated 16th April 2024

Braintree District Council Productivity Plan

June 2024

1. Introduction

Braintree District Council has a long and successful history of doing more with less. In 2013/14 20% of our budget requirement was funded via the Revenue Support Grant, which has now to all intents and purposes been removed, but we continue to deliver good quality services to a district that has experienced nearly 6% growth in the period 2011 to 2021. This has only been achieved through improving the efficiency of our services whilst taking an innovative approach to raising more income locally.

We have historically committed to being a low tax authority whilst protecting service delivery. Our KPIs and customer satisfaction survey results prove that to be true. In the 10 years prior to financial year 2023/24 we have added an additional locally raised £5 million of income to our base budget whilst removing £5 million from our cost base. However, this work is not done. In common most local authorities, there continues to be a gap in our Medium Term Financial Strategy. Productivity improvements continue to play a key role in our budget strategy alongside other transformational changes to ensure we achieve financial resilience. This document sets out what we have done in the past, where we are now and our ongoing work to secure the sustainable delivery of services to our citizens.

2. How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?

We have used a variety of solutions and approaches to ensure that efficiency and effectiveness are at the heart of service design, commissioning and delivery. Changes we've introduced over recent years have removed more than £10 million from our cost base over the last decade. Examples include:

Shared Services and Partnerships

Working together with our partners brings economies of scale, shared capacity and ability to greater develop capabilities within shared teams. Braintree District Council has led a Shared Payroll function for five other lower tier local authorities in Essex for several years and we are exploring the expansion of this service. Payroll is a scalable, transactional function that brings real efficiencies when provided at greater volumes.

We are the lead District Council within the Essex Procurement Partnership. The Partnership brings together the County Council and a number of district, borough and city councils to use their combined buying power to provide better value for all organisations. This also provides improved efficiency and productivity savings to our local businesses as procurement processes and documentation are standardised across the partnership.

Since 2022, Braintree District Council has been a core partner in the North Essex Councils (NEC) strategic partnership with seven other district councils and Essex

County Council. NEC provides a unified voice for an area with a population of over 1 million people and the partnership is driving forward collective activity on economic growth, housing, shared services and climate action.

Technology

We continue to review the use of technology across the organisation to ensure we maximise the value we get from the use of our resources. Examples include the introduction of in-cab technology for all of our front line waste and operational crews which allows access to real time information from operational headquarters to improve efficiency and the timeliness of delivery. Front line officers across the organisation have mobile access to key systems with real time updates and significant changes have been made to collaboration tools to reduce or eliminate duplication or manual input.

We have introduced both improved software and hardware to enable teams within our Planning Services to become paper free creating efficiency savings across the function.

Service Design and Commercialisation

Through changes to the structures within our Planning service, we have introduced a new Housing and Delivery and Growth team to deal with strategic planning proposals. This has been instrumental in achieving the highest number of homes in Essex completed in 2021/22 and the highest number of homes completed in Essex over the three-year Housing Delivery Test period 2019-22.

Braintree District Council recognised the need to move to more commercial models of operation several years ago. This is applied across all our operations, whether statutory or discretionary and whether we can charge service users or not. Commercialisation to us is more than just fees and charges. We had an independent review of our commercial activity in 2023 that rated our commercial maturity well above average with a wide range of commercial activities in place and key commercial roles embedded in the organisation. However we continue to pursue this agenda aggressively and have changed service designs to achieve these ambitions.

The most recent example is the introduction of a subscription for the garden waste service. In line with the Simpler Recycling reforms and with consideration to the Controlled Waste Regulations, Braintree District Council reviewed its garden waste services to ensure that it was providing best value for money, utilising resources effectively, reducing unnecessary journeys and making the best choices for the disposal of organic materials.

In doing so, we identified that a chargeable garden waste subscription service would achieve all of those aims and provide, through a polluter pays principle, the opportunity for a kerbside collection of garden waste, whilst ensuring a free disposal option by either composting or attending the Household Waste and Recycling Centres.

The changes have enabled a more focussed approach to collecting garden waste, as a discretionary service, ensuring only those who need the service are paying for

it. This approach ensures that less vehicles are required to travel the district by designing routes more effectively as only those who require the service are visited. This will likely have a positive carbon impact and reduce vehicle running costs, such as fuel and maintenance.

We have also redesigned our venues team to consolidate the management in the organisation which has delivered cost savings and increases in resilience. It has improved the customer interface and allows for cross-selling plus management of the venues as a portfolio rather than individual premises. We have a shared pricing models and shared marketing models across the portfolio to us to respond to market conditions in a holistic manner.

3. How do you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?

Digital enabling is a fundamental part of our latest Transformation Programme, Fit for the Future. As we carry out reviews of activity, processes and outcomes across the organisation we will be assessing what data we have, what data we could have access to and how we maximise the value this information holds. This builds on the work we have already done in utilising data for the advantage of the organisation, our partners and our citizens.

We continue to develop more innovative ways for our citizens to interact with us through a variety of online and social media channels, whether it is how they access key services from the council, or how they can engage and respond to consultation and feedback to us about the services that matter to them. We have used technology to improve access to data and information improving transparency of decision making and information about the places where people live. This includes development of spatial technology to make information more accessible to our citizens.

There are limitations to how we can use data within the organisation due to the lack of ability and cost effectiveness of maintaining, extracting and utilising data within our legacy IT systems. The movement of data between partner organisations is often difficult and we have a project in flight to break down some of those barriers to allow our staff and staff in other organisations to work together more easily whilst ensuring that we do not expose ourselves or the sensitive data that we hold on behalf of our citizens to any further risk.

We are keen to explore the opportunities that new technologies can bring but cost can often be prohibitive to lower tier local authorities. By working together with our partner organisations we aim to increasingly share costs and expertise to overcome this barrier.

4. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems

We already have robust and well embedded systems that prevent wasteful spending in the organisation. Our approach to ensuring efficiency and productivity is all encompassing and embedded with our managers and staff. Decisions on invest to save initiatives are underpinned by business cases subject to a structured and

comprehensive decision-making process that ensure that proposals are fully appraised, and benefits and risks are properly identified. Our business case process challenges organisational need, whole life investment requirements, and the deliverables and benefits to be realised. Sound corporate governance arrangements ensure that Initiatives that are approved, are then tracked through the Council's performance management reporting and quarterly financial reviews.

Previous examples, include the decisions to invest in solar panels across the council's property estate, generating income as well as supporting our green credentials; or investing through an external contract provider into modern material recycling facilities that then has meant recycling waste is processed at a lower cost per tonne to the authority. Our general balances have been used in the past to drive financial gains, for example, by making lump sum pension fund deficit contributions covering three years, leading to revenue savings, whilst still allowing for cyclical replenishment of balances.

Our Service Review process which is a key part of our Fit for the Future programme, includes aspects of zero-basing revenue budgets and reducing expenditure where appropriate. Key strategies support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy, and future investment requirements are highlighted helping to determine where finite resources should be allocated. Preventive services that invest in communities and their wellbeing will continue to ensure demand for more acute services is reduced and more sustainable public services can be delivered.

We have a councillor board in place to oversee the delivery of benefits on our major projects and programmes and the board also oversees our transformation programme. This provides check and challenge and oversight of delivery in robust and transparent way, supported by an effective PMO function.

5. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

One of the main barriers to improving productivity across our organisation and the sector is the lack of certainty regarding the future of local government funding. In addition to there being no clear timeline for the long-awaited 'fair funding' reform of the entire system, there have been multiple years of single year settlements. Uncertainty creates risk and this risk increases unnecessary costs in projects that span multiple years. A Government providing multi-year settlements would assist in reducing that uncertainty, as would a commitment to work in partnership with sector leaders on a wider programme of public service reforms.

Multiple funding streams with onerous reporting requirements, all of which differ across different Government departments are inherently unproductive. A standardised approach to reporting on grant funding across Government would allow for greater efficiencies within local authorities. Greater join-up between Government departments would reduce duplication and cut out the current differential drivers that restrict the ability of public service partners to deliver the place-based reforms needed to achieve better outcomes.

The requirement by Government departments for councils to take on new roles without sufficient notice, funding or even legislative frameworks in place can divert resources from activities that are revenue raising or create additional overheads. A recent example is the requirement for Councils to 'assess' funeral homes.

Increasing costs of software and the change of charging models that shift these costs from capital to revenue spending will increasingly create barriers to the implementation of new technologies. This will be particularly felt in smaller organisations as the efficiency savings created may take a number of years to be realised. Like almost all organisations, we are dependent on Microsoft, not only in our direct use of their products but also in that many of our line of business systems are based on Microsoft platforms. Increases in these licence costs create a pressure that cannot be avoided.

There is a restricted market for some of the line of business systems that Councils use, such as those supporting planning functions and revenues and benefits, this means that costs are increasing whilst service levels from providers are falling and there is no impetus for improvement or innovation in how those systems function. These systems and lack of join up across systems are a major driver of lower productivity in our organisation as manual workarounds have to be used. The costs of an ERP system, both in terms of implementation and ongoing costs currently prevent an organisation of our size considering this as solution, although we are exploring all alternatives.

An accelerated move towards place-based trailblazer-style single settlements would create the freedoms for our council to drive forward better outcomes and growth and has the potential to remove a number of these barriers very quickly. We are best placed to make the biggest and fastest difference to the prosperity and wellbeing of citizens, both as providers and convenors of key public services, and as place leaders who hold the keys to local inclusive economic growth and community wellbeing.

Report Title: Strategic Risk Register	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/24
Report Presented by: Councillor Kevin Bowers, Cabinet Member for Finance, 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 updated Strategic Risk Register for Braintree District Council (the Council).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the updated Strategic Risk Register as set out in the Appendix to this report.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Strategic Risk Register details the significant risks which have the potential to impact on the delivery of the Corporate Strategy over the medium-term.
- 3.2 The Strategic Risk Register forms a key part of the Council's overall approach to risk management.
- 3.3 The Strategic Risk Register was previously agreed by Cabinet on 4th March 2024, and the aim is to formally review strategic risks at least twice a year. The Corporate Management Team have reviewed the risks, along with the relevant Cabinet Member Risk Owners.
- 3.4 The recommendations set out in this report support the Council to maintain robust risk management arrangements across the delivery of its Corporate Strategy and to ensure the organisation remains fit for the future.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A Member Development Evening was held on the 9th May 2024, at which opportunity was given to all Members to participate in a review and discussion of the strategic risks facing the Council and the updated register. The evening generated wide discussion with responses provided by Cabinet Members and senior officers. There were no changes proposed to the strategic risks or register.

5. Options

- 5.1 The report invites Cabinet to approve the updated Strategic Risk Register. Cabinet may, however, determine that amendments are required before formal approval.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The approved Strategic Risk Register will be reported to the next meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no new financial implications from this report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no new legal implications from this report.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix – Strategic Risk Register

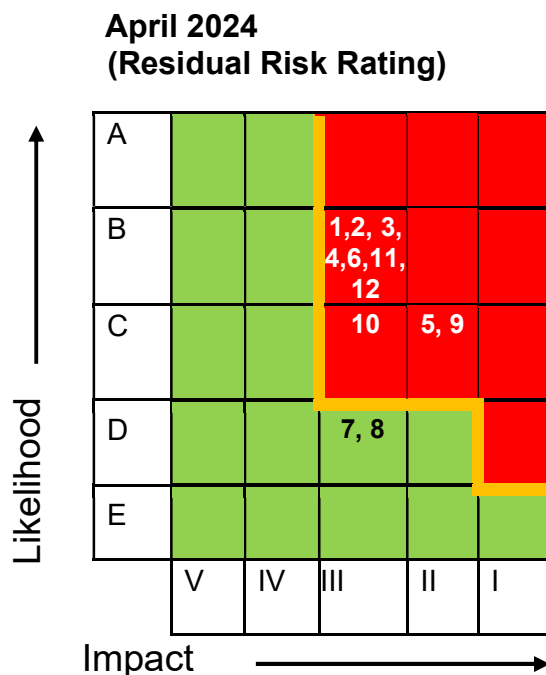
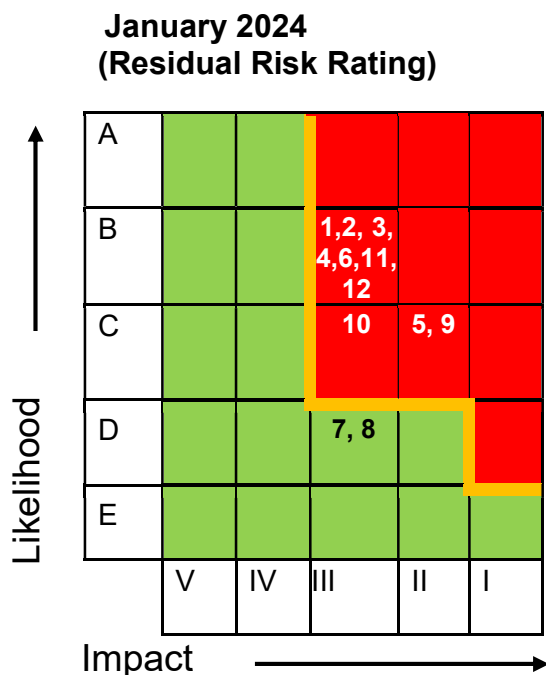
11. Background Papers

- 11.1 None

STRATEGIC RISK PROFILE

Last reviewed by Members via Cabinet March 2024.

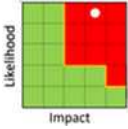
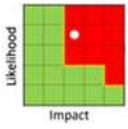

Review by CMT in April 2024 for the Member Evening 9th May 2024



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: Major Capital Programme (*formerly Strategic Investment*)
- Risk 11: Climate Change
- Risk 12: Landscape Services (*new Jan 2024*)

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 potential escalation of conflict in the Middle East. Geo-political and economic outlook remains volatile.</p> <p>Cost of living and a relatively weak prospect for economic growth impact on the finances of residents and businesses.</p> <p>The absence of a multi-year finance settlement with central government and allocation of one-off grants makes future financial planning very difficult and without much degree of certainty over grants and retained business rates. Whilst government have recently signalled a move to simplify funding streams there are still several programmes that are subject to bidding rounds. Late grant allocations with conditions containing 'hard' deadlines risks not being able to maximise use of funding where reliant on third parties.</p> <p>Future reforms of Local Government Finance system and potential impact on medium-longer term finances.</p> <p>Autum Statement 2023, set out a future outlook for public sector finances that raises the risk over future funding cuts to non-priority/ un-protected departments which cascades through to local authorities and particularly those authorities not responsible for adult and children services.</p> <p>Changes in demand for property and/ or ability of tenants to meet lease obligations.</p> <p>Funding arrangements with third parties & partners who are 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>			<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. - Increased credit loss risk due to non-collection of debt. - 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. 	

<p>Legislative changes e.g., Waste reforms and planning reforms</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 and 2022/23 accounts. An opinion is expected to be provided on the 2019/20 and 2020/21 accounts and the 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts disclaimed on the basis that the auditor is unable to carry out any work prior to meeting the government's proposed backstop date.</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"> - Changes to usable resources that have been taken into account for financial planning & budget due to changes required post-audit. - 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 rolling 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. 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 income, and treasury management, and service delivery.
- A developing three-year strategy on meeting the projected funding shortfall estimated in the MTFs over the medium-term through the 'Fit for the Future' 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.
- Horizon scanning of government announcements concerning Local Government Finance and participate in any consultations

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director & Section 151 Officer

- Work with other Essex authorities and Local Government representative bodies to lobby Central Government for resources and greater certainty for financial planning.
- Develop strategy to deal with potential for DLUHC not continuing with statutory regulations mitigating accounting requirement for long-term pooled fund investments.
- Develop & embed transformation agenda across the Authority linked to achievable targets for savings/ additional income
- Agree new Reserves Policy

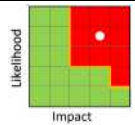
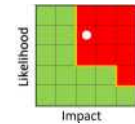

Risk 2. Economic Growth

International socio/political and economic disruption continues to impact on the UK national economy, caused by particular situations of inter and intra-national conflict and crisis that are impacting on world financial markets and supply chains. The national UK economic landscape itself remains unpredictable with a relatively weak economy suffering from low growth and high inflation at a time when the economy continues to recover from the recent impacts of the Covid pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU. All of the above factors will continue to impact on the Braintree District economy, potentially impacting on the competitiveness and viability of some businesses, with downstream impacts on the employment of residents and their quality of life.

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC)

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Frankie Ricci

Link to Corporate Priorities: Prosperity

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>Slow growth in the national economy and the risk of recession Inflation rises on the cost of materials and staffing. Energy cost rises which have increased businesses operating costs and impacted on profitability. Lack of workforce available with the right skills.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the growth of 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:				
<p>The Economic Growth Strategy 2023 was agreed in March 2023 with an action plan of projects which are currently being delivered. The Council is the host of the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB), a partnership of 9 local authorities working together to deliver economic growth support to businesses and residents. A NEEB strategy has been approved in 2023 and an action plan has been agreed. BDC are delivering a business support programme funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) within the District in 2023 and 2024 delivering support for sole traders, green skills and digital skills. BDC are also working with partners through NEEB to deliver a coordinated business support programme across North Essex also funded via the SPF. Braintree business newsletter with over 3000 subscribers and closed Facebook page for businesses to network and share opportunities and best practice. Economic Growth team are delivering business networking events every quarter to broker and signpost support and advice. BDC has launched a grant funding round of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to support businesses in rural areas of the district offering grants of £50,000. Strong working relationships exist with skills providers, Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and other stakeholders working to support business and skills development.</p>				
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 brand and website and promote inward investment marketing campaigns to attract businesses to locate and grow in Braintree District (alongside relevant partners). - Deliver the actions as set out in the BDC Economic Strategy Action Plan. - Deliver the actions as set out in the NEEB strategy action plan. - Work with North Essex partners to find new opportunities to coordinate economic growth support activity. 				

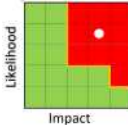
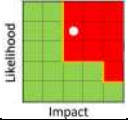
Risk 3. Planning

The government continues to suggest and legislate changes to the planning system, in support of delivering a national increase in housing supply. All changes have the potential to impact on the expectations, delivery methods and budgets of the Councils planning service.

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC)

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Spray

Link to Corporate Priorities: Communities and Prosperity

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)

The government has made and continues to make changes to the planning system. Before changes are made this leads to uncertainty in the system and difficulty in making decisions. When changes are made, they are often made immediately with no time to plan for implementation.

The Government has announced (December 2023) it intends to make several changes to the current planning system, including:

- Made a multitude of changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Consult on removing the use of Extensions of Time (EoT's) for minor developments and make them exceptional for major developments. If the proposals are confirmed this will severely impact on how the planning team deal with applications and the ability for consultations and negotiations.
- The planning guarantee timescales (the time within which a planning application should be determined) are expected to be reduced, which could mean more applicants asking for refunds if decisions have not been issued within certain time limits.
- The government is introducing mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) stipulations for major developments in January 2024 and minor developments in April 2024. This will require new skills and take significant resources to deliver.
- Natural England is requiring a full review of the Essex RAMs (Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation) Strategy which could significantly increase the amount charged per home or could prevent development altogether.

That Local Plan making or decision making is delayed or unsettled by potential future changes to the Planning system.

More applications may be refused if EoT's are no longer allowed, with the consequence of more planning appeals being made against council determinations, which may require the Council to spend more money defending its decisions at appeals.

Some planning applications are likely to be of a poorer quality if negotiation time (i.e. EoT's) is removed.

Cost implications of having to refund more planning application fees due to the loss of the planning guarantee.

Not being able to properly implement BNG due to lack of staff expertise or resources.

Charges for RAMs could make development unviable thus impacting on housing delivery numbers.

Natural England could put a block on new development if it believes the impact on protected sites is too great.

Current Controls:

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Completely effective (as far as BDC influence can go)

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (DC)

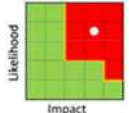
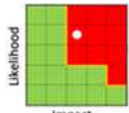

Continue to lobby government on making sure changes to the planning system deliver what is required. Liaise with groups including PAS (Planning Advisory Service), EPOA (Essex Planning Officers Association), EELGA to lobby for appropriate changes to the system and more resources.

Officers reviewing national changes and implementing required changes to processes and service as appropriate quickly and effectively, including anticipating potential impacts and acting proactively. This includes potential changes of removal of EoT's for most applications.

RAMs working group working with EPOA and Natural England to revise the RAMs evidence base and strategy.

Working across Essex to provide BNG training and work together with Essex County Council to appoint a shared officer to work on behalf of all authorities to share knowledge and best practice.

Strong monitoring and management of planning applications to ensure decisions are made and the planning guarantee refund period is not met.

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.				
Risk Owner: Corporate Director (CR)		Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Mary Cunningham		
Corporate Priorities: Communities				
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>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. In work poverty is a concern in the district.</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 predicted 80% increase in over 80 year olds in the district who may require increased support.</p> <p>The community and voluntary sector continue to have fewer 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:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and Wellbeing post ○ 2 year Cost of Living Officer post ○ 2 year Community Support and Employment officer post ○ Health and Wellbeing Apprentice ○ Community Engagement Officer post until March 2025 				
Live Well Strategy 2023 – 2028 is in place which sets out the strategic aim to support residents to be healthy				

and live well working with a range of partners through the Livewell Boards and the Health and Wellbeing Panel.

The Poverty Report has been refreshed and the action plan will be delivered through the Cost-of-Living Partnership group. 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 24/25. 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 third 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 Community360 to provide assistance to charities and community groups across the district.

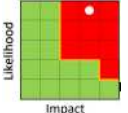
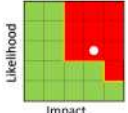

The Council is working with key partners to respond to the levelling up white paper and key missions. This will seek to tackle a number of highlighted vulnerabilities and triggers identified in the community resilience risk.

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

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (SB) **Cabinet Member Owner:** Cllr Kevin Bowers

Corporate Priorities: Fit for the Future

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)

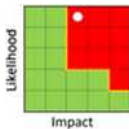
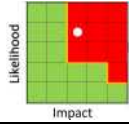

- Development and delivery of Transformation Programme. Shared Service element has a key outcome of improved staffing resilience so will play key role in addressing this risk. Other elements of Transformation programme should also be designed to address this risk
- Development of Transformation Programme 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
- Ensuring structured approach to training aligned with succession planning, building on good practice already in place across some technical and professional roles

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

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (CR) **Cabinet Member Owner:** Cllr Lynette Bowers-Flint

Corporate Priorities: Communities

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 - Unknown impact in the Local Housing Allowance increase effective from April 2023. - Temporary Accommodation (TA) subsidy frozen at 2011 levels, adding financial strain on finances / budgets in regard to TA costs - Withdrawal of Public Health funding from the Housing Related Support Accommodation Based Support Contract. This includes the primary resource for homeless households towards whom the Council has an accommodation duty - 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. 				<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 - More types of Temporary Accommodation required – supported, adapted etc - Potential for more Temporary Accommodation placements out of district - 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. 	

- 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.
- Results from public consultation indicates that the public's perception is that refugee / asylum are impacting housing waiting lists in BDC

Changes to BDC Staffing and Responsibilities:

- Increased homelessness duties arising from the Domestic Abuse Act: increasing the number of priority need households to be placed in temporary accommodation and alternative longer-term accommodation sourced
- 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
- Advertising short-term contracts is impacting recruitment and retainment
- 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

Partner Changes Impacting BDC Ability to Deliver:

- Staff turnover within Eastlight Community Homes: impacts on established working relationships and procedures

Current Controls:

- The Council has recruited to the following posts:
 - 2-year post to investigate empty homes and access to the Private Rented Sector
 - 2 year Assistant Housing Operations Manager
 - 18 month Private Rented Sector tenancy sustainment officer
 - 2 year Housing Strategy Officer
 - 2 year Ukraine Resettlement Officer
 - 12 month Ukraine Support Officer
 - X2 data and x1 Housing Apprentices
- Healthy Housing Strategy was adopted in 2023 – the focus on maximising the number of affordable homes brought on-stream. The first year of the strategy was dedicated to developing a private rented sector 'incentive scheme'. The second year of the strategy will be focused on addressing specialist housing to meet the needs of our current and future residents.
- Empty Homes Policy developed to support BDC to address the number of empty homes will all ensure that housing opportunities for residents are optimised.
- Registered Provider and Private Rented Sector 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.
- Local Housing Allowance will be returning to the 30th percentile of local rents from April 2024.
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029 to be adopted in May 2024 which will prioritise through the action plan how BDC and partners work to prevent homelessness and break the cycle of rough sleeping

- Temporary Accommodation Review to establish what is required for the needs of households presenting as homeless and in priority need.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Partially effective

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (CR)

- Additional resources available via the Homelessness Prevention Grant top up of £192,531 for 2024-25 (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
- Approval being sought to recruit x1 Housing Options Officer (HOO) on a short-term contract to support the change of focus of x2 HOOs to Early Intervention
- Review of service to be undertaken – Fit for the Future
- ECC are committed to continuing conversations with BDC to explore how homeless individuals can best access a range of support services, recognising the planned end of the Peabody Housing Related Support Accommodation Based Support Contract, funded via the Public Health Grant, from April 2025.

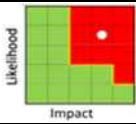
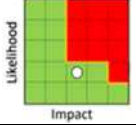

Risk 7. Return on Investments

The Council is not able to optimise its return on its financial or property investments or suffers financial loss.

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (SB)

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers

Corporate Priority: Fit for the Future

RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Cautious
Residual Risk Rating	Low	Significant		
Direction of Travel				
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
- 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

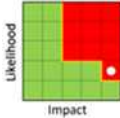
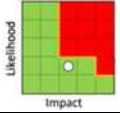

Additional Actions Required

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)

- Development of a new Asset Management Strategy and associated annual action plan.
- To continue to consider and develop options for Mayland House and other key assets.
- Continue to review major leases within the portfolio and consider future options/ scenarios.

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: Communities and Fit for the Future				
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				
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 2024
- Rest Centres plan – run an annual exercise
- Continue to deliver training programme
- Dialogue with partner organisations – including with Essex Resilience Forum on a collective approach to community resilience
- 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 – planned for July 2024.
- Expand Gold and Silver teams and pool of rest centre managers

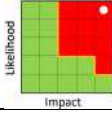
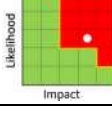

Risk 9: Information Management and Cyber Security

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

Risk Owner: Corporate Directors (CR and SB)

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers

Corporate Priorities: Effective management of information and cyber risks is essential to enable delivery of **all priorities**

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"> - 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. 				

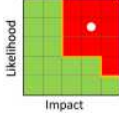
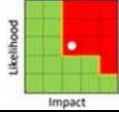

- Regular engagement with the National Cyber Security Centre and use of cyber protection tools and services.
- Regular meta-compliance checks for all employees and members.
- Controls in place around the use of technology to work virtually and collaboratively.
- Latest versions and security patches to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

Risk 10: Major Capital Programme				
Delays in delivery of the major Capital Programme projects will affect corporate priorities outlined in the annual and business plans, impacting scheduled timelines, leading to missed objectives and potentially hindering the overall success of strategic initiatives				
Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC) Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Kevin Bowers				
Corporate Priorities: Communities and Prosperity				
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 / Political:</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><u>Other:</u></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.
<p>Current Controls:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feasibility reserve: A dedicated reserve has been approved and ring fenced to ensure that feasibility studies are conducted thoroughly and with adequate resources, allowing for informed decision-making at each stage of project development - Cost/value advice from third party specialists: All investment opportunities undergo rigorous evaluation with the support of expert third-party specialists. Their insights and assessments contribute to the development of comprehensive business cases, ensuring that investment decisions are based on robust cost/value considerations. - Investment appraisal tools and HMT Green Book: Every investment opportunity is subjected to appraisal using sophisticated investment tools and adheres to the principles outlined in the HMT Green Book. This rigorous approach ensures that projects are assessed systematically, considering both financial and wider societal impacts. - Collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders: Strong working relationships with Essex County Council, the new Essex Local Enterprise Partnership, NHS and Homes England are cultivated to align major projects with strategic priorities. These partnerships facilitate project delivery and provide potential avenues for funding and support. - Comprehensive project engagement across relevant teams: Engagement across various BDC teams, including Asset Management, Finance, Legal, Operations, Planning and Procurement, ensures early involvement in scheme development. This collaborative approach guarantees that projects are aligned with objectives and are fit-for-purpose from inception. - Procurement of specialist consultants: Appropriate architects, cost and planning consultants are meticulously selected for each scheme to ensure that projects benefit from specialist expertise, fostering optimal design and delivery outcomes. - Business case development with external advice: Business cases are developed with specialist external advice, incorporating robust financial, strategic, and risk assessments to support informed decision making. - Robust programme assurance processes: Extensive programme assurance processes are in place to monitor project progress, mitigate risks, and ensure compliance with established standards. Management information and reporting outputs provide stakeholders with transparent insights into project performance. All processes are being reviewed and supplemented through the new Project Management Office. - Emphasis on project documentation and techniques: A strong emphasis is placed on comprehensive project documentation, supported by the implementation of industry-leading tools and techniques to enhance project management effectiveness and efficiency - Budget monitoring in partnership with Finance: Highly developed budget monitoring processes are implemented in close partnership with the Finance department to ensure financial accountability, transparency, and effective resource allocation throughout the project lifecycle. - Effective contract management: Rigorous contract management processes are established to oversee the execution of contracts, safeguarding project objectives, and ensuring adherence to contractual obligations and performance standards 	
<p>EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Effective</p>	
<p>Additional Actions Required</p>	
<p>Corporate Director (DC)</p>	
<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.

-	- Consistent modelling to agreed financial parameters is in place	- 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	
	- Implementation of timely, high-quality marketing strategies for all development projects is in place	- Early engagement with Planning Team and judicious use of the pre-application process is in place	
	- Increase organisational "maturity" and embed rigorous and consistently applied project and programme processes and reporting is in place	- Regular review of approved parameters and hurdle rates is in place	
-	- Weighted NPV measure to reflect non-financial priorities is in place	- Independent evaluation of business case is in place	

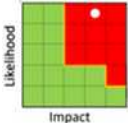
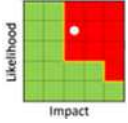
Risk 11. Climate Change

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.

Risk Owner: Cherie Root

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Tom Cunningham

Corporate Priorities: Environment

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)

‘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.

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.

The Council has declared a “Climate Emergency” with an aim to make Braintree District Council activities, as far as practical, carbon neutral by 2030.

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.

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.

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.

Key Identified Triggers:-

- Increase in mean temperature
- Decrease in air quality
- Depletion of key resources including water
- Severe weather event(s) including drought, floods and gales.

Risk Consequence(s)

Failure to maintain/deliver services and an increased cost of delivering services

Increased financial costs for Council (due to insurance excesses/ pressures on service delivery)

Future Capital investment needed in alternative fuel infrastructure and vehicles

Reduction in resilience of the organisation

Reputation of Council damaged through failure to deliver services.

Failure to give local community leadership in preparing for climate change.

- Failure to deliver 2030 carbon neutral target

Current Controls:

- 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.

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.

Progress to Date

- 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

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: partially effective

Additional Actions Required

- 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

Risk 12. Landscape Services

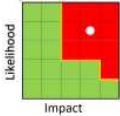
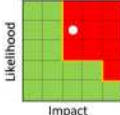
Tree related risks are rising as a result of more building, a growing population, and increasing impacts of weather events. The Council, as a tree owner, has a legal duty of care to take reasonable management measures to avoid reasonably foreseeable injury or harm to life and property. Staff capacity to manage the risk is limited.

This risk is linked to Risk 11 (Climate Change) as trees make a significant contribution to climate change resilience.

Risk Owner: Corporate Director (DC)

Cabinet Member Owner: Cllr Spray

Link to Corporate Priorities: Environment and Fit for the Future

RISK SCORE	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Risk Appetite
Inherent Risk Rating	High	Critical		Averse
Residual Risk Rating	High	Significant		

Direction of Travel N/A - New Risk (January 2024)

Risk Cause(s)

The Council's tree stock is considerable (approx. 11,838). Due to climate change, wetter winter months and longer periods of drought during summer months, there is greater potential for tree failure across the year.

There have been several storm events over the last two years, Storm Eunice (Feb 22), Storm Ciarán (Nov 23), and most recently Storm Henk (Jan 24). The risk of further storm events increases the risk of tree failure (physical breakage).

Ongoing staff shortages within the Landscape Services team, due to a difficult and competitive employment market, means limited proactive surveys have been conducted of tree stocks on land owned by the Council, whilst reactive work has been prioritised. Interim Arboricultural Officers have been appointed on temporary contracts to support the critical business functions of the team, whilst permanent replacements are being sought.

Focus is required on ensuring that the Council's tree management data and systems are up to date in order to track surveys undertaken, the felling of trees and planting of new trees.

Risk Consequence(s)

Risks to persons or property:

The HSE reports that UK deaths from falling trees or branches is relatively low, (approximately 6 per year), however substantial fines may be imposed where deaths and injury are foreseeable. Recent storms have resulted in tree damage to property in the Braintree District. Proactive inspection protocols (zoned according to assessed risk) are necessary to comply with legislative duties and to mitigate risk and impact on persons and property and resultant fines. Consultation as part of the response to planning applications will reduce the likelihood of future impacts on residents.

Insurance Liability and Premium:

The Council is experiencing an increase in insurance claims associated with trees and vegetation, impacting affected residents and the Council. Reduction of claim likelihood and ability to defend claims relies on tree risk management activity.

The Council's Liability insurer has imposed an increase in premium as a direct result of the increase in claims and a requirement to evidence that adequate surveying and management regimes are in place.

Other:

Further financial, legal, and reputational impacts arise from tree related incidents.

Current Controls:

- Interim qualified, experienced and knowledgeable Arboricultural Officers appointed which have improved the response to customers and insurance claims.
- Interim resource used to undertake as much surveying of Council tree stock as possible, and to promptly action required works identified.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS: Partially Effective (given current interim resource)

Additional Actions Required

Corporate Director (DC)

- Complete the Landscape Services restructure and recruit to vacant posts through additional resources confirmed in 2024/25 budget. Structure to reflect resource required for appropriate system of ongoing proactive inspection and response, and contribution to Planning consultation.
- Adoption of formal tree management policy encompassing risk profiling and zoning to guide proactive inspection protocols and assess the impact and likelihood of failure.
- Finalise a new procurement framework to support the speedy and efficient procurement of specialist tree related contractors, to undertake tree surveying work, and to undertake works to trees.
- Identify system requirements for maintenance of tree records and undertake a review of the Council's tree management software (ARBORtrack) to assess whether it is fit for purpose / review other available systems. Ensure data capture is accurate, so database can be used as evidence for the Council's Insurance team.
- Develop network of and engagement with volunteer District Tree Wardens to enhance local knowledge of arising issues.
- Continue work as part of the Council's Climate Change activity to ensure a coordinated response to tree planting and management, and in the assessment of tree value.

Report Title: Proposal for a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Recommendation
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/19
Report Presented by: Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
Enquiries to: Jessica Mann, Scrutiny Officer Jessica.mann@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider the report of the Member Working Group and the proposal to develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet agree that the Council does not develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/2028.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 On 8th April 2024, the Member Working Group (the Group) met on a one-off occasion to consider the Motion that was approved at Full Council on 11th December 2023 to develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28. The Group were asked to examine the concept with particular, but not exclusive, reference to the following issues (Terms of Reference):-

1. The likely level of officer and financial resources needed by the Authority to prepare and execute such a plan;
2. The linkage and overlap with the Corporate Strategy, the MTFs, the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, and existing Community Grant schemes;
3. The way and extent to which local communities could be involved in developing such a plan, recognising the diverse nature of the District;
4. The way in which partner organisations responsible for issues such as Health, Social Care, Community Safety, the Environment, Transport and Sustainability should be involved;
5. How “fairly” should be determined, for example geographically, by reference to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, or by Community Groups.’

- 3.2 A detailed report of the discussions of the Working Group, including the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Working Group, is provided at Appendix 1. A brief summary of the main discussion points is provided below.
- 3.3 During the meeting of the Working Group, Members were asked to assess the level of need for a Community Delivery Plan (the Plan) and whether such a Plan would provide added value for the Council and wider District. It was highlighted that the development of such a Plan would not focus on the addition of specific 'community' projects, but rather it would encompass the wider, overarching needs of the District.
- 3.4 Members sought to define a 'Community Delivery Plan' and determine where such a Plan would sit within the organisation in the context of the Corporate Strategy and Annual Plan. It was agreed a Plan would need to be reflective of local views and would as such require significant engagement with residents and relevant community groups from across the District.
- 3.5 In terms of engagement, Officers explained that there was ample opportunity for residents to feed into the development of the Corporate Strategy, as exemplified by the Council's consultation with residents, Parish Councils, business partners etc through various outlets such as social media, promotional events and newsletters. It was noted that the Council also utilised national data and statistical information from its partners to help inform specific aspects of the Corporate Strategy. Furthermore, consultation exercises only represented one element in the development of the Corporate Strategy and subsequent Annual Plan, a process which was already hugely resource intensive on the Council and officers.
- 3.6 Members acknowledged that there was a myriad of engagement activities already undertaken by the Council through forums such as the Community Safety Partnership, consultation around the Annual Plan and Corporate Strategy and in the development of Neighbourhood Plans and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. However, it was felt that communication between the Council, housing associations and Parish and Town Councils sometimes lacked coordination, and that some local communities did not receive as much engagement as others as a result. Nonetheless, it was felt that an additional layer of structure to the Council's current reporting mechanisms through a Community Delivery Plan would duplicate the work already being undertaken across the Council (e.g. as part of the Corporate Strategy, Community Safety Partnership, etc) and require further use of Council resources where there was already limited capacity. Instead, Members concluded that an improvement exercise in respect of the Council's current communication methods with communities, especially around the Corporate Strategy and ensuring there was buy-in, would be a more prudent approach towards addressing the issue.

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

- Communities – our communities can thrive

4. Conclusion

4.1 The recommendation of the Member Working Group is that the Cabinet does not agree to proceed with the development of a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28. This is due to the likely resource and financial implications for the Council, and in acknowledgement that there is much engagement activity with communities already undertaken by the Council through its existing channels and structures.

4.2 The Member Working Group suggests that there is opportunity to improve the communication messages and engagement with communities through its existing channels and structures, particularly around the new Corporate Strategy, and ensuring there is buy-in.

5. Options

5.1 An alternative option for the Cabinet would be to agree to proceed with the development of a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28. However, it should be noted that this would likely generate additional resource and financial implications for the Authority, as well as duplicate much of the engagement work already undertaken through the current structures of the Council, such as the Corporate Strategy, Annual Plan, MTFs and Community Safety Partnership.

6. Next Steps

6.1 The Cabinet will either agree to proceed with the development of a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28 or not to proceed.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However, should the Cabinet agree to proceed with the development of a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28, there will be additional costs to the Council.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications arising from 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 Appendix 1 – Report of the Member Working Group – 8th April 2024.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 [Full Council – 11th December 2023 – Agenda, Report and Minutes](#)
- 11.2 [Cabinet – 22nd January 2024 – Agenda, Report and Minutes](#)
- 11.3 Introduction to service areas from Lead Officers

'To consider the proposal to develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28'
Report of the Member Working Group – 8th April 2024

1. Motion

- 1.1. On 11th December 2023, a Motion to examine the viability of a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28 was considered and subsequently approved by Full Council. The full Motion is set out below:

'Following the engagement process and publication of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2028, and aligning with the MTFS 2024-28, the Council will consider developing a Community Delivery Plan for 2025 – 2028.

This Plan could facilitate the delivery of specific local projects and improvements to benefit residents and communities fairly across the whole of Braintree District.

In order to establish whether such a plan would provide added value Council requests the Cabinet to set up an all-party Member Working Group to examine the concept with particular, but not exclusive, reference to the following issues:-

- 1) The likely level of officer and financial resources needed by the Authority to prepare and execute such a plan;*
- 2) The linkage with the Corporate Strategy, the MTFS, the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, and existing Community Grant schemes;*
- 3) The way and extent to which local communities could be involved in developing such a plan, recognising the diverse nature of the District;*
- 4) The way in which partner organisations responsible for issues such as Health, Social Care, Community Safety, the Environment, Transport and Sustainability should be involved;*
- 5) How "fairly" should be determined, for example geographically, by reference to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, or by Community Groups.'*

2. Terms of Reference and Membership

- 2.1 At its meeting on 22nd January 2024, Cabinet established the Working Group and approved the Terms of Reference, as set out below:-
- a. The Working Group will consider the proposal to develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025-2028.

b. To fully consider whether a Community Delivery Plan would provide added value, the Working Group will consider, although not limited to, the following areas:

- i. The likely level of officer and financial resources needed by the Authority to prepare and execute such a plan;
- ii. The linkage with the Corporate Strategy, the MTFs, the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, and existing Community Grant schemes;
- iii. The way and extent to which local communities could be involved in developing such a plan, recognising the diverse nature of the District;
- iv. The way in which partner organisations responsible for issues such as Health, Social Care, Community Safety, the Environment, Transport and Sustainability should be involved;
- v. How “fairly” should be determined, for example geographically, by reference to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, or by Community Groups.

2.2 Membership of the Working Group consisted of Councillors J Beavis, J Edwards, M Fincken, D Holland, J Pell, G Prime and R van Dulken. It was agreed that a Member of the Administration would Chair the Working Group; Councillor R van Dulken was therefore appointed as Chairman.

2.3 To support the Working Group in their consideration of this matter, the following officers were also identified from the Terms of Reference and were in attendance at the meeting: C Elias-Stephenson, Head of Housing and Communities; T Headford, People and Performance Manager; A Massow, Principal Planning Policy Officer; P Myers, Head of Finance and T Parry, Community Services Manager. K Mayo, Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer, and J Mann, Scrutiny Officer, were also in attendance at the meeting to help manage the proceedings.

3. Summary of Issues

3.1 On 8th April 2024, the Member Working Group (the Group) met on a one-off, informal occasion to consider the Motion that was approved at Full Council on 11th December 2023 to develop a Community Delivery Plan for 2025/28.

3.2 To assist with informing Members’ discussions, the officers in attendance provided a brief introduction into the key service areas of the Council referred to in the Terms of Reference and how these services might link in with a Community Delivery Plan (the Plan), should such a Plan be developed (see Appendix 2).

3.3 During their considerations, Members addressed each of the points within the Terms of Reference in turn and sought advice and clarification from

officers, as set out below. The final conclusions of the Working Group in respect of the potential development of a Community Delivery Plan are set out in paragraph 4.

3.4 “The likely level of officer and financial resources needed by the Authority to prepare and execute such a plan:”

- 3.4.1 Members agreed that any such Plan, if developed, would likely sit between the Annual Plan and the Corporate Strategy. It was difficult to envision what such a Plan would look like, and what else it would offer for the District, as most of the engagement activities undertaken by the Council with communities in respect of future plans and projects was already captured within the Corporate Strategy and Annual Plan. It was also noted that the Corporate Strategy was a key factor in the allocation of the Council’s resources.
- 3.4.2 Members questioned whether there was a need for an additional ‘layer of bureaucracy’ in the form a Community Delivery Plan alongside the Corporate Strategy and Annual Plan, particularly as this could duplicate the work already being undertaken and place further impacts on the Council’s limited resource and financial capacity.
- 3.4.3 Members agreed that the Plan would need to cut across the Council’s various services. This would require additional resources to be pooled, including substantial officer engagement, to pull aspects of the Plan into fruition, such as the drafting of the Plan and inserting the necessary governance arrangements. The Plan would then need to be implemented, monitored and reported against over a four-year period alongside the current overarching strategies that are already in situ, such as the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The development of a Plan would place notable time and resource implications on the MTFS, which already encompassed much of the Council’s investment projects for the District.
- 3.4.5 Officers acknowledged there were some issues around communicating with ‘harder to reach’ groups across the District, such as with the more rural localities. The Council would never be able to capture the views of every single group during consultation exercises, although its performance in this respect could be reviewed and improved. In this respect, the development of a Community Delivery Plan was not necessarily the correct approach, as it was considered more beneficial to examine the existing structures of the Council, rather than introduce new ones.
- 3.4.6 In respect of consultation exercises, it was noted that residents tended to express more interest in the activities taking place in their localities and become involved at community levels. In contrast, consultation exercises around the strategic plans of the Council were very high level. Engagement pieces represented only one element of a strategy’s development, which was resource intensive and required much preparation before wider engagement could begin.

3.4.7 Strengthening the structures already in place within the Council was essential in terms of improving how the organisation engaged with residents, community groups and partners to ensure that current feedback mechanisms were robust, and that resources could be allocated appropriately. Any such exercises in respect of performance improvement could also be featured within the Annual Plan.

3.5 **'The linkage with the Corporate Strategy, the MTFS, the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, and existing Community Grant schemes:'**

3.5.1 The possibility of reinstating 'Area Planning Committees' was raised, although there was an accompanying cost attached with this. Historically, 'Village Cluster' meetings with Parishes used to take place on the subject of new developments, along with local Strategic Partnership meetings. There was nothing to prevent Parish Councils from arranging their own, unofficial 'Village Cluster' meetings if they felt these would be beneficial for their communities.

3.5.2 Reference was made to the 'Livewell' and 'Green Heart' campaigns and the benefits these had brought for the District. In contrast, the Corporate Strategy did not appear to receive the same level of promotion, leading to a lack of understanding amongst residents as to the activities of the Council. The possibility of reinstating 'Area Committees' was raised, although there was an accompanying cost attached. Historic 'Area Planning Committees' were funded by the Council.

3.5.3 Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans

The Local Plan was considered to be a more strategic, corporate document, whereas Neighbourhood Plans regarded communities at town or parish levels, forming 'mini plans' for a specific local area. The formation of Neighbourhood Plans revolved around local canvassing, workshops and questionnaire exercises undertaken with communities, and they tended to be well received and popular amongst residents. 'Neighbourhood Forums' would be more applicable to town areas, providing there was a defined area.

3.5.4 A Public Open Spaces Improvement (POSI) document related to areas which attracted development. POSI documents were more beneficial to larger parishes with a longer list of projects. Such plans revolved around setting policies for local areas.

3.5.5 It was noted that residents cared about results and which political decisions and local projects were going to affect them. The financial resource required for the development of a Community Delivery Plan could potentially impact the delivery of local projects across the District.

3.5.6 There was not a need for all residents to be aware of every activity of the Council, nor would they be relevant to everyone, but an educational piece on the collective work of the Council's services was one method through which activities from 'behind the scenes' (e.g. such as Safer Streets, Open Spaces

and Neighbourhood Plans) could be conveyed to wider communities within the District. The communication messages of the Council could also be strengthened for when there are specific engagements underway.

3.6 ‘The way and extent to which local communities could be involved in developing such a plan, recognising the diverse nature of the District:’

3.6.1 It was suggested that more could be done by the District Council to support improvements in respect of coordination with outside bodies such as the Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC).

3.6.2 It was felt by some Members that there was disparity in terms of engagement between rural and urban areas of the District, and this needed to be addressed. However, this did not require the addition of another level of structure in respect of the Council’s decision-making processes, nor did Members feel there was an argument for new layers of consultation, which would only serve to duplicate the work already present at Corporate Strategy level, slowing processes down and generating further costs.

3.7 ‘The way in which partner organisations responsible for issues such as Health, Social Care, Community Safety, the Environment, Transport and Sustainability should be involved:’

3.7.1 The Council was limited in terms of its powers to enforce action from its partner organisations (e.g. as seen in the development of the health centre at Sible Hedingham). To address such issues, a recommendation would need to be brought before the Cabinet and implemented at the level of the Annual Plan, which would add another level of “structure” to the process.

3.7.2 It was explained that in order to meet the wider needs of the District, the Council would need to adapt its service delivery. A range of different methods had been trialled by the Council previously to support local organisations and communities by enabling them to deliver new schemes and smaller-scale projects themselves (e.g. through a range of grants, such as health and wellbeing).

3.7.3 Engagement with the wider District needed to be considered at a deeper level than consultation exercises.

3.7.4 Community Safety Partnership (CSP)

There was much engagement undertaken with partners as part of the CSP, which included community and voluntary sectors across the District (e.g. rural engagement team within the Police, domestic abuse charities, drug and alcohol support, etc). The CSP also included a forum to help combat social isolation and loneliness.

Much of the delivery of the partnership-working through the CSP was undertaken within the communities by the partners themselves. Community development was asset based; the Council provided support in order to help build more resilience into communities (e.g. the Councillor Community Grants Scheme had brought lots of benefits to communities throughout the District).

It was noted that deprivation was present in every community across the District, and much work was undertaken through the CSP to help address this; for example, through the funding of foodbanks. A sum of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was also distributed to approximately 15 parishes to set-up community gardens.

3.7.5 Members agreed that examining how the Council engaged with its partners was essential going forward in terms of supporting communities in a sustainable way.

3.8 **‘How “fairly” should be determined, for example geographically, by reference to the Index of Multiple Deprivation, or by Community Groups:’**

3.8.1 Members noted that the historic Parish Support Grants helped to support villages to develop new facilities and/or improvements to existing facilities. It was recognised that the perception of residents was essential in terms of the Council acknowledging and responding to their needs. However, the resources and spending powers of the Council were limited.

3.8.2 In terms of improving engagement, it was incumbent on Councillors to communicate effectively with residents within their own Wards about the activities of the Council.

3.8.3 When referencing “fairly” and “deprivation,” it was important to note that rural areas were not necessarily the most deprived within the District in terms of income, employment levels, health, education levels, life expectancy, etc. In fact, urban areas within towns were often found to be the most “deprived” in this respect.

4. Final Considerations of the Member Working Group

4.1 Members did not wish to advocate for another ‘layer’ to the current structure of the organisation through the introduction of a Community Delivery Plan, as this would duplicate the work that is already being undertaken by the Council.

4.2 It was inferred that improvements could be made in terms of the methods through which the Council communicated and consulted with communities across the District, especially on matters such as the Corporate Strategy. However, any such improvements in respect of its performance in this area could be implemented without the addition of a Community Delivery Plan.

4.3 In conclusion, the Working Group suggests that there is opportunity to improve the communication messages and engagement with communities through its existing channels and structures, particularly around the new Corporate Strategy, and ensuring there is buy-in.

5. Acknowledgements

The Member Working Group wishes to offer their thanks to the Lead Officers for their attendance at the meeting in support of Members' discussions, and for the information that was provided in advance to help inform the conclusions of the Working Group (see Appendix 2).

Report Title: Hackney Carriage Fare Increase	
Report to: Cabinet	
Date: 1 st July 2024	For: Decision
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2024/22
Report Presented by: Councillor Mary Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities	
Enquiries to: John Meddings (Principal Licensing Officer) john.meddings@braintree.gov.uk 01376 557790	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider a request made by the Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association received by Braintree District Council (the Council) as the Licensing Authority under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 (LG(MP)76) to amend the table of fares by:
- a) The initial hiring distance (before incremental increases) reduced from 0.4 mile to 0.3 mile (528 yards).
 - b) Base rate 1 incremental distance to be increased (after initial hire, above) from 95 yards to 176 yards and increase the incremental charge from 10p to 20p. This will give a per mile increase from £1.85 to £2.00 per mile.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree the request from the Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association for an increase in the Council's Hackney Carriage Table of Fares to come in effect on 1st August 2024
- 2.2 To commence the statutory public consultation in accordance with Section 65 of the LG(MP)76.
- 2.3. To Delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, in consultation with the Corporate Director (Operational) and Chairman of the Licensing Committee:
- a) Consider any representation received during the 14-day consultation period and to determine whether the increase comes into effect with or without modification; and
 - b) In the event of represents being made, to agree a revised implementation date for the new fares, if necessary, such date shall not be later than 2 months after the first effective date.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Under Section 65 of the LG(MP)A76 the Council may fix the rates or fares within a District for time as well as distance and all other charges in connection with the hire of a vehicle or arrangement of the vehicle, to be paid in accordance with the fare card.
- 3.2 Historically it was agreed that a review of the fares charged for travelling in licensed Hackney Carriages should take place annually by the Taxi Association. Should they wish for an increase, this would then be submitted for consideration by the Council. The Annual review was to avoid a request for a high increase after several years. The last request fare increase was implemented on 1st April 2023.
- 3.3. The request for a fare increase has been submitted by Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association (“The Association”). Details of the proposed increase have been prepared by the Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association and are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 The proposed requested increases to Tariff one (starting rate) are as follows:
- a) The initial hiring distance (before incremental increases) reduced from 0.4 mile to 0.3 mile. The monetary amount will remain the same, £3.90.
 - b) Base rate 1 incremental increase (after initial hire, above) from 95 yards to 176 yards and increase the incremental charge from 10p to 20p. This will give a per mile increase from £1.85 to £2.00 per mile.
- 3.5 The Association has submitted the request on the basis that they consider the increase necessary due to the continuing rise in costs associated with providing a Hackney Carriage service to the traveling public.
- 3.6 The Hackney Carriage fares of other Essex and neighbouring Authorities have been provided as a comparison and are set out in table 1 below. However, the data is several months out of date at the time of preparing this report and some Councils may be considering increasing fares or have already done so.

Table 1 Comparison of fares by Essex and neighbouring authorities

LOCAL AUTHORITY	2 MILE FARE
Basildon**	£7.20
Braintree**	£6.90
Brentwood***	£8.10
Castle Point*	£7.20
Chelmsford***	£7.70
Colchester***	£6.90
Epping Forest*	£7.50
Harlow***	£7.20

Rochford***	£6.60
Southend on Sea*	£7.80
Thurrock***	£6.00
Tendring***	£6.80
Uttlesford****	£8.30
Babergh**	£7.00
West Suffolk*	£7.60
East Cambridgeshire***	£6.80

(Last amended: *2024 **2023 *** 2022 **** 2021 and earlier)

- 3.7 If the proposed increase is agreed the cost of a two-mile journey would increase from £6.90 to £7.30.
- 3.8 In June 2023 the Council carried out an Unmet Demand Survey in relation to the quantity restrictions on the number of Hackney Carriage licensed by the Council. During that survey several observations were received regarding the Hackney Carriage Fares. The Survey report stated that the growth in taxi fares cost since 2016 has been less than the underlying inflation. This may have an influence on the attractiveness of the trade, to new drivers. It was recommended that this factor is given consideration when taxi fares are next reviewed.
- 3.9 The level of hackney carriage fares has reduced in real terms since 2016 and have not kept pace with fares in other licensing areas.
- 3.10 One of the recommendations of the Survey report was that a fares review be conducted at the earliest opportunity and if hackney carriage fares were increased, this would enhance interest in joining the hackney carriage trade and accelerate the increase in availability of Hackney Carriages to the public.
- 3.11 A common concern associated with increasing fares is that the demand in the use of Hackney Carriages would fall. The level of consumer price inflation and income growth since 2016 have both been higher than the increase in hackney carriage fares since 2016. Consequently, fares are currently more affordable now than they were in 2016. An increase in fares is likely to have less of an impact on demand than if fares had kept pace with inflation.
- 3.12 If Cabinet agrees to approve the request, before the fares come into effect, the Council must carry out a statutory public consultation in accordance with Section 65 of LG(MP)76.
- 3.13 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:

Prosperity

- Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure.
- Attract and support business growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries

4. Options

- 4.1 The Council's power to set fares for Hackney Carriages is discretionary under Section 65 of the LG(MP)A76; therefore, the Council may decide to either to approve or decline the request to increase the Fares as requested.
- 4.2 If the request for the revision of the table of fares is not approved the current table of fares (April 2023) will remain in place. Hackney Carriages licensed by the Council will be unable to charge more than stipulated on the table of fares. This would have an impact on the costs being incurred by the Hackney Carriages as running costs continue to increase.
- 4.3 If the request for the revision of the table of fares is approved a public consultation will commence as detailed in the following paragraphs.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Should the proposed new fare structure be approved, the Licensing Team will commence the statutory consultation period, which will last for a period of not less than 14 days. The Council is required to publish a notice in at least one local newspaper and at the Council offices. The Notice must specify the date by which representations to be lodged and the date on which the new fares will come into effect if no representations are received or received and withdrawn before the specified date.
- 5.2 In the event that representations are received and not withdrawn, those representation must be considered when making the final decision on whether to bring in the new fares.
- 5.3 Should the Council be in a position that it needs to set a second date for the fare to come into effect, which must be within two months of the first date as required by the LG(MP)76.
- 5.4 To provide flexibility for the decision-making process for this statutory process, it is recommended that the consideration of the representation and the determination of whether the increase comes into effect with or without modification to be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities as the portfolio holder for Licensing, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee and Corporate Director, Operational.
- 5.5 It is not until the consultation period expires that the new fare cards can be prepared and issued to the trade with an implementation date and instructions to have their meter chip replaced.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are financial implications for the Council associated with the increase of fare. The cost of the governance process, statutory advertising and fare card preparation would be met by the fees charged to administer the licensing function for Hackney Carriages.

- 6.2 There are financial implications for the users of Hackney Carriages. By increasing the fare tariff increases the costs of the fare paid by the users.
- 6.3 The Fare Card for Hackney Carriages was last reviewed in 2023, but The Hackney Carriage Association has cited the increase in the costs of providing the service to the travelling public. Increasing the fare tariff, increases the income to meet the costs associated with operating Hackney Carriages. Should the increase not be agreed, Hackney Carriage Proprietors will continue with the current fare tariff which may impact upon their income and the viability of providing Hackney Carriages moving forward.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Under Section 65 of the LG(MP)A76 The Council may fix rates or fares within a District for time as well as distance and all other charges in connection with the hire of a vehicle or arrangement of the vehicle, to be paid in accordance with the fare card.
- 7.2 When setting fares imperial measurements must be used, but it is also permissible to have metric equivalent shown.
- 7.3 The request for the fare increase has been made Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association. The Proprietors who are not members of the Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association, will be able to make representation during the public consultation period. The Council is required to consider all representations in determining whether the increase comes into effect with or without modification.
- 7.4 In accordance with the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 there is no right of appeal against the fares once set. The only remedy would be by way of Judicial Review.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 This licensing function is a matter for Cabinet, however, as connected to the licensing functions reserved to the Licensing Committee, the Chairman of the Licensing Committee has been invited to provide his comments on the proposed.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act.
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1. Appendix 1 Schedule setting out the fare Increase prepared by the Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 Request by Braintree District Hackney Carriage Association for fare increase dated 26th June 2024
- 11.2 [Report](#) and [Minutes](#) – Licensing Committee 25th January 2024 - Hackney Carriage proprietors' licences – Quantity Restrictions

BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL – FARES FOR DISTANCE

PROPOSED 5.72% rise (in 20ps)**[1] MILEAGE TARIFF 1**

If the distance does not exceed 482.8 metres (528 yard or 0.3 mile) for whole distance.....£3.90

If the distance exceeds 482.8 meters, for the first 482.8 meters (528 yards or 0.3 mile)...£3.90

For each subsequent 160.93 meters (176 yards) or uncompleted part thereof.....£0.20

[2] WAITING TIME

For each period of 1 minute or uncomplete part thereof.....£0.40

[3] EXTRA CHARGES

- a) **MILEAGE TARIFF 2** for hiring's between the hours of 11.00pm and 6am or for any commenced on a Sunday for a public holiday (excluding those stated at (b) below) a charge equivalent of 50% extra (i.e one and a half times) the tariff 1 fare will be charged
- b) **MILEAGE TARIFF 2(i)** for hiring's between 6pm and 11pm on CHRISTMAS EVE (24th December) and NEW YEARS EVE (31ST December)
- c) **MILEAGE TARIFF 3(ii)** for hiring's between 11pm on CHRISTMAS EVE & NEW YEARS EVE and 6am on the day succeeding BOXING DAY (27th December) & NEW YEARS DAY (2nd January) – a charge equivalent to 100% extra (i.e double) of the tariff 1 charged.
- d) **SOILING FEE** £30 per occasion vehicle is soiled and is required to be withdrawn from service for valeting.
- e) **CARRIAGE OF 5 PERSONS OR MORE** – vehicles licenced to carry 5 or more passengers may charge Tariff 2 for journeys **only** when 5 or more persons are travelling and Tariff 3 for journeys **only** when 5 or more persons are travelling between the hours of 11.00pm and 6am or for a journey commenced on a Sunday or a public holiday. Tariff 1 applies when 4 or less passengers travel

NOTE: These are the maximum fares allowed. Passengers may negotiate a lesser fare at the discretion of the owner/driver. Hiring covering two tariff periods may be charged proportionately according to time or distance in each tariff period.

Passenger complaints with respect to the Hackney Carriage and/or its Driver should be made, in writing, to the licensing team, Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree, Essex CM7 9HB quoting the licence number displayed in the front window or on the rear and sides of the vehicle.