

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, 6th October 2021 at 7.15pm

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

**This meeting is open to the public - This meeting will be available to view via
the Council's webcast and YouTube channel**

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk>
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**Members of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee are requested
to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.**

Councillor J Coleridge	Councillor S Rehman
Councillor G Courtauld	Councillor B Rose
Councillor Mrs C Dervish	Councillor P Schwier (Vice Chairman)
Councillor T Everard	Councillor N Unsworth
Councillor M Radley (Chairman)	

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.

A WRIGHT
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

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

Public Question Time – Registration and Speaking:

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public wishing to participate are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk **by midday on the second working day** before the day of the Committee meeting. For example, if the Committee meeting is due to be held on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a bank holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday).

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

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be read within 3 minutes allotted for each question/statement.

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

Public Attendance at Meetings:

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

Public attendance is limited and will be on a first come first served basis with priority given to Public Registered Speakers. In order to maintain safe distances, the Council may have to refuse entry to members of the public. The public will not be able to sit in the Council Chamber, but will be permitted to observe the meeting from a public gallery through a large screen. Alternatively, the Council meetings are webcast and are available via the Council's YouTube Channel and can be viewed by the public as a live broadcast, or as a recording following the meeting.

Public speakers and public attendees are required to attend on their own, and where possible only one representative of any community group, family household or Company should attend.

Members of the public intending to come to Causeway House to observe a meeting are recommended to watch the meeting via the webcast, or to contact the Governance and Members Team to reserve a seat within the public gallery.

Health and Safety/COVID:

Causeway House is a Covid secure building and arrangements are in place to ensure that all visitors are kept safe. Visitors are requested to follow all instructions displayed at Causeway House or given by Officers during the course of their attendance. All visitors will be required to wear a mask or face covering, unless an exemption applies.

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

Documents:

Agendas, Reports, Minutes and Public Question Time questions and statements can be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

Data Processing:

For further information on how the Council processes data, please see the Council's Privacy Policy.

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

Mobile Phones:

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent during the meeting in order to prevent disturbances.

Webcast and Audio Recording:

Please note that this meeting will be webcast . You can view webcasts for up to 6 months after the meeting using this link: <http://braintree.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. The meeting will also be broadcast via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Comments and Suggestions:

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

1 Apologies for Absence**2 Declaration of Interests - Scrutiny Committee**

1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests 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.

2. To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee held on 14th July 2021 (copy previously circulated).

4 Public Question Time

(See paragraph above)

5 First Quarter Performance Report 2021/22**5 - 37****6 Scrutiny Review into Commercialisation - Third Evidence Gathering Session**

Members to receive a presentation from James Sinclair, Commercial Manager and Lead Officer for the Scrutiny Review. The presentation will provide an update for Members on the Council's Traded Services.

7 Decision Planner

To note the Decision Planner for the period 1st October 2021 to 31st December 2021.

8 Urgent Business - Public Session

To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Report Title: First Quarter Performance Report 2021/22	
Report to: Performance Management Scrutiny Committee	
Date: 6 th October 2021	For: To inform
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager	
Enquiries to: Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager. tracey.headford@braintree.gov.uk ext 2442	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Council provides a report to demonstrate the performance of Braintree District Council (the Council) at the end of the first quarter (April 2021 to June 2021). The performance report was presented to Cabinet on the 6th September 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The report is to inform the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee of the performance of the Council following its presentation and noting at Cabinet on the 6th September 2021.

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 In the first quarter and as we begin to emerge from lockdown, a number of projects that have previously been delayed, have been reviewed and brought back on track. As the existing Annual Plan has been extended until September 2021, this provided many projects with the time they needed to be able to focus on completing what they set out to achieve.
- 3.3 As at the end of the June 2021, thirteen projects are complete with 39 projects on track and progressing well. One project has an amber status due to delays incurred.
- 3.4 Targets have not been set for all our performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and will be reviewed over the coming months to see how we need to adjust targets for the future. For the targets that remain, six performance indicators have met or exceed target and seven performance indicators have missed their target. Two have missed target by less than 5% and five missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the kilograms of waste collected (<5%), the collection rate for Council Tax (<5%), recycling rates (>5%), average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%), average call answering time in

the Customer Service Centre (>5%), the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days (>5%) and the collection rate for Business rates (>5%).

- 3.5 The Finance section of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the year. It examines the latest forecast for spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget for the year. Also included is a summary of treasury management activities; projected movements on the General Fund balance; and a summary of spending to date on capital projects. An update is also provided on the financial impact arising from the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.6 The outturn financial position for the quarter is as follows:
- Taking into account the projected impact of Covid and variations to the base budget, the net budget position forecast for the year is a positive variance of £252,000.
 - The estimated budget impact of the pandemic in 2021/22 is £1.213m. This is expected to be partially offset by funding received from government leaving a net projected variance due to Covid of £278,000.
 - The forecast position regarding the base budget is a positive variance of £530,000.
 - After taking into account other planned movements in balances, the projected change in General Fund unallocated balances is a reduction of £384,000.
 - Expenditure of £5.53m on capital projects during the quarter, with spending mainly being incurred on: Horizon 120 business park infrastructure, now completed; the new Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre; I-Construct; Manor Street regeneration scheme; and the Halstead Leisure Centre artificial grass pitch.

4. Options

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

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 There are no next steps as a result of this report being presented to Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The report provides an update as to the financial position as at the end of the June 2021 covering the revenue and capital outturn for this period.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 There has been some impact due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the report will include detail of the Councils response. Information is included on how we

intend to support residents, communities and businesses moving forward. 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.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1 – First Quarter Performance Management Report 2021/22

11. Background Papers

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

FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1ST APRIL 2021 TO 30TH JUNE 2021

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Section 1: Introduction and Summary






Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the performance of the Council at the end of the first quarter and the end of the financial year in relation to the publication of the 'Annual Plan 2020/21' which has been extended until September 2021. This sets out the key activities and measures used to check our performance for the year and along with the Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 sets out the priorities we are working towards. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and health and safety.






This report does not contain details of the numerous activities ongoing in each service area that also contribute to delivering what is important and will make a difference to all in the District. Full details of all projects and performance indicators used to measure the outcomes are available upon request.

Summary of the Corporate Projects current position for the end of the first quarter

The following table provides updates for the end of the first quarter in relation to the key activities in the 'Annual Plan 2020/21'




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	1	9	0	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	4	5	0	0	0
Supporting our Communities	4	10	0	0	0
Promoting Prosperity	1	8	1	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	3	7	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	39	1	0	0

KEY:




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

Summary of the Performance Indicators position for the end of the first quarter

The following table shows the performance for the end of the first quarter in relation to the quarterly reported Performance Indicators that have targets set as defined in the 'Annual Plan 2020/21'.

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	2	0	0	1
Enhancing our Environment	1	1	1	1
Supporting our Communities	0	0	1	3
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	5
Delivering and Innovating	3	1	3	1
TOTAL	6	2	5	11

KEY:

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

Summary Position

In the first quarter and as we begin to emerge from lockdown, a number of projects that have previously been delayed, have been reviewed and brought back on track. As the existing Annual Plan has been extended until September 2021, this provided many projects with the time they needed to be able to focus on completing what they set out to achieve.

As at the end of the June 2021, thirteen projects are complete with 39 projects on track and progressing well. One projects has an amber status due to delays incurred.

Targets have not been set for all our performance indicators due to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and will be reviewed over the coming months to see how we need to adjust targets for the future. For the targets that remain, six performance indicators have met or exceed target and seven performance indicators have missed their target. Two have missed target by less than 5% and five missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the kilograms of waste collected (<5%), the collection rate for Council Tax (<5%), recycling rates (>5%), average waiting time for disabled facility grants (>5%), average call answering time in the Customer Service Centre (>5%), the percentage of invoices paid within 30 days (>5%) and the collection rate for Business rates (>5%).

Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy





CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES



Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
Develop the Braintree District Local Plan and provide a vision for the future growth of the district	
The hearings for Section two of Local Plan are due to be held in July after such time as the Inspectors will advise of the next steps and timetable. It is hoped that this will remain on track for approval around the end of the year	▶
Complete the pedestrianisation of Braintree Town Centre improving the attractiveness of the area and creating a safer and healthier environment	
A new contractor was appointed in April to resume the construction work and will be completed in phases. Works are progressing well with a main section of the paving work in the high street now completed with paving work moving into Great Square. The tarmac has also been laid in Market Place ready for the resin and paving.	▶
Progress construction of the Victoria Square development creating a vibrant hub for the Braintree Town centre	
Building work on the regeneration project continues to progress according to plan.	▶
Continue to work on the redevelopment of the entrance of Witham Town Park providing greater accessibility and improved public realm	
Contractors are now on site and working on the redevelopment of the entrance of Witham Town Park. The project is due to be completed in the second quarter.	▶
Enable to delivery of 150 affordable homes across the district	
A total of 220 affordable homes were delivered in 2020/21. In the first quarter of the 2021/22, a further 91 affordable homes have been delivered.	✓
Support our town centres to open for business safely and recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic	
Ongoing support is being provided to businesses in the town centres under our Safer Places working group. This includes the employment of covid ambassadors on the High Street and the provision of materials including stickers and posters funded from the reopening High Streets fund. Millions of pounds of grants have been provided to businesses on the High Streets and elsewhere. The shop local campaign is ongoing, alongside tourism messaging through the District tourism website and event planning is being undertaken with a view to relaunching street markets in August. Final confirmation on the award for Welcome Back funding is awaited from government which will trigger numerous town centre projects if approved.	▶

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
Invest in resource and connectivity to support business growth and expansion including the planning and delivery of highway schemes across the district	
<p>This is a long term action and there are a number of highway schemes planned across the district and Braintree District Council and Essex County Council meet regularly to discuss delivery of the schemes. The scheme to extend the A120 to the A12 is included in the Governments latest Road Investment Strategy as a pipeline project that will undergo further analysis and design work for consideration for potential future investment. The proposals for improving this stretch road were initially developed by Essex County Council. This project has now been passed over to Highways England who continue to carry out a validation exercise of all the work that has been done. Once completed, the validation will establish if further work needs to be done in order to progress the scheme. In respect of the A12 widening scheme between junction 19 and junction 25 to ease congestion and cope with increasing traffic demands, Highways England have launched a public consultation, virtual exhibition, webinars and public exhibitions in June 2021 running until the 16th August 2021 on the proposed improvements on this stretch of road and the likely significant environmental effects. The responses will help to shape the proposed improvements before Highways England submit the development consent order application intended for submission in the spring/summer of 2022. An infrastructure officer to lead our involvement in infrastructure projects is now in place</p>	
Continue to support and monitor Superfast Essex in the delivery of Superfast Broadband across the district	
<p>Braintree district is currently at 95% of premises able to access superfast broadband. The district is forecasted to reach 99% coverage within 3 years. The district wide take up of superfast broadband is currently at 30%. Residents can continue to check the work happening in their area by viewing interactive maps now available on the Superfast Essex website (superfastessex.org).</p>	
Continue to support NHS England to improve health facilities across the district	
<p>The Council has been working with Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and Hedingham Medical Centre to evaluate bids following a tender process to bring forward a new health care facility in Sible Hedingham. New River Retail are in direct discussions with the NHS and Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group regarding health facilities in Witham and New River Retail are waiting to receive a commitment from the NHS before submitting their planning application.</p>	
Support our residents and businesses to develop the skills needed to support the economy	
<p>We continue to signpost enquiries to the schemes that have been set up to support skills development including support to Essex County Council on schemes including Kickstart, apprenticeships and virtual job fairs. A details programme of support for skills and business support is being worked on and will be implemented over the summer</p>	



ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT



Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
Carry out improvements to our recreational open spaces including the provision of all-inclusive play facilities for young people to enjoy	
Improvements works are now complete in all four play areas: Albert Moss Recreational Gardens in Rivenhall, Braintree and Bocking public gardens in Braintree, Notley Community Hall play area in Notley Green and Bramble Road in Witham.	✓
Investigate the provision of an eco-friendly woodland alternative to traditional burials at Braintree Cemetery in London Road	
A feasibility study has been carried out which concluded that an eco-friendly woodland alternative to traditional burials is not suitable at Braintree Cemetery. However, the feasibility study has identified that there is additional capacity at the cemetery for traditional burials subject to drainage works being carried out.	✓
Create gardens of remembrance at some of our cemeteries providing peaceful environments for families to visit	
This project has now been resurrected. The tender for the works required has been awarded and a project meeting has been set up with the contractor.	▶
Protect further areas of public open space against unauthorised encampments	
Works are now completed in all four areas identified to install protection measures against unauthorised encampments	✓
Respond to requirements from the Environment Bill in relation to waste and resources efficiency whilst supporting our climate change objectives	
The Council has provided responses to the government consultations around Extended Producer Responsibility, Deposit Return Scheme, Environmental Principles Draft Policy Statement and a Waste Prevention Programme. A further consultation on Consistency of Collection of Household Waste will be responded to by the 4 th July.	▶
Research and trial alternative fuel vehicles for some of our front line services	
Quotations are being received from UK power networks for the green infrastructure required to support electric vehicles. Further research on electric vehicles will be undertaken as part of the waste management review happening later this year.	▶
Raise awareness of duty of care and fines in relation to litter and waste offences through targeted campaigns	
The Council has continued to raise awareness through targeted campaigns on our social media channels regarding litter as people start to spend more time outside.	✓

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
Trial anti-littering signage along some of our strategic routes across the district to discourage roadside littering.	
<p>The 12 month trial that commenced in November 2020 continues and we are now more than halfway through the trial and on target to carry out evaluation at the end of the year. Working in partnership with Essex County Council as the Highways Authority, the signs are being trialled in five locations and monitored by litter-picks, to see if they deter people from littering.</p>	
<p>Review and update the Climate Change Local Strategy for the next four years focusing on the areas below to support the delivery of our 2030 targets through the Climate Change Working Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resources - Energy Use - Planning and Development - Transport - Council Assets and Operations - Natural Environment - Adapting to climate change 	
<p>The draft Climate Change Strategy and draft Cycling Strategy were approved at Full Council in March 2021. Both strategies went out to public consultation in May 2021 for an eight week period closing on the 4th July 2021.</p>	

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES











Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
Improve the sport facilities at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre, creating high quality amenities for the community to use	
The refurbishments to the athletics track at Braintree Sports and Leisure Centre are now completed. With regards to replacing the 3G surface, we are awaiting the written agreement from Tabor Academy regarding their contribution towards the costs.	▶
Provide a new footpath and resurface the rear of Rivenhall village hall to improve accessibility to a much used community building	
The works to provide a new footpath and to resurface the rear of Rivenhall Village Hall are now complete.	✓
Upgrade the CCTV in Halstead and Braintree using new technology to improve the effectiveness of the systems	
Open reach have installed the new fibre optic links and the new digital cameras were installed in March 2021.	✓
Upgrade to CCTV in Braintree will be carried out following completion of the pedestrianisation work which is currently ongoing	▶
Commence development of the 3G pitch at Halstead Leisure Centre	
The artificial football pitch was completed ahead of schedule and is now open for bookings. The football pitch is not only a full sized pitch but has 9, 7 and 5 a side pitch markings. The pitch provides improved facilities for residents and local clubs and will be used by students of Ramsey Academy through a joint use agreement. Following discussions with stakeholders, it was agreed for the new pitch to be named the 'Calum Leys Memorial Pitch' in tribute to the former Ramsey Academy PE teacher, Head of School and much admired member of the Halstead Community.	✓

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Status
Continue with Livewell Child initiatives to support families to live healthier lives and become more active	
Work has continued looking primarily at mental health and how the Embers the Dragon project can be re-introduced to schools. Talks have also been taking place to start a new link project between Livewell child, Fusion and Tabor Academy through piloting a new	▶


after school activity programme through a rewards system that children can accrue and redeem. During the first quarter, we have also engaged with four Livewell primary schools regarding climate change to obtain the views of the younger generation as part of the climate change engagement process.	
Improve awareness of mental health services, identifying gaps in service provision and potential opportunities for partnership working	
Conversations have taken place with public health practitioners regarding a potential drop in crisis café with the Council currently looking at venues and funding opportunities to take this forward. A recovery for growth working group has been established to identify with partners how we can use allotments to improve mental health as well as reduce isolation. An action plan of key projects is being worked on. A Mental Health Awareness week took place within the Council in May 2021 allowing staff to meet the mental health first aiders and take part in either Pilates, meditation, Walk & Talk 4 Men or a craft session.	
Work with communities to influence the planning of the area in which they live through the development of local neighbourhood plans	
The Coggeshall Neighbourhood Plan has had a successful referendum and will be going to Council in July for adoption. An examiner for the Salings Neighbourhood Plan has been appointed and the process will begin shortly. The Kelvedon Neighbourhood Plan is expected to be submitted in July and will be subject to consultation in due course.	
Reduce the number of rough sleepers across the district by developing a range of support services	
Additional funding has been received from MCHLG through the Rough Sleeping Initiative to help provide vital services to those who need it most. Through partnership working, the housing service now have access to a mental health navigator to help individuals with more complex needs move away from rough sleeping.	
Continue to develop a range of initiatives to address social isolation and loneliness across the district	
There have been a number of community engagement events taking place and we have used the opportunity to talk to people about whether they feel lonely or socially isolated and signposting them to Community 360 or other befriending services or activities that are opening up.	
Continue to work with Community 360 to support volunteers across the district harnessing the energy of new volunteers	
The Council has provided funding to Community 360 to continue to expand on the work they have been doing for the past 10 months in supporting vulnerable people in the district during the pandemic. This will be done through volunteer recruitment and co-ordination. During the first quarter, volunteers have made 247 befriending/welfare calls, distributed over 100 food vouchers & collected/delivered over 50 food parcels.	
Provide support and assistance to the most vulnerable people across our district in response to Covid-19 through the Community Hub	
Over the 2020/21 year the community hub dealt with 413 referrals for a variety of support including food shopping, collection and delivery of food parcels, prescription delivery, mental health calls and befriending. We made contact with 3121 individuals deemed clinically extremely vulnerable and 127 people identified as shielding. Ongoing support is now being provided by Community 360.	
Support our communities and local organisations to respond to issues that have emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic increasing long term strength and resilience	
We continue to provide funding to Community 360 enabling them to build on the work they have been doing in supporting vulnerable people in the district during the pandemic. During the first quarter, volunteers have made 247 befriending/welfare calls, distributed over 100 food vouchers & collected/delivered over 50 food parcels.	
In the first quarter, the Councillor Community Grant scheme has awarded 16 grants to the value of £15,538. Thirteen members contributed to a £6,000 grant to Braintree Museum Trust to deliver the summer 2021 exhibition 'Space: Fact and Fiction'	

PROMOTING PROSPERITY






Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
Commence construction of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park	
The main infrastructure will be completed in July with only some soft landscaping remaining. 6.3 acres of the site are sold and contracts exchanged on a further 6.78 acres	
Commence the build of the I-Construct Innovation in Construction Hub at the Braintree Enterprise Centre	
Building work is progressing well on the I-Construct hub and the building is taking shape with 80% of the zinc cladding now complete. A subcontractor has gone into administration pushing completion of the site back to September 2021	
Carry out restoration works to the Bocking Windmill to preserve the building for future generations to enjoy	
Works to replace the sails on Bocking windmill continue with the sails being manufactured at the millwrights in Suffolk. We are awaiting a date from the manufacturers to re-install the sails.	
Raise the profile of the Braintree District as a place to do business	
The shop local campaign is ongoing with 'click it local' launching in April allowing local independent shops to showcase their products to customers in the area. Shoppers can then buy items online and have them delivered in one package, or 'click and collect' themselves. Planning is also being undertaken with a view to relaunching street markets in Braintree in August. Halstead High Street was celebrated in the Daily Telegraph as a great place to visit because of its independent businesses.	
Provide business and employment support and advice for those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic	
Support continues to be provided to businesses and individuals through either the business newsletter, closed Facebook page, over the phone or through the daily patrols of the Town centres and interactions with businesses. This includes providing advice and information on the business grants available for those affected by the pandemic.	
Minimise the barriers to economic growth and support the needs of businesses to start up, innovate and grow.	
The Council continues to provide support to businesses and to signpost those looking to start or to grow to schemes, advice and support that will aid their businesses. This includes the young entrepreneur grant programme and a further success story has been highlighted recently where a young person who was awarded £3,000 from the grant has built a gym to offer clients private personal training sessions. She also used the money she received to create a website to promote her services.	

Continue to work with businesses to make physical improvements to industrial areas in the district	
Ten businesses across six industrial estates in the district have secured the funding needed to improve the external appearance of their premises. Grants of up to £5,000 were offered to businesses willing to match the funds.	

Actions carried out in partnership with others


Project description and comments	Status
Help to strengthen economic recovery across the district working towards the shared vision in the North Essex Economic Strategy	
Working in partnership with colleagues in other authorities, the Council has secured 1.7million pounds to spend on business support across the area up to March 2022. An agreement programme of early phase projects has been completed which include a local shopping network, communications approach, supporting Essex County Council on schemes including Kickstart and apprenticeships and a virtual job fayre. A detailed programme of support for skills and business support is being considered. Recruitment to the programme officer post was unsuccessful and the Board are currently considering the opportunity to get in some interim support.	
Identify education and retraining programmes and actively promote these enabling access new work opportunities	
Officers continue to actively promote and make referrals to local and national education and retraining schemes. As part of the North Essex Economic Board work, plans are underway to host a virtual Job Fair in July to support people to become economically active, this will include apprenticeship opportunities. Officers are also promoting the opportunities available via the Essex Apprenticeship Hub and Essex Kickstart scheme	
Maximise opportunities for businesses in the district to access grant funding	
All grant funding information is provided to businesses on a regular basis through the Braintree district business facebook page and business newsletter. Through the various business grant schemes that have been launched throughout the pandemic, the Council has processed over 10,500 grants issuing more than £54million in grants. Details of other grants to kick start new business ideas, support and grow businesses are also included in newsletters and on our website.	

DELIVERING AND INNOVATING







Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Status
Address the challenges of reduced income from Government funding and as a result of Covid-19, by working collectively across the organisation to reduce costs and improve services without impacting on service delivery by being efficient, effective and commercially focussed.	
It is still expected that the majority of reduced income will be covered by support received from Central Government. The Government has provided the Council with Emergency Funding of £0.68m in 2021/22 to help meet the impact of the Covid pandemic on the Council's finances and has also confirmed the continuation of the income losses compensation scheme for the first quarter of 2021/22. The scheme provides compensation at the rate of 75p in £ for losses above a threshold of 5% against budget. It is expected that an application for this compensation will be submitted to the Government during the second quarter. The Investment and Development Programme set up to address the budget gap is now embedded within the organisation and has a current pipeline of projects to the value of £1.86m across Strategic Investment, Asset Management, Treasury Management, Commercial and Organisational Impact workstreams.	▶
Address the challenges and recognise the opportunities of the changing work environment as a result of Covid-19 for the whole organisation including steering staff and members through the recovery journey	
The Council will be progressing with a hybrid working model of staff predominantly working from home and working in the office to meet the needs of the business. This will allow for new ways of working to be taken forward. A manager's conference will be held in the second quarter focussing on the £1.6m challenge which will also be launched across the Council providing staff the opportunity to suggest saving ideas.	▶
Upgrade our website to comply with the web accessibility regulations enabling residents, visitors and businesses to transact with us easily	
The Council's website has been upgraded and the new version went live at the end of November 2020 to comply with the web accessibility regulations.	✓
Review our Asset Management Strategy to ensure Council assets are fit for purpose, managed effectively and provide a valuable income stream for the Council	
The Asset Management Strategy has been reviewed and will be incorporated into the overarching Corporate Investment and Development Strategy.	✓
Use customer information and feedback to improve services ensuring they remain customer friendly whilst working towards retaining the customer service excellence standard for the authority	
The Customer Service Excellence Assessment took place in April 2021 and the Council have successfully retained the accreditation for the sixth year in a row. The assessor	✓







applauded the Council for its approach to the pandemic and the work to ensure services continued to be delivered and meet the needs of its customers. Seven areas of the assessment were awarded compliance plus.	
Continue to develop relationships with Town and Parish Councils	
We continue to have monthly meetings with Town and Parish Clerks, and the agenda is determined by all parties based on emerging issues. Weekly newsletters are sent out updating on the latest district news, Covid related issues and emerging priorities.	



Actions carried out in partnership with others






Project description and comments	Status
Consider and determine the future approach of our leisure services	
A recommendation paper will be going to Cabinet in September 2021 on the options for the future approach of our leisure services which includes looking at the financial recovery following the pandemic.	
Look to develop health priorities in various localities within the district in partnership with the newly formed NHS Primary Care Networks	
Talks have started to resume with Primary Care Networks and discussions have taken place with the Colne Valley Primary Care Network with regards to working together on a low carb project. Doctors from the Colne Valley Surgery will be presenting their proposal to the Health and Wellbeing panel.	
Continue to improve health and wellbeing across the district through our work with Health and Wellbeing partners	
The Health and Wellbeing Panel have been working together to deliver the Covid response to residents in our District. In particular the partners have provided assistance to shielding residents and providing children's activities during the school holidays. The Health & Well-being Panel are now reviewing their terms of reference and the priorities of health and wellbeing partners in light of the Covid pandemic.	
Continue to protect local communities and tackle priority problems with the Community Safety Partnership	
The Community Safety Partnership has established a local exploitation group to look at the growing number of cases of young people being exploited either online or in the community. This group is a multi-agency group and will focus on early intervention and prevention as well as identifying hot spot areas across the district. The partnership has also provided a range of information to the community around the use of nitrous oxide, fraud and scams.	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2021/22						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES							
Number of affordable homes delivered	91				37		
Percentage of superfast broadband coverage across the district	95%				n/a	n/a	
Number of homes granted planning permission	916				270		
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT							
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.26%				60%		The tonnage of recyclable material was 1,979 tonnes higher this quarter compared to the same period in 2020-21. This was partly offset by a slight increase in residual waste of 131.73 tonnes. The target is an aspirational target set by the Essex Waste Partnership. We will continue with promotional work around waste reduction and increasing recycling to encourage change in attitudes and behaviours.
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	119kgs				117kgs		There has been a slight increase in residual waste arising this quarter, which we believe can be attributed to residents continuing to work from home and consequently generating more waste. This is a trend being seen on a local, regional and national level
Percentage of land that falls below cleanliness standards for litter	n/a				6%	n/a	Recorded three times a year – July, November and March.
Number and percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported	100% (198)				100%		
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES							
Average waiting time for applicants on the Disabled Facilities Grant (calculated in days from point of	211 days				90 days		The restrictions imposed during lockdowns has impacted larger and more complex grants as they could not be progressed quickly during the pandemic. This is now the focus of the team and we

Performance Indicator	2021/22						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
referral to approval)							<i>should start to see improvements in the average waiting times over the coming quarters.</i>
Participation levels across all our sports centres	91,643				n/a	n/a	<i>Leisure centres across the district re-opened from the 12th April 2021 operating in line with government covid safety guidelines meaning the centres ran at reduced capacity to keep customers safe when using the facilities.</i>
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						
Number of customers using out Handyman scheme	25				n/a	n/a	
Number of homelessness cases prevented	64				n/a	n/a	
Achieve at least a 1% increase in adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						
PROMOTING PROSPERITY							
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	4.3%				n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups across the district	259				n/a	n/a	
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	191				n/a	n/a	
Number of business grants processed	1205				n/a	n/a	
Amount of business grants paid out	£7.5m				n/a	n/a	<i>Actual amount is £7,538,228.35</i>
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING							
Average call answer time in the Customer Service Centre	36 seconds				15 seconds		<i>The CSC have handled 27,195 calls in the first quarter with 73% of these calls being resolve at first point of contact in the CSC. The bank holiday weekends in April and May have seen an increase in bulky waste bookings which take longer to process with council tax reminders and the elections also contributing to an increase in the number of calls received during peak times.</i>
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	97.08%				99.25%		<i>Performance is less than target with 72 payments out of 2,469 being made later than 30 days after receipt of the invoice. Performance will improve as staff become more accustomed to using the new procurement system which was introduced from April 2021.</i>

Performance Indicator	2021/22						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
Number of people transacting with us online	39,311				n/a	n/a	
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	16.48 days				20 days		
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	5.59 days				6 days		
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	93.51%				90%		<i>Represents 144 out of 154 stage one complaints responded to within timescale.</i>
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.10%				31.06%		<i>The target is based on the pre-Covid collection performance recorded in 2019. Actual performance is marginally higher than 2020 but remains lower than the pre-Covid performance. Recovery processes will include the application for liability orders from the Magistrates Court with effect from late July. These will enable payment plans to be agreed with those that have not made any payment against their liability.</i>
Collection rate for Business Rates	25.80%				31.40%		<i>The target is based on the pre-Covid collection performance recorded in 2019. The actual performance is lower as the change in the Retail Rate Relief, from 100% down to 66% with effect from 1st July, has been reflected in the amount collectable at the end of June. It is expected that performance will improve throughout the remainder of the year as payments are received against the increased liabilities.</i>

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the first quarter of 2021/22 is detailed below. This is compared with 2020/21 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 2020/21	Q2 2020/21	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21	TOTAL
Justified	51 (43)	(51)	(53)	(50)	(197)
Not Justified	80 (55)	(56)	(43)	(73)	(227)
Partially Justified	26 (19)	(22)	(19)	(28)	(88)
Not known	2 (0)	(0)	(0)	(1)	(1)
Total	159 (117)	(129)	(115)	(152)	(513)

Comments

The majority of complaints are in relation to the Operations service, in particular, complaints around missed waste collections or bins not being returned to their collection point. A number of these are in relation to assisted collections which have been missed due to different crews not being familiar with the assisted collections or collection points. Crews had to be changed around and agency staff brought in to ensure we could provide a continuous waste collection service due to a number of operations staff having to self-isolate in the first quarter.

Other reasons for missed collections are in relation to bins being too heavy for the vehicle machinery (common in missed green bins where soil is put in the bins), vehicle breakdown, collection points overlooked, contaminated recycling bags and access issues due to parked cars and road closures. The waste crews endeavour to return to collect any missed waste within 48 hours of being reported.

The Planning service have seen an increase in planning complaints primarily around delays in the application process or in providing responses or the planning decisions granted.

Complaints continue to be reviewed by services to help identify improvements to processes and the service provided.

In the first quarter of 2021/22, of the 159 complaints received:

- 154 are stage one complaints
- 2 are stage two complaints
- 3 are stage three complaints

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the first quarter of 2021/22, the LGO has received one new complaint enquiry on the handling of a complaint in relation to the discretionary scheme for test and trace self-isolation payments. A final decision notice was issued for a complaint received in the previous quarter which the LGO declined to investigate as there was no injustice to the complainant. Two other complaints submitted in previous quarters are ongoing and under investigation.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 21/22	Q2 21/22	Q3 21/22	Q4 21/22	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	495				- 4	-
Total staff FTE	446.07				- 3.77	-
Level of employee turnover	3.03%				+ 1.63	-
Number of leavers	15				+ 8	-
Number of starters	11				+ 1	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.4 days				+ 0.09	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	84.8%				N/A Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1365.5				- 94	-
Number of delegates	189				+ 116	-
Number of apprentices **	16				0	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
	470	464	466	481	492	499

** 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	
	(2020/21 figure in brackets)				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	8 (10)	(13)	(10)	(12)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	6 (8)	(11)	(8)	(9)	<i>The most common reported accident this quarter was injury to hands reported by waste crews.</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	2 (2)	(2)	(1)	(3)	<i>One contractor suffered a hand injury from glass in a black sack the other involved heat stroke suffered by a grave digger</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	0 (0)	(0)	(1)	(0)	
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	0 (0)	(5)	(18.5)	(16)	
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	2 (2)	(4)	(1)	(0)	<i>Two incidents of verbal abuse to housing staff</i>
Number of near miss incidents	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	(1)	
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (0)	(2)	(3)	(2)	
Number of claims settled	1 (1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	

Financial Performance

This part of the report provides an updated review of the financial position for the year. It examines the latest forecast for spending on day-to-day service provision compared to the budget for the year. Also included is a summary of treasury management activities; projected movements on the General Fund balance; and a summary of spending to date on capital projects. An update is also provided on the financial impact arising from the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Executive Summary

- Taking into account the projected impact of Covid and variations to the base budget, **the net budget position forecast for the year is a positive variance of £252,000.**
- The estimated **budget impact of the pandemic** in 2021/22 is **£1.213m**. This is expected to be partially offset by funding received from government leaving **a net projected variance due to Covid of £278,000.**
- The forecast position regarding the **base budget** is a **positive variance of £530,000.**
- After taking into account other planned movements in balances, **the projected change in General Fund unallocated balances is a reduction of £384,000.**
- **Expenditure of £5.53m on capital projects** during the quarter, with spending mainly being incurred on: Horizon 120 business park infrastructure, now completed; the new Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre; I-Construct; Manor Street regeneration scheme; and the Halstead Leisure Centre artificial grass pitch.

Background

At the meeting of Full Council on 22nd February 2021, a net budget of £8.064m for the 2021/22 financial year was approved. The budget included a drawdown from the business rate retention reserve to offset a deficit carried over from 2020/21 on the Collection Fund. Therefore, for budget monitoring purposes, this technical adjustment has been ignored resulting in an adjusted budget figure of £15.433m. Financing of this amount was to be from a combination of: general government grants (£0.362m); business rates (£4.979m); and Council Tax (£10.092m). During the year budgets may be updated in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure.

Due to the continued uncertainty caused by the pandemic and the changing nature of restrictions and lockdowns it was considered appropriate to make central provision for the continuing financial impact arising from Covid, which could then offset any budget variances or additional costs that might be incurred at service level. This arrangement is reflected in the monitoring information below where increased costs and/ or reductions in income are being reported against the relevant service, and the financial support available to offset these being shown separately.

General Fund Revenue Spending

The table below shows the projected outturn by service as forecast at the end of Quarter 1.

Service	Updated Budget £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Adverse (Positive) variance against Budget				RAG Status
			Staffing	Other Exp.	Gross Income	Total	
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Asset Management	(2,477)	(2,512)	0	3	(38)	(35)	G
Community Services	489	515	2	(8)	32	26	A
Corporate Management	1,496	1,485	(18)	(3)	10	(11)	G
Economic Development	267	267	-	-	-	-	G
Environment & Leisure	1,037	1,338	(16)	109	208	301	R
Finance	1,511	1,556	(132)	42	135	45	A
Governance	1,210	1,174	10	(34)	(12)	(36)	G
Housing Services	956	941	(15)	2	(2)	(15)	G
Human Resources	358	355	0	(3)	0	(3)	G
ICT & Facilities	1,712	1,730	31	(13)	0	18	A
Marketing and Communications	614	572	7	(24)	(25)	(42)	G
Operations	6,341	6,403	(10)	45	27	62	A
Strategic Investment	23	23	-	-	-	-	G
Sustainable Development	973	954	(53)	44	(10)	(19)	A
Service Total	14,510	14,801	(194)	160	325	291	R
Corporate Financing	1,223	1,315	(8)	(34)	134	92	R
Efficiency target	(300)	0	300	0	0	300	
Total Budget	15,433	16,116	98	126	459	683	R
Covid-19 general grant						(686)	G
Covid-19 specific grants & income compensation						(249)	G
Net Total General Fund						(252)	G

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

Analysis of the Total Budget Variance

Except where specific expenditure is being incurred, it is difficult to be precise about the extent to which the budget variances set out above have arisen solely as a result of the Covid pandemic, therefore judgement has been used. As the pandemic has continued and society has had to adapt, it is recognised that there will be lasting consequences which will impact on the Council's activities and finances. It is likely that there remains economic implications that have yet to be realised once government support for individuals and businesses has been withdrawn.

Reason for budget variance:	Adverse/ (Positive) variance against Budget				Net of Covid-19 grants £'000
	Staffing	Other Expenditure	Income	Total	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Covid-19	31	284	898	1,213	278
Base budget	67	(158)	(439)	(530)	(530)
Total Budget Variance	98	126	459	683	(252)

Commentary on the impact on the budget due to the Covid-19 Pandemic

The budget impact from the Covid pandemic is estimated to be £1.213m, which is mainly as a result of the following areas:

- Increased costs and reductions in income expected to be incurred whilst providing support to the Council's leisure services to remobilise and recover following the multiple periods of national lockdown and other local restrictions. This includes putting in place measures to ensure that facilities continue to operate in accordance with the appropriate guidance and advice. The financial implications for these measures are reflected in the reported position for Environment & Leisure. Partially offsetting the costs incurred is the balance of funds that were received in 2020/21 following a successful bid to the National Leisure Recovery Fund.

- Anticipated reductions in fees and charges, primarily from car parking, but also other services including community transport, the Town Hall Centre, and licensing. The government committed to continue to provide compensation to local authorities at a rate of 75p in the £ for net losses across certain income streams where these exceed 5% of the amount originally budgeted in 2020/21. At the present time the scheme is only planned to run until the end of June 2021 for which an estimated amount has been included in the projections above. For shortfalls in income projected from July the assumption is that these will have to be met in full by the Council. It is inherently difficult to predict how demand and usage of facilities might recover following the lifting of all restrictions in July and, therefore, this aspect of the projections remains potentially subject to significant change.
- Estimated reductions in non-fee income. This relates mainly to recoveries from local tax and housing benefit activities. Staff resources have continued to be prioritised towards administering Covid business rate reliefs and grants. Recovery procedures have been impacted by the limited capacity and availability of the courts to deal with applications for liability orders, with the Council having its first scheduled court date for over a year on 30th July. Whilst collection rates for both Council Tax and business rates have improved over that achieved last year up to the end of the quarter, rates remain below that which would normally be expected. Consequently, there is a projected reduction in the amount of income to be received back from the major preceptors through the Council Tax Sharing Agreement, albeit the position forecast has improved from the income achieved last year.

Partially offsetting the adverse effects from the pandemic, the government allocated a further £685,853 of emergency funding to the Council as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22. In addition, other funding has been received, including Contain Outbreak Management Funds, which is meeting the costs of various Covid-related activities that, in part, are being carried out by staff within the Environmental Services team with some back-fill arrangements in place. As indicated above, an estimate of the amount which the Council is considered eligible under the government's Income Support Scheme has been reflected in the projections.

Taking into account the external funding received, there is still a projected shortfall in relation to Covid of £278,000 for the year. The Council holds £266,000 of Covid funding in earmarked reserve from 2020/21; however, given the overall budget position, and the continued uncertainty around the effects of the pandemic, it is proposed at this stage to retain the reserve and offset the Covid shortfall against the current year's forecast variance against the base budget.

Commentary on Base Budget Variances

Staffing

Staffing budgets include both directly employed staff, and bought-in/ agency staff, the latter being used where additional resources are required to meet increased service demands and/ or the need for specialist skills; to provide cover in cases of absence (e.g. vacancies, holidays, sickness, maternity etc.); or where in-house staff are assigned to work on other projects and priorities.

Across all service areas staffing budgets are projected to be underspent by £194,000, with a further saving of £8,000 under Corporate Financing. The budget includes a corporate efficiency target of £300,000, which is normally achieved from staffing, therefore, after taking this into account, it is currently projected that staff costs will be over budget by £98,000. Included in this figure is £31,000 of Covid-related costs.

The projections are based on known staff changes at the end of Quarter 1, and it is likely that further changes will become evident during the year which will affect the final position.

The main reasons for the projected staffing underspend within services are due to current vacant posts and/ or efficiency savings.

Other Service Expenditure

Excluding the additional costs incurred through Covid, there is net underspend projected against the base budget of £158,000, which is a combination of variances across all service areas, including:

- A reduction in payments to the pension fund for prior year discretionary benefits (-£52,500)
- Savings on insurance premiums following the previous letting of new contracts (-£26,890) – this is in addition to the £40,000 reduction that had already been reflected in the budget. However, there are elements of the insurance contracts that are now being re-tendered which might negate some of these savings.
- Lower recharges from Eastlight Community Housing for voids and repairs on temporary housing accommodation (-£28,000), and a projected overall underspend on the rent support scheme used to assist people access private rented housing (-£11,000)
- Lower expenditure in horticultural services mainly due to a trial of reducing cuts of rural highway verges (-£20,100), and lower maintenance costs within parks (-£27,400).
- Governance services including Members allowances and expenses, and electoral services; part of which is offsetting a loss of Cabinet Office grant for Individual Electoral Registration (-£27,700).

Within the overall position there some areas where increased costs are projected:

- Housing benefits – a complex area involving significant expenditure in benefits paid to claimants, but also with subsidy receivable from government. The level of subsidy is subject to various claim types where the rate of subsidy provided can vary. It is currently projected that there will be a net additional cost to the Council of £88,000 based on current claimant data.
- To support a more pro-active approach towards enforcement of planning rules additional legal costs are expected to be incurred (£30,000).

External Income

A significant proportion of the Council's budget is reliant on external income. Grants and subsidies from government, alongside income from business rates are major elements. These income streams are normally fairly predictable or fluctuate in response to compensating changes in expenditure. Where uncertainty exists this is managed via earmarked reserves, e.g. the business rate retention reserve. Other income is more susceptible to changes in external factors and service demand, and the projected position at this first quarter for the outturn is summarised in the following table:

Service	Updated Budget	Joint Financing & Other Reimburs.	Sales, Fees & Charges	Rents & Service Charges	Other Income	Total	RAG status
		3,840	6,205	3,156	1,416	14,617	
	£000	Adverse (Positive) Variance £000 against Budget :					
Asset Management	3,385	-	3	(41)	-	(38)	G
Community Services	211	(6)	32	-	6	32	A
Corporate Management Plan	10	10	-	-	-	10	A
Economic Development	-	-	-	-	-	-	G
Environment & Leisure	1,176	13	205	-	(10)	208	R
Finance	2,033	222	-	-	(87)	135	R
Governance	198	(6)	(27)	-	21	(12)	G
Housing	41	-	(6)	5	(1)	(2)	G
Human Resources	-	-	-	-	-	-	G
ICT & Facilities	2	-	-	-	-	-	G
Marketing & Communications	109	-	-	-	(25)	(25)	G
Operations	5,456	(139)	153	26	(13)	27	A
Strategic Investment	300	-	-	-	-	-	G
Sustainable Development	1,696	-	(10)	-	-	(10)	G
Service Total	14,617	94	350	(10)	(109)	325	R
Corporate Financing	-	114	-	-	20	134	R
Total Budget	14,617	208	350	(10)	(89)	459	R
Attributable to:							
Covid-19 impact		204	671	23	-	898	R
Base budget		4	(321)	(33)	(89)	(439)	G

RAG Status: G = positive or nil variance, A = up to 5% adverse variance or <£50k, R = adverse variance greater than 5% and >£50k at Individual Business Plan level

The commentary above on Covid-19 provides an explanation of the income activities that have been most affected by the pandemic.

Commentary on Base Budget income variances

The reasons for the projected overachievement of income of £439,000 against the base budget include:

- Higher income from the sale of mixed dry recycling material. The price paid to the Council for material is based on basket of indices which are reviewed each quarter. The budget had assumed a basket price of £29 per tonne based on the position at that time; however, this increased at Q1 to £38 per tonne and has been agreed for Q2 at £62 per tonne. With such sharp volatility it is difficult to be confident about future quarters; nevertheless, for projections an average of £50 per tonne has been used, leading to estimated increase in income of £207,000 over budget.
- A number of administrative grants for Housing Benefits and Local Council Tax Support were not announced until after the budget was approved. The final determinations means that an additional £86,300 of income is now to be received.
- Whilst a number of the Council's service areas have continued to see a drop in fee and charges income, the Local Land Charges service are projecting an overachievement against budget of £26,000. Demand for services remained high during the first quarter as residential buyers were looking to benefit from the increase in the stamp duty threshold limit which was due to be reduced from 1st July. It is likely that some of this upturn in activity will continue through the next quarter but with a planned further reduction from 1st October meaning the threshold will revert back to the level that applied pre-Covid. Similarly, the Building Control service has also seen an increase in demand for services

resulting in a higher level of income being predicted (+£13,000), albeit some staffing difficulties means that increased costs having to be incurred on short-term temporary staff which is currently outweighing this improvement.

- A higher level of occupancy within the commercial property portfolio and the effect of rent reviews, along with rental income being generated from two properties in Halstead that were previously part of a proposed land disposal, means that income is projected to be higher than budget (+£37,940)

Treasury Management

Investment activity

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity to the end June		Amount Invested at end of the quarter
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£35.47m	£70.00m	£50.73m	£54.74m
Average amount invested for the period			£50.90m
Highest amount invested			£55.29m

The amount of cash under management during the first quarter was significantly less than last year which had been inflated due largely to the funding passported through local authorities to businesses. The Council also incurred a much higher amount of capital expenditure than had previously been typical due to the ambitious strategic investment programme. This increased capital spending is expected to continue into the current year.

Investments totalling £19million continued to be held 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 money market funds and the Debt Management Office Account (UK Government), with liquid cash held in a current account with Lloyds Bank.

Investment income and valuations

Interest and dividends earned to the end of the quarter totalled £235,821, which is equivalent to an annualised rate of return of 1.86%:

Investments	Average Amount Invested	Interest & Dividends Earned	Annualised Return %
Long-Term Pooled Funds	£19.00m	£233,127	4.92%
Short-Term	£31.90m	£2,694	0.03%
Total	£50.90m	£235,821	1.86%

Dividend income from long-term pooled funds will vary quarter on quarter and therefore the annualised return will be expected to reduce over subsequent quarters, albeit still in excess of 4%.

The projected income for the year is £784,000, which is £75,000 better than the budget. However, the budget was reduced by £350,000 in light of the sharp falls in interest rates, expected reductions in dividends from pooled funds, and also taking into account the significant reduction profiled into estimates of the Council's cash balances reflecting the higher level of capital expenditure. This reduction in budget was to be met by using the Treasury Management earmarked reserve in 2021/22. Consequently, the expected improvement in income for the year will partially offset the drawdown from reserve which is held to aid management of treasury management risks.

The market value of shares and units in pooled funds at the end of June 2021, was £20.851m, representing an unrealised gain of £1.851m over the amount originally invested.

Investment portfolio

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

- Long-term pooled fund investments £19million (allocated: £3 million property fund; £13 million equity funds; and £3 million in diversified asset funds);
- Low volatility Money Market Funds (MMFs) £15m;
- Variable net asset value MMF £4 million;
- Debt Management Office Account Facility £15m
- Lloyds current account £1.74m.

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

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

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

	£'000
Balance at 1 April 2021	5,999
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(320)
Funding for one-off investment	(1,139)
Pension Fund triennial payment - repayment	823
Projected outturn variance at Q1	252
Estimated Balance at 31 March 2022	5,615

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

- The approved budget included an anticipated reduction in balances of £320,165.
- An allocation from General Fund balances was approved by Full Council in February 2021, to meet one-off budget requirements: £1m to be set aside to deal with the potential impact of Covid-19 on services, the requirement for which will need to be kept under review in light of changing circumstances; £75,000 for the Councillor Community Grant

Scheme; £6,500 for a Noise Level meter; and a total of £57,500 as provision for loss of income during the redevelopment of the Manor Street area.

- A one-off payment was made in 2020/21 to the Essex Pension Fund covering the period April 2020 to March 2023, which was part funded from General Fund balances. A repayment back into balances is being made in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- The projected outturn variance for the year at Q1 is an overall positive variance of £252,000.

Risks and Assumptions

The forecasts reflect service managers' "best estimate" of the predicted outturn for the year. Whilst the previous year outturn and trends in-year have been considered; the position continues to be uncertain due to the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst restrictions have now been lifted, it will take some time to understand the lasting effects this will have on services.

Directors and service managers continue to scrutinise all expenditure commitments in light of the financial challenge required to balance the Council's budget over the medium-term. External income is inherently difficult to predict as it is substantially demand led and impacted by external factors.

Planning application fee projections are based on the best information available regarding when developers are likely to submit planning applications for growth locations within the district. Previous experience has shown that this can change quickly and income can vary significantly. Income will be influenced by both the number and type of planning applications received.

Investment income is influenced by the overall level of cash balances held, which in turn are dependent upon the progress of the strategic investment programme and other capital projects, and the pace at which planned capital receipts are generated. Market sentiment will impact on the value of the Council's long-term pooled fund investments; whereas general economic conditions in both the UK and globally will influence dividend returns. Interest rates are expected to remain at very low levels.

The income which is offset from costs incurred for the processing of recycling material collected from households is subject to regular review of the composition of material collected assessed across the whole of the Suffolk Waste Partnership contract, which the Council is party, and market indices for the sale of materials. As this quarter's report demonstrates, the market price for materials can fluctuate leading to significant changes to the budget position.

The original budget assumed that £478,000 of staffing costs can be recharged from the General Fund revenue account to capital projects. The actual amount recharged will depend on the extent to which projects progress and staff are working on activities that can properly be treated as capital under accounting rules, with any shortfall impacting the General Fund.

There are estimated amounts of income included in the projections where the final amounts will only be ascertained once grant and subsidy claims have been subject to post claim assurance reviews.

The projected outturn will be reviewed as part of the process for developing proposals for the 2022/23 budget and update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Capital Investment

The overall planned level of spending in the Council's approved capital programme is currently over £45m. Delivery of a number of significant projects spans a number of years, therefore, the amount profiled to be spent in 2021/22 is almost £38million:

	Profiled Spend 2021/22 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 1 £000	Actual Spend at Quarter 1 % of Profile
Horizon 120 business park infrastructure	4,250	2,143	50%
Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre	11,054	389	4%
Manor Street regeneration	13,047	1,604	12%
I-Construct Innovation Centre	1,506	385	26%
Town centre improvements	1,825	85	5%
Springwood Drive business units and parking	66	-	-
Planned maintenance to Council premises	940	62	7%
Replacement vehicles and plant	256	96	38%
Information technology systems & equipment	513	30	6%
Play areas, parks and open spaces	443	54	12%
Environmental improvements	100	-	-
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	159	5	3%
Operational equipment	165	1	1%
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	445	371	83%
Climate change initiatives	192	-	-
Grants to registered social landlords	100	-	-
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	887	157	18%
Capitalised interest	1,265	-	-
Capital salaries	678	148	22%
Total	37,891	5,530	15%

Additions to the profiled programme during the quarter included works on pedestrianisation; the acquisition of light commercial vehicles which were coming to the end of their lease term; and additional litter bins funded by external grant.

Capital resources

During the quarter the Council completed the sale of land in Witham and also received interim payments in respect of the development of apartments at Victoria Square, which on completion will transfer to Eastlight Community Homes (Eastlight).

Under arrangements in place with Eastlight, 7 right-to-buy sales were completed in the first quarter generating circa £885,000 for the Council. Eastlight have advised that a further 30 applications are in progress and, therefore, based on past experience this would indicate around 18 sales potentially completing this year and which should generate circa £2m+. This compares to 11 sales last year that raised £1.323m for the Council.

A total of £57,566 was generated by the VAT shelter agreement with Eastlight for the first quarter.

The Council has also received £1,056,441 grant from the Better Care Fund, which will be used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.

Staged claims are also being made to drawdown approved funding from European Regional Development Funds, which were awarded for the I-Construct project, and from the government's Getting Building Fund (via the South East Local Enterprise Partnership or SELEP) for the Horizon 120 Enterprise Centre.