

# **COUNCIL AGENDA**

**Monday, 20th March 2023 at 7.15pm**

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,  
Bocking End, Braintree, CM79HB**

## **THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

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

Councillor J Abbott  
Councillor D Abram  
Councillor J Baugh  
Councillor Mrs J Beavis  
Councillor K Bowers  
Councillor G Butland  
Councillor J Coleridge  
Councillor G Courtauld  
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham  
Councillor T Cunningham  
Councillor C Dervish  
Councillor P Euesden  
Councillor T Everard  
Councillor Mrs D Garrod  
Councillor M Green  
Councillor A Hensman

Councillor S Hicks  
Councillor P Horner  
Councillor H Johnson  
Councillor A Kilmartin  
Councillor W Korsinah  
Councillor D Mann  
Councillor T McArdle  
Councillor J McKee  
Councillor A Munday  
Councillor Mrs I Parker  
Councillor Mrs J Pell  
Councillor I Pritchard  
Councillor M Radley  
Councillor S Rehman  
Councillor F Ricci  
Councillor B Rose

Councillor Mrs J Sandum  
Councillor Miss V Santomauro  
Councillor Mrs W Scattergood  
Councillor Mrs W Schmitt  
Councillor P Schwier  
Councillor Mrs G Spray  
Councillor P Tattersley  
Councillor P Thorogood  
Councillor R van Dulken  
Councillor T Walsh  
Councillor L Walters  
Councillor Miss M Weeks  
Councillor D White  
Councillor Mrs S Wilson  
Councillor J Wrench  
Councillor B Wright  
Vacancy

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](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

**D GASCOYNE**  
Chief Executive

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBER – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

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

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

### **Public Question Time - Registration and Speaking:**

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make statement to the Council on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the district and matters listed on the agenda.

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

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

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

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

The Chairman of the Council has discretion to amend the order in which questions/statements are presented to Full Council.

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

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

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**Documents:**

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**Your Comments:**

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](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk)

<b>PUBLIC SESSION</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>	
<b>2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 20th February 2023 (copy previously circulated).	
<b>3 Declarations of Interest</b>	
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.	
<b>4 Public Question Time</b>	
(See paragraph above)	
<b>5 To receive any announcements/statements from the Chairman and/or Leader of the Council.</b>	
<b>6 Appointment of a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer</b>	<b>5 - 7</b>
<b>7 Climate Change Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan Update</b>	<b>8 - 45</b>
<b>8 Healthy Communities Update</b>	<b>46 - 69</b>
<b>9 Celebrating Apprenticeship Successes at Braintree District Council</b>	<b>70 - 71</b>
<b>10 Cabinet's Report to Full Council</b>	<b>72 - 85</b>

<b>Report title:</b> Appointment of a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	<b>For:</b> Decision
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> DP/2023/15
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Dan Gascoyne, Chief Executive <a href="mailto:dan.gascoyne@braintree.gov.uk">dan.gascoyne@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report seeks to appoint a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To appoint the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer as the Deputy Electoral Registration Officer, with the full powers of the Electoral Registration Officer in their absence.

## **3. Summary of Issues**

- 3.1 Every Council is required by law to appoint an officer of the council to the position of Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). This position is responsible for compiling and maintaining the register of electors. In Braintree District Council (the Council) this role is held by the Chief Executive.
- 3.2 If there were a legal challenge to any act of including or refusing to include somebody within the register of electors, it is the Electoral Registration Officer that would convene and conduct the hearing required by statute.
- 3.3 Electoral Commission guidance recommends the appointment of a Deputy ERO to carry out the functions of the ERO and be available to act in their absence. The guidance further recommends that, "Any deputies appointed should have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions that they have been assigned." Under Section 52(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, Council can appoint a Deputy ERO who could carry out the duties of the Electoral Registration Officer in their absence.
- 3.4 Unlike Returning Officers, the ERO cannot appoint a deputy themselves, unless the power to do so has been delegated to them. The Council's Constitution has retained the appointment of the ERO and Deputy ERO, and therefore the matter must be considered by full Council.
- 3.5 The Elections Act 2022 places further obligations on the ERO, which it would be more practical for a deputy to undertake. These include some of the

statutory functions currently placed on the ERO that would, in practice, be better undertaken by a Deputy, including

- Conducting a registration hearing, following a registration review and an objection to the removal of an elector from the register of electors, and
- Signing a temporary voter authority certificate (free voter ID), issued to an elector within six days of an election.

3.6 In accordance with Electoral Commission guidance, and to ensure that there is an officer available to discharge these functions, it would be sensible to arrange for the ERO to be able to delegate their powers and duties. This would ensure that if it became necessary to hold a hearing or sign a temporary voter authority certificate, it could be dealt with efficiently and effectively without unreasonable delay. The appointment of the Deputy ERO will mitigate risks in the event that the ERO is unavailable as their deputy will be able to make legal judgments regarding the Electoral Register on their behalf.

3.7 The Deputy ERO would not receive any additional payment.

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

- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;

3.9 These recommendations provide resilience to the statutory responsibility for maintaining the electoral register. This is in line with the Council's commitment to provide a place of healthy and resilient communities the ability to shape their own future.

#### **4. Options**

##### **Appoint a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer**

4.1 The appointment of a Deputy ERO will mitigate risks in the event that the ERO is unavailable to undertake their statutory duties.

##### **Do not appoint a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer**

4.2 There are significant risks associated with not appointing a Deputy ERO, in terms of ability to properly discharge the relevant duties in a timely way, especially during elections, and the potential legal, financial and reputational implications of any challenge.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications to the appointment.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The appointment of the Deputy Electoral Registration Officer will mitigate risks in the event that the Electoral Registration Officer is unavailable, as the deputy will be able to undertake their duties.

## **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 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this appointment.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 None

## **9. Background Papers**

- 9.1 None

**Agenda Item: 7**

<b>Report Title:</b> Climate Change Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan Update	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 20th March 2023	<b>For:</b> Noting
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> DP/2023/13
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor Wendy Schmitt, Cabinet Member Climate Change and The Environment	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Josie Falco, Head of Environment <a href="mailto:Josie.falco@braintree.gov.uk">Josie.falco@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Braintree District Council (the Council) on the progress made to date on the Council's Climate Change Strategy (CCS)

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note progress of the Climate Change Strategy and its associated Climate Change Action Plan.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In July 2019 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 October 2019 the Climate Change Working Group was established, comprising cross party Members and public representatives from community, business and other organisations, to develop the Council's Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan to ensure all council functions and decision making was aligned to the shift to carbon neutral in 2030.
- 3.3 In September 2021 at full council the Climate Change Strategy and its associated Action Plan was adopted. The Climate Action Plan included indicative timescales: ongoing, short, medium and long term.
- 3.4 In July 2021 the Essex Climate Commission published the Commission's recommendations in "Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral". In November 2021 ECC Published its Climate Action Plan supporting the Commission's recommendations. In January 2022 ECC launched its environmental stewardship Climate Focus Area (FCA) which comprises the Blackwater and Colne catchments. Braintree District covers 34.52% of the total Climate Focus Area and 68.69% of the istrict's land is included within the Climate Focus Area, this equates to 42,0178 hectares. The intention of the CFA is to pilot sustainable land stewardship technologies and systems that can then be adopted across all of Essex.

- 3.5 The delivery of some of the Council's Climate Action Plan is reliant on other key developments, including changes in national legislation being made via the Environment Act 2021 and more locally in Essex via the recommendations of the Essex Climate Commission and the Essex County Council's resultant Climate Action Plan. The Environment Act 2021 received Royal Assent on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Although the Environment Act 2021 itself has been enacted there are still several areas within the new Act that are reliant on secondary legislation that has not yet been fully published.

### **Climate Strategy Update**

- 3.6 The Climate Change Working Group continues to hold regular meetings focusing in on a range of topic areas to discuss and steer local climate issues, lobby on national policy and funding, review the climate change action plan progress and identify potential opportunities for future projects.
- 3.7 In September 2022, an internal Officer Climate Change Delivery Board was established to oversee and support the delivery of the Council's commitment to climate change both within BDC and across the district.

### **Climate Change Action Plan**

- 3.8 The Council's initial Climate Action Plan had 73 actions identified to progress across 7 key themes. The key themes being -



- 3.9 Climate Change Action Plan progress is provided quarterly as part of the corporate Performance Indicator reporting. An annual summary report will be produced that will summarises the Climate Change Action Plan progress and will also provide a performance update against the long-term key climate performance indicators approved by Full Council in September 2022. The annual report will include the BEIS district wide carbon emission data and the organisational carbon emission data.

### **Update on Progress to date**

- 3.10 This report provides an update of the Climate Action Plan (please see attached as Appendix A) and a supporting presentation on key achievements to note.
- 3.11 A total of 10 of the projects have now closed, additional projects are being identified through the annual business plan process.

- 3.12 Future climate actions are being considered as part of the internal Service Annual Business Plan process and will be taken for approval to the Climate Change Working Group.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 In 2021/22 budget, the Council agreed to create an initial reserve of £500,000 to support the delivery of the emerging Climate Change Strategy. During the 2022/23 Budget a review of the reserves resulted in the following being added into the Climate Change Reserve:
- £48k being the Carbon Management reserve balance
  - £46k being the Green Heart reserve balance
  - £22k being the Flooding relief reserve balance
- 4.2 The total amount reserved for Climate Change is therefore £616k. Allocations from the initial £500k had already been agreed in the capital programme:
- 4.3 The 2022/23 Budget included agreement to use the (consolidated) Climate Change Reserve for the following:
- Programme officer for Climate Change 2 years @ £50k p.a. total £100k
  - Funding for Cycling Strategy 2 years @ £25k p.a.
  - Substation and electric Chargers at Lakes Road £80K
  - Air Quality Monitoring equipment capital bid £30k
  - First year costs of air quality monitoring equipment £3k (funding beyond 22/23 to be unavoidable growth in MTFS)
  - First year funding of the Tetrapak collections £8k (funding beyond 22/23 to be unavoidable growth in MTFS)
  - Bulb and Trees £34K
  - Air Quality Monitoring Methodology Review £7,365
  - Housing Condition Survey – Environmental & Energy Efficiency information (£9,345)
  - Climate Change Communications resource £37,500
  - Tree Survey £10K
  - Total allocated £369,210K
- 4.4 To achieve the objectives of the Strategy and its associated Climate Action Plan substantial investment will be needed at an International, National and local level, particularly in relation to infrastructure projects and long term programmes such as the move away from fossil fuel heating systems and investment in sustainable transport solutions. Many of the actions Districtwide actions are reliant on third party investment and/or the award of grant funding.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

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

## **6 Other Implications**

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

## **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.

## **8. List of Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix A. Climate Change Action Plan Progress Report

## **9. Background Papers**

- 9.1 Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan

# Climate Change Initial Action Plan:

SEP 2021 – MAR 2023





# Climate Change Action Plan: September 2021 – March 2023

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.

Timescale	Council Role	Indicative Costs	Potential Carbon impact of Council Projects
<b>Short Term</b> – 2021 to 2023	<b>D</b> - Deliver	<b>£</b> - Low - between £0 and £25,000	<b>Low</b> – less than 0.5% reduction in Councils own emissions
<b>Medium Term</b> – 2021 to 2026	<b>E</b> – Enable and Facilitate	<b>££</b> - Medium - between £25,000 and £100,000	<b>Medium</b> - up to 5% reduction in Councils own emissions
<b>Long Term</b> – 2021 to 2030	<b>S</b> – Support and Encourage	<b>£££</b> - High - between £100,000 and £250,000	<b>High</b> – over 5% reduction in Councils own emissions
<b>Ongoing</b> – Actions that will continue through the life of the strategy	<b>P</b> - Partnership	<b>££££</b> - Very High - Over £250,000	<b>NB</b> – District Wide reduction measures and methods still to be calculated

# Resources

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
CC/001 Continue with campaigns to raise the profile of local food producers by promoting shop local and seasonal foods including plant based substitutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of produce that can be sourced locally and the benefits of buying seasonal produce and swapping to plant based produce</li> <li>Increased support for local businesses</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>The promotion of shop local has been ongoing.</p> <p>The BDC "Shop Local in Braintree District" Facebook page now has 618 subscribers.</p> <p>Media releases and case studies have promoted specific businesses selling local produce, street market businesses and local growers selling environmentally conscious products.</p> <p>A shop local Christmas campaign was run. Dec 2022</p>
CC/002 Work with partners to offer a subsidized water butt scheme to encourage residents to use rainfall rather than tap water to sustain their plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the use of water</li> </ul>	Short Term	A subsidized water butt scheme is now operational in partnership with ECC and Get composting. 331 website visits were recorded immediately after launching the scheme and 87 water butts have been delivered to date (31 <sup>st</sup> January 2023).
CC/003 Create a learning and development program 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness of climate change issues</li> <li>Improved consideration of climate change issues across all services, projects and policies</li> </ul>	Short Term	2 members of staff have undertaken full accreditation via the 'Carbon Literacy Project' and these staff are now developing an inhouse staff training program. The target for all staff to have undertaken training is March 2024.
CC/004 Install water butts in our cemeteries to capture rainfall run off from cemetery chapels and other buildings for use by visitors bringing floral tributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the use of water from the standpipes</li> </ul>	Short Term	All BDC Cemeteries now have water butts installed capturing rainwater run off.

<p>CC/005 Review the Councils sustainable Procurement Policy to strengthen the procurement process ensuring environmental considerations are made when procuring goods and services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement specifications developed that supports carbon reduction and sustainability.</li> <li>• Council is more aware of the environmental credentials of the contractors it works with</li> <li>• Encourage more businesses to consider climate change credentials</li> </ul>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>The BDC joint Procurement Team is working alongside ECC to develop an approach to Sustainable Procurement which includes Climate impact as part of the social value standards. The Carbon Trust is assisting with this project. Work is ongoing including developing guidance on including Sustainability into specifications and how to evaluate submissions once received.</p>
<p>CC/006 Explore the feasibility of re-using waste water from the depot to fill the water tanks on the street sweepers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the use of water</li> </ul>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>A feasibility project was undertaken regarding harvesting rainwater from Lakes Road for use in road sweepers. Technical issues identified made the project unviable. An alternative project is underway investigating harvesting and re-using water at Cordon's Farm.</p>

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Reduce Waste, Increase Recycling</b>			
CC/007 Work with the Essex Recycling Forum (ERF) and the Essex Waste Partnership on Countywide campaigns and initiatives to encourage people to reduce their waste and to maximise recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of total waste collected</li> <li>Reduction in tonnage of residual waste and increase in percentage of waste recycled</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>This work is ongoing. Multiple recycling focused web updates and social media campaigns have been run.</p> <p>A joint campaign between ECC, 11 Essex Local Authorities, KFC and MacDonalds targeting reduced waste/littering which involves two outlets at Galleys Corner is underway.</p> <p>BDC is currently supporting the ERF with a food waste reducing campaign. Of the 722 residents that have signed the Essex Food Waste Pledge, 161 (22%) are from the Braintree District.</p> <p>School visits, evening talks and multiple events have been attended promoting recycling and waste minimalization.</p>
OP/21/004 Review the waste management service to identify future working models and respond to the outcomes of the Environment Bill, including impacts on kerbside collections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New 10 year waste strategy developed.</li> <li>Improved service delivery model implemented providing more sustainable ways of working.</li> <li>Reduce residual waste and increase recycling</li> <li>Ensure outcomes of the Environment Bill are understood and fed into the service review of the waste management service</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>The Council commissioned an external consultant (Ricardo AEA) to review its waste collection service including modeling various service delivery options to identify the most cost effective and efficient model in line with the Government's proposed Consistency in Household Waste Collections.</p> <p>Secondary legislation relating to the above under the Environment Act 2021 is still pending and further work cannot progress on this aspect of the review until a formal announcement is made by Defra.</p>

CC/009 Develop a District wide campaign to encourage residents to reduce the use of plastics and non-sustainable packaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in waste collected</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>Promotion of plastic recycling is ongoing via social media, website, attended events and BDC Facebook posts.</p> <p>A social media post and e-newsletter campaign is underway to inform residents and businesses about the single use plastic ban for takeaway cutlery/plates/cups, to be introduced nationwide in October 2023</p> <p>A business case cost and benefit evaluations is underway of working in partnership with City to Sea and Refill.org on a "Refill" campaign in 2023/24.</p>
CC/010 Consider options to increase public access to drinking water to reduce single use plastics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the use of single use plastics</li> </ul>	Short Term	Mapping and promoting accessible water 'refill' locations has been scoped as part of the above "Refill" campaign with Refill.org.
CC/011 Research opportunities around using waste collected from dog waste bins and other sources as either a fertiliser or fuel source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce energy from non-renewable sources</li> </ul>	Short Term	Research was undertaken with other Councils in Essex and it was established there are none who recycle dog waste due to the operational impracticalities and costs involved of separating the waste from plastic bags. It was concluded this project was not viable.

# Energy Conservation

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Reduce energy use and improve energy efficient infrastructure</b>			
CC/012 Switch the Councils energy use to non-fossil fuel green energy tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> </ul>	Short Term	5% of the Council's energy is now from non-fossil fuel energy sources. The Council is currently in a fixed term contract for energy supply. Cost evaluation is underway regarding switching to a green energy tariff when the contract term expires. (Green Tariffs are currently more expensive than standard tariffs).
CC/013 Explore opportunities to purchase batteries to store electricity/ energy to supply back to our buildings or sell back to the National Grid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> <li>Reduced cost of energy consumption</li> </ul>	Short Term	Currently BDC does not generate enough overspill energy from alternative sources or off-peak tariffs to make the project financially feasible. It is likely that battery storage will be re-explored in the future.  This project has been closed.
CC/014 Switch all BDC public lighting to well-designed and well directed LED lights on a like for like replacement basis and CC/015 work with parish councils to replace any parish council owned street lights when they need replacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> <li>Reduced cost of energy consumption</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC's Car Park lighting was changed to LED in 2018.</p> <p>ECC's street light LED replacement program is ongoing in Braintree.</p> <p>All BDC managed properties now have LED lighting installed. LED lighting is being installed in Fusion managed buildings in 23/24. 3% of BDC managed lampposts have now been exchanged to LED lighting. This project is ongoing with bulbs being exchanged when lampposts fail. A specification for lamppost repair is being written for tender in 23/24 which will include replacing LED Lighting.</p> <p>ECC has offered Parish Councils second hand working LED lanterns on a first come first serve basis. Parish Councils were also signposted to apply for ECC climate change grants of up to £20,000 to support their LED replacement programs and the case study of Feering Parish</p>

			Council was promoted. (This grant stream has now closed.)
CC/016 Increase energy efficiency and renewable technologies across Council equipment, assets and estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> <li>Reduction in energy used</li> <li>Reduction in energy costs</li> </ul>	Long Term	<p>The number of solar panels installed on BDC owned buildings was increased in 22/23.</p> <p>Future renewable energy projects are in the process of being scoped.</p>
<b>Increase the proportion of energy derived from renewable sources</b>			
OP/20/005 Continue to research and evaluate ultra-low emission alternatives for the Council's fleet of vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify opportunities to reduce the impact of the Council's impact on emissions</li> </ul>	Short Term (Med Term implementation)	<p>An internal Vehicle Replacement Project Board has been established.</p> <p>An external review of the Council's fleet and opportunities to look at alternative fuels and alternative low emissions vehicles has been commissioned and a draft report has been received. We are expecting the final report to be submitted to us by the end of March.</p> <p>This project is linked to the Review of the Waste Management Service and as a result has also been setback by the delay in publication of the secondary legislation expected from the Environment Act 2021.</p>
CC/018 Consider use of robust certified carbon credit schemes to offset any residual organisation emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce Carbon Impact of organisation</li> </ul>	Long Term	This project has not yet been started.

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Improve energy performance of existing housing stock</b>			
CC/019 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in fuel poverty have access to affordable, low carbon warmth.</li> <li>• Improved energy efficiency in homes and reduced costs for residents</li> <li>• Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>BDC was awarded £1.6 million of energy efficiency grant funding in 2022.</p> <p>1934 residents have been referred to access grant funding and/or solar panel schemes. 62 BDC residents accessed Sustainable Warmth grants for retrofitted energy efficiency measures to a value of £329K</p> <p>BDC also supported Eastlight Community Homes in securing funding under phase1 &amp; 2 of the Home Upgrade Grant – these HUG grants have resulted in 450 low-income households accessing energy efficiency upgrades.</p>
CC/020 Continue with campaigns providing information to residents on saving energy measures to help reduce emissions, including promotion of retrofit schemes for homeowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District emissions reduced.</li> <li>• Campaigns successfully delivered.</li> <li>• Increase in residents sign posted to grants</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>This work has been ongoing and has become part of a working stream for the multi-agency Cost of Living Partnership.</p> <p>A “Don’t wait for Winter” and “Winter Warmth” campaign was run, and residents are being directed to the Green Doctor Referral scheme for home energy efficiency audits.</p> <p>‘Ease the Squeeze’ - information on home insulation and a range of energy saving tips has been promoted and articles on these schemes have been included in BDC’s Contact Magazine</p>

# Built Environment

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Reduce the carbon impact and improve biodiversity of new developments</b>			
CC/021 Continue to emphasise climate change and the requirements around carbon reduction and renewables in Neighbourhood Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness and consideration of Climate Change issues for those developing Neighbourhood Plans</li> </ul>	Ongoing	BDC is encouraging community groups putting together Neighbourhood Plans to consider whether they wish to add policies on managing the impact of climate change. Both recent plans adopted at Kelvedon and Feering include responding to climate change as part of the vision for their villages and include policies encouraging energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation'
CC/022 Promote sustainable materials for new constructions based on the BREEAM* tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced environmental impact of new builds</li> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new developments</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>The Plaza development is an example of BREEAM construction and is being used as a promotional BREEAM case study. Presentations to Essex wide groups on the success of this building has been undertaken.</p> <p>(The Plaza is 42% more efficient than building regulations and derives 54% of its energy from renewable sources. )</p>
CC/023 Review changes in national planning policies that may help shape and enforce energy efficiency improvements in buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policies implemented and considered for new planning applications</li> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new developments</li> </ul>	Short Term	The Local Plan has been adopted and applying the policies within it is now standard practice.
CC/024 Create and adopt new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) on sustainability and carbon reduction, including waste management, biodiversity gain, encouraging developers to exceed targets and build sustainable, resilient and efficient new homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supplementary Planning Document adopted and used as a material planning consideration</li> <li>Positive impact on biodiversity from new developments</li> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new developments</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>The Planning policy team is in the commissioning stage of documents.</p> <p>Consultation on draft SPDs is expected to be undertaken in 2023.</p>

CC/025 Develop a Planning Sustainability check list for use by officers, members and town/parish councils when reviewing planning applications to ensure climate change is taken into consideration by decision makers of all new planning applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve framework, ensuring that climate change issues are effectively considered at planning stage</li> </ul>	Short Term	The Planning Sustainability Checklist is in its final stages of development and is expected to be reported to the Local Plan Sub Committee in Spring 2023.
CC/026 Develop an environmental assets map to understand the potential locations of positive environmental assets moving forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase knowledge of environmental assets to better understand opportunities</li> <li>• Market the District to build the green economy</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC are working in close partnership with ECC through the Local Nature Partnership. Mapping will be needed as part of the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy introduced via the Environment Act 2021 and expected to be rolled out by DEFRA by the end of 2024.</p> <p>A tree canopy study has also been commissioned.</p>

\*Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method.

*A sustainability assessment method that is used to master plan projects infrastructure and buildings*

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
CC/027 Support the transition to sustainable heating sources in new developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new developments</li> </ul>	Medium Term	<p>The newly adopted Local Plan includes policy support for renewable energy on new developments. ECC guidance on how to install renewable on listed buildings has now been completed as part of the Essex Design Guide and a viability study to confirm the costs of net zero for new homes has been completed and published.</p> <p>A major development site in the district is developing no gas homes on its affordable and build for rent elements.</p>
CC/028 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> impact of new developments</li> </ul>	Long Term	BDC are continuing to investigate the opportunities for this as part of wider Planning network.
<b>Reduce household water consumption and maximise installation of sustainable drainage systems, water reuse and grey water harvesting technologies</b>			
CC/029 Work with ECC to ensure that all new development sites have sufficient "green/blue" infrastructure to mitigate flooding through the Sustainable Urban Drainage System Strategies submitted at Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced risk of flooding in new developments</li> </ul>	Medium Term	Local Plan policies were considered sufficient by Inspectors to ensure the required amount of green and blue infrastructure was in place. These are being applied in new developments.
<b>Reduce energy use in existing households by retrofitting energy efficiency measures</b>			
CC/030 Continue to signpost owners of traditional or listed buildings to advice and assistance on energy saving measures and improved sustainability that will avoid causing harm to the building and surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from homes</li> <li>Reduced cost of energy for residents</li> </ul>	Ongoing	ECC has completed guidance for those with listed buildings. This is now published online in the Essex Design Guide and being promoted by BDC

<p>CC/031 Work with registered housing providers and registered landlords to progressively increase the energy efficiency of social housing stock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from homes</li> <li>• Reduced cost of energy for residents</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>BDC has supported ECH with preparation of funding bids to the Homes Upgrade Grant (Phase 1 &amp; 2). This has resulted in 450 low-income Households accessing energy efficiency upgrades.</p> <p>A joint BDC and registered social landlord forum is being launched as part of the Healthy Housing Strategy and the BDC support offered to ECH will be extended to all RSL with housing stock in BDC in 2023.</p>
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# Transport

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Grow electric vehicle charging network and infrastructure areas</b>			
CC/032 Continue with the installation of electric charging points in the Council's car parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Council owned car parks fitted with EV charging points.</li> <li>Improved infrastructure and accessibility for customers with EV's using our car parks.</li> </ul>	Short Term	All BDC car parks have EV chargers installed. 12 of the chargers installed have now been upgraded to fast (22Kwh) chargers. A feasibility study is in progress regarding installing a pilot solar canopy in a BDC car park.
CC/033 Support ECC to continue to build up the on-street charging infrastructure across our District for electric vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved infrastructure and accessibility for electric vehicle charging</li> </ul>	Medium Term	ECC has submitted a bid (LEVI) to central government for funding to improve the on-street EV charger infrastructure. BDC is supporting ECC by promoting their EV Charger webpage which includes a link for residents to submit suggested locations for on street EV chargers to be installed.
<b>Improve digital connectivity to reduce work travel demand</b>			
DC/21/003/C Work with partners to improve the digital connectivity across the District enabling people to work from home more and travel less	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase coverage across the District and work with digital suppliers to achieve digital connectivity in any gaps.</li> </ul>	Short Term	95% of the district now has access to superfast broadband.
<b>Increase cycling and walking in the District</b>			
CC/035 Continue to work with LiveWell partners to encourage people to get active and walk more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase active travel</li> <li>Reduce car journeys</li> <li>Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from travel</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>"Walk More" promoting has been ongoing.</p> <p>There are now 38 regular monthly walks being held as well as 'pop up walks' around the district. A volunteering network is being created to arrange and support these walks in the future.</p> <p>Residents are being signposted from the</p>

			Provide Weight matters Sessions to their local community walking groups.
CC/036 In partnership with Essex County Council, consider pilot school street schemes to reduce the number of vehicles travelling into school streets during school drop off and pick up times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce congestion around schools</li> <li>• Reduce car journeys to and from school</li> <li>• Reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from travel</li> <li>• Increase cycling and walking opportunities</li> </ul>	Short Term	A pilot healthy school street scheme has been installed in Braintree along Lancaster Way and Gilcrest Road. The pavement has been resurfaced to make active travel easier. In addition, 20mph signs and thermoplastic road signs (Children Crossing Warning) have been erected, road markings refreshed, and temporary street art painted on the road to change the look and feel of the street.
ED/21/005/C Working in partnership, deliver the actions of our cycling strategy and promote walking and cycling throughout the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase cycling across the District</li> </ul>	Short Term	Cycling promotional videos have been produced. Cycle Videos promoted via Facebook reached 18,125 residents.

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Encourage greener transport choices</b>			
CC/038 Continue with campaigns to reduce engine idling targeting specific high traffic areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> <li>Improvement in air quality</li> </ul>	Ongoing	A targeted anti-idling campaign is included in the comms plan for 2023/24.
CC/039 Review the Councils Travel Plan to ensure it continues to promote sustainable travel to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> <li>Reduction in fuel costs</li> <li>Reduction in journeys</li> </ul>	Short Term	BDC has reviewed the Council's Green Travel Plan. As a result of this review ECC has accredited BDC with a Green Travel Accreditation Award.
CC/040 Consider introducing differential parking charges in council owned car parks for low emission vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage use of low emission vehicles</li> </ul>	Short Term	As part of a recent parking charge review differential parking charges were considered for low emission vehicles however standard tariffs were applied for consistency across all users and car parks.
CC/041 Work with Essex County Council to improve the quality and availability of low carbon public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in use of more sustainable travel options</li> <li>Reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from public transport</li> </ul>	Medium Term	ECC has launched DigiGo.  BDC Comms have been supporting the use of the DigiGo bus service by actively responding to queries regarding this on both direct and indirect social media channels.
CC/042 Review the Council's Driver and Vehicle Standards and Policies to create a greener fleet of taxis in the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from taxi fleet and pollution</li> <li>Reduction in fuel costs from taxi fleet.</li> </ul>	Medium Term	Data has been collated in relation to baselining the current vehicle types across the Taxi and private hire fleet.  Discussions have been held with the industry forum to understand the industry constraints such as the current market limitations on the availability and supply of electric or hybrid wheelchair accessible vehicles.  A review of the current Taxi Licensing Policy is in progress.

# Businesses and the Green Economy

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Developing the Green Economy</b>			
ED/21/011/C Work with Essex County Council and other service providers to identify opportunities to develop low carbon skills, education, training and employment opportunities and support ECC Centre of Excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Attract new business in the green economy and encourage green sector companies to cluster in the North Essex local economy</li> <li>• Increase overall awareness of climate change issues and how to tackle them</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC is working with ECC to pilot a Green Accreditation Scheme in the district.</p> <p>A business consultation has been completed to identify the skills gaps in businesses and the current provisions local business are already using to fill these gaps. This will inform what courses and skills are required to provide the greatest impact on local businesses.</p>
ED/21/009/C Work with partners to maximise the impact that I-Construct brings to the construction sector and its supply chain, championing modern design and construction methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced carbon from construction process and new developments</li> <li>• Increased sustainability in design of new buildings</li> <li>• Develop our green economy</li> </ul>	Long Term	This project has not yet started.
CC/045 Work with landowners, DEFRA and ECC to encourage sustainable land stewardship practices on land across the District, including rewilding and tree planting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Biodiversity of farmland</li> <li>• Improve carbon capture and carbon storage of farmland</li> <li>• Improve water quality</li> <li>• Reduce carbon use through fewer artificial inputs</li> </ul>	Long Term	<p>BDC is working with ECC and the newly formed North Essex Farming Cluster to pilot sustainable land stewardship schemes such as Agroforestry in ECC's Climate Focus Area which covers 68% of the district.</p> <p>A trial of rewilding verges has been completed. Several parish councils have expressed an interest to extend rewilding of verges in their parishes in 23/24.</p>

<b>Encourage businesses to reduce waste</b>			
CC/046 Improve engagement and communication with businesses within the District to improve their participation in recycling and waste minimisation, including working with manufacturers to support the reduction of packaging and make products more re-usable and recyclable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase engagement and participation of businesses in recycling and minimising their waste</li> <li>• Overall reduction in waste produced</li> <li>• Increased percentage of waste recycled</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>A “green” business feature is now included in the business newsletter. This provides information on business that have successfully adopted environmental and sustainable business practices. These articles also promote LoCASE funding and those businesses that have benefited from</p> <p>In January 2023 Government updated the legislation on “Producer Responsibility” for packaging waste. This is new legislation aimed at reducing packaging waste by making those that package goods more accountable for the amount of packaging waste used in their products. BDC will be promoting guidance to local businesses to ensure those that are involved understand and comply with the new legislation.</p>

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Encourage businesses to reduce energy use</b>			
CC/048 Continue to encourage businesses to switch to ECO heating and reduce energy use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of referrals to support and take up of funding.</li> <li>• Reduction in energy use</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>BDC is working with the Federation of Small Businesses to provide information on eco heating to businesses.</p> <p>Green Business features have been published promoting light saving measures as well as switching to LED lighting. Information on solar energy for businesses has also been issued.</p>
CC/049 Continue to promote carbon footprint tools to businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements identified and implemented by businesses to reduce carbon impact</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>The Colchester Business Enterprise Agency (COLBEA) have now received funding via Braintree (through the Shared Prosperity Fund) to provide fully funded Sustainability and Carbon Foot Printing courses to Braintree district businesses.</p> <p>Promotion of these course began in January 2023.</p>
CC/050 Provide support to businesses across the District on the development and implementation of green travel plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of businesses implementing a green travel plan</li> <li>• Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from travel</li> </ul>	Ongoing	
CC/051 Introduce a Climate Change/Green Environmental Accreditation Scheme or Business Award scheme to recognise and showcase initiatives that can be adopted as best practice and to encourage businesses to become carbon neutral.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness of opportunities to become carbon neutral</li> <li>• Increased sharing and recognition of best practice across businesses</li> </ul>	Medium Term	<p>ECC is introducing an Environmental Accreditation Scheme. (Good Start Levels 1-3) .Due to the established Business Network and interest of some environmental advanced businesses already case studied in Braintree district ECC working with BDC will be piloting the accreditation scheme in the district.</p>

### Encourage businesses to build resilience

CC/052 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

- Successfully sharing knowledge and resources to increase our opportunities to collaborate for grant funding
- Reduction in carbon impact of businesses and voluntary sector organisations

Ongoing

Information on the Essex Climate Commission £20k Climate Action fund has been shared with several parties. (This fund has now closed.)

A grants list for Climate Change community projects has been created and shared locally.

Information on joint initiatives, best practice examples, presentations and best practice visits have been presented to the cross party working group to inform future initiatives and actions.

# Natural Environment

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Improve biodiversity and green spaces</b>			
Continue to deliver campaigns to support a reduction in littering and fly-tipping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in fly-tips</li> <li>Reduction in littering</li> <li>Cleaner District</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>BDC is one of 11 Essex Authorities that form the “Cleaner Essex Group”. This year’s Love Essex campaign will be targeting road littering with the slogan, “<i>It’s for driving on, not littering on</i>”, and highlights the consequences offenders who are caught throwing litter from a vehicle will face (Fixed Penalty Notice of up to £150 and up to £2,500, plus costs upon Court conviction.) Local business partners will be supporting the campaign, by displaying banners at 23 KFC and 25 McDonald’s drive-through restaurants in Essex with the message “It’s a takeaway not a throwaway”, as well as distributing stickers on packaging and posters in the restaurants.</p> <p>BDC has an on-going social media messages campaign to tackle litter – “<i>bin it or take it home.</i>”</p> <p>There are now over 500 Green Heart Champions and their work is celebrated through a dedicated social media channel.</p> <p>Increased social media coverage begins in July onwards for the duration of the school holiday period encouraging school holiday litter picks</p>
CC/054 Complete our trial of alternative weed control methods other than the use of chemicals in Council operations that are more sustainable and environmentally friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trial completed evaluating relevant alternative methods of weed control introduced.</li> <li>Reduce environmental impact of weed control</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC will continue to use Glyphosate as being the most cost efficient and effective method of weed control however, reliance has significantly reduced in favour of more sustainable methods as part of the Council’s Integrated Weed Control Management Programme that includes, mulching, weed scrubber etc.</p>

CC/055 Develop a Local Nature Recovery Plan to identify actions needed to restore declining species and habitats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan established to address the practical actions needed to restore declining species and habitats and a healthy natural environment where our plants and animals can thrive</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>Essex County Council are the responsible authority for delivering a new Local Nature Recovery Plan.</p> <p>A local nature partnership has been set up to undertake the work and stakeholders from across Essex are now engaged.</p>
CC/056 Plant wildflower areas across the District, including mixture of ornamental and native wildflowers and areas which are left with minimal maintenance to increase biodiversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase biodiversity</li> <li>Improve attractiveness of District</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p><b>Scheme 1 – Naturalisation/whip &amp; Bulb planting/drought resistant planting – areas identified by BDC Staff</b></p> <p>In Halstead BDC have removed 2 bedding areas (Mount Hill and Halstead Cemetery) and the areas have been naturalised.</p> <p>In Halstead Public Gardens BDC have removed bedding in the bed next to the Pond and replaced with a sustainable planting scheme.</p> <p>The next areas for Sustainable Planting are programmed for Autumn 23 and included :</p> <p>Braintree Cemetery removal of the front bedding area, Braintree Leahurst (opposite St Michael's Fountain) the removal of front bedding from 6 beds and replace with Sustainable Planting schemes.</p> <p><b>Scheme 2 – Rewilding of BDC open space as suggested by Town/Parish Councils</b></p> <p>Rivenhall Parish Council have made contact with Essex Wildlife Trust for guidance on rewilding in their area. Castle Hedingham Parish Council are working with Essex Wildlife Trust from January 23. Rivenhall PC, Castle Hedingham PC and Hatfield Peveral PC have all formed working groups to further this action.</p> <p><b>Scheme 3 Wild seeding of ECC rural verges as suggested by Town &amp; Parish Councils.</b></p> <p>BDC have received the license application from Rivenhall Parish Council which will be forwarded to ECC for approval.</p> <p><b>Scheme 4 – Tree Planting/Soil Bunds in</b></p>

			<b>BDC owned areas</b> A soil bund on Mary Ruch Way/Hadfield Drive Black Notley has been started. BDC are currently awaiting confirmation of approval and funding for tree planting on behalf of Braintree Civic Society.
CC/057 Reduce the number of cuts to rural verges across the District (Subject to outcome of recent trials)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase biodiversity</li> <li>• Improve attractiveness of District</li> </ul>	Short Term	A single Autumn cut of the rural verges was adopted in 2022 for a period of 3 years during which time ECC will undertake ecological monitoring to evaluate the impact on biodiversity to inform future thinking on the
CC/058 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase biodiversity</li> <li>• Improve attractiveness of District</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC is in discussion with Eastlight regarding funding community gardens and community orchards on Eastlight managed land.</p> <p>Eastlight have published their Sustainability Strategy 2022-27 which provides for reduced energy and Carbon emissions, improved water efficiency, enhanced biodiversity diversity in their housing stock, and improved waste and recycling from their housing stocks. BDC is working with Eastlight to support their delivery plan for example working in partnership to receive grant funding for energy efficiency measures.</p> <p>A Registered Social Landlord forum is being established in 23/24 to foster better communication with all RSLs working in the district and BDC's support will be extended to all RSLs once the forum is established.</p>

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
CC/059 Explore opportunities to use council owned land to develop community orchards and community gardens (to grow veg or fruit),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase biodiversity</li> <li>• Improve attractiveness of district</li> <li>• Increase opportunities for communities to grow fruit and veg</li> <li>• Increase community engagement in enhancement of local areas</li> </ul>	Medium Term	Funding for Community Gardens was awarded to BDC as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund. Working with partner organisations 11 sites have so far been identified as potentially viable for a Community Garden or Orchard. This project is ongoing with applications for funding currently being received with the first phase of funding due to be allocated by March 2023.
CC/060 Review our current air quality monitoring to ensure that it continues to monitor high risk pollutants and locations and take appropriate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure continued effectiveness of air quality monitoring</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>An external review of the districts Air Quality monitoring Methodology has been commissioned and is in progress.</p> <p>The Annual Air Quality monitoring readings have been submitted to DEFRA – no declaration of an air quality management area is required.</p>
CC/061 Develop a community tree and bulb planting scheme to support community groups, town and parish councils to increase tree and bulb planting across the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of trees and shrubs planted across the District.</li> <li>• Increase engagement from communities in their local area</li> <li>• Increase publically accessible woodland</li> </ul>	Short Term	A community whip and bulb planting project was undertaken in 2021-22. Tree whips (18,700) and bulbs (73,000) were offered to residents from October 2021 and were planted over the following six months.
CC/062 Identify opportunities to plant trees on Council owned land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of trees and shrubs planted across the District on Council land.</li> <li>• Increase publically accessible woodland</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>4,500 trees have been planted.</p> <p>A tree survey has been commissioned.</p>

CC/063 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve water quality</li> <li>• Improve biodiversity</li> <li>• Reduce flooding</li> </ul>	Medium Term	A reviewed watercourse and flooding GIS layer is under development as part 1 of this project.
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# Adapting to Climate Change

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Support communities to improve resilience</b>			
CC/064 Continue to provide advice for residents on how to reduce health risks during severe weather events such as heatwaves/extreme cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased accessible information available to residents on health risks from climate change</li> <li>Increased resilience of communities to climate change</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>Advice for residents was provided for Storm Eunice and also the summer heatwave via our 'Beat the Heat' campaign.</p> <p>In preparation for winter "Don't Wait for Winter" and "Dampness in your home" leaflets have been promoted.</p> <p>BDC's "Warm Spaces" map is also available for residents.</p>
CC/065 Work with Town and Parish Councils to develop their emergency plans, ensuring the plans reflect the changing risks of their communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in number of Parish and Town Council with Emergency plans developed.</li> <li>Successful collaboration on climate emergency related areas of work</li> <li>Increased resilience to climate change impacts in our communities</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>BDC commenced engaging and supporting Town and Parish Council's with updating and developing their emergency plans October 22. This is enacted annually.</p> <p>This engagement concluded at the end of February 23 and final plans are in the process of being received by BDC's Corporate Resilience Officer. The information within the plans will be used to update BDC's own emergency response plans with local resilience measures.</p>
<b>Improve flood alleviation for community areas that flood</b>			
CC/066 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in flood risk</li> <li>Increased resilience in communities to impacts of climate change</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>BDC is an active member of the Essex Flood Board. A commitment was received in 22/23 for surface water drainage improvements to be made to Halstead Town Centre. Initial improvement work was undertaken in Autumn 2022.</p>

CC/07 Lobby Government to increase the funding available for flood risk management to meet the growing need for action especially around surface water flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in flood risk</li> <li>• Increased resilience in communities to impacts of climate change</li> </ul>	Short Term	BDC has lobbied central government and the insurance industry to extend Floodre to include insurance support for business who are at higher risk of flooding. BDC has promoted the Property Level Flood Grant for those properties that suffer from repeated flooding.
CC/068 Work with partners to open up main rivers and create wetlands, natural flood defences and urban drainage, as supported by the Local Plan and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve water quality</li> <li>• Improve biodiversity</li> <li>• Reduce flooding</li> </ul>	Short Term	The Hoppit Mead back-channel clearance project on the Brain has been completed to create a nature-based flood management solution. There is ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of this flood system.

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
<b>Increase drought mitigation for the District</b>			
CC/069 Ensure that planting in open space owned or managed by the council is drought resistant and requires less watering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase sustainability of planting schemes and resilience to climate change impacts</li> <li>• Reduce use of water</li> </ul>	Short Term	Drought resistant planting schemes have been installed as part of the cc/056
CC/070 the Councils Climate impact risk assessment and integrate risk mitigation into service business plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective emergency plan to respond to risks</li> </ul>	Short Term	Climate Risk is included in the Council's strategic risk register.  Emergency plans are constantly under review with the Essex Resilience Forum. Emerging climate risks are monitored as part of the work undertaken by the "Risk and Intelligence Group" within the Forum. The Met Office and Environment Agency are part of the ERF and the Risk and Intelligence Group.
Regularly review and test the Council's emergency plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective emergency plan to respond to risks</li> </ul>	Short Term	
CC/071 Work with Essex Resilience Forum (ERF) and other partners to review and test plans and respond to emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective emergency plan to respond to risks</li> </ul>	Short Term	BDC is an active member of the Essex Resilience Forum which reviews and tests emergency plans. In 2022 BDC used these plans to support the emergency response to Storm Eunice and the Autumn Heatwave.  In 2022 BDC developed and adopted a Recovery Plan and reviewed our existing Emergency Plan.
CC/073 Monitor and seek to mitigate emerging risks and their impact on vulnerable people in the community with ERF partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased resilience of communities to climate change impacts</li> </ul>	Ongoing	The ERF has a "Risk and Intelligence Group" that meets regularly to review emerging risks and their possible impact on Essex communities.

			<p>The ERF members have invested in an electronic “Vulnerable Intelligent Person Emergency Response” (VIPER) system that can be accessed in an emergency event to identify vulnerable residents that may need assistance.</p> <p>As part of the annual review of Town and Parish Council emergency plans BDC requests that Town and Parish Council's identify vulnerable locations that may need support in the event of an emergency.</p>
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# Delivery and Monitoring

Action	Outcome	Timescale	Update
Validate our action plan in respect of current actions and look to strengthen the medium term and longer term actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action plan receives external validation on the actions it is taking to achieve net zero and the support it is providing across the District to residents, communities and businesses.</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>This work is ongoing. BDC Service Unit Managers work with the Climate Project Officer to identify new actions as part of the internal Annual Service Plan process.</p> <p>BDC works with ECC who are partnering with The Carbon Trust to validate Climate Actions.</p>
Create a communication plan to promote and raise awareness of the Climate Change strategy and action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication plan developed.</li> <li>Monitoring and reporting plan developed and timetable for reporting on progress established.</li> </ul>	Short Term	A Climate Communication plan is in place. The Climate Communication Plan will be updated as part of the Annual Business Plan process for 23/24
Develop a monitoring and reporting plan to track the progress of the action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing regular updates on progress against our actions</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>A monitoring and reporting plan has been developed and was approved by full council in July 2022.</p> <p>Quarterly Project Highlight reports are produced and scrutinized by Management Board.</p>
Collaborate with other Authorities across Essex to share learning, data, best practice and, increase access to grant funding bids for environmental projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully sharing knowledge and resources to increase our opportunities to collaborate</li> <li>Increase access and opportunities for grant funding</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>Meetings have been held with Essex local district councils as well as with Local Authorities across the UK through Local Government Association forums and training sessions to share learning, data and best practice.</p> <p>In 2022 the Local Government Association launched its "Climate Change Hub" that includes an Innovation Zone and a database of Climate Change case studies. The LGA Climate Change Hub alerts Local Authorities to any Climate focused grant release.</p>

Develop a sustainability and carbon reduction tool to assess the environmental impact on projects undertaken by the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due consideration given of the environmental impacts and/or carbon emissions from projects and how they can be reduced.</li> <li>• Overall Council emissions reduced</li> </ul>	Short Term	<p>BDC worked with the Carbon Trust to develop an organisation carbon calculation tool.</p> <p>As part of the launch of the LGA Climate Change Hub additional tools are now available for BDC to use.</p>
Support national campaigns and use these to promote our campaigns and take action where we can to increase engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align to national days of action to reinforce the message of collective action</li> </ul>	Short Term	This work is ongoing as part of the Climate Actions Plan's Annual Communication Plan
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All strategies and policies are reviewed and updated to take climate change impacts into account</li> </ul>	Medium Term	BDC is in the process of developing an internal Sharepoint site that will provide information to Service Unit Managers that are reviewing or writing strategies/policies on how to take climate impact into account.





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<b>Report Title:</b> Healthy Communities Update	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	<b>For:</b> Decision
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> DP/2023/14
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor Frankie Ricci, Cabinet Member for Communities	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Cherie Root, Corporate Director, <a href="mailto:cherie.root@braintree.gov.uk">cherie.root@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on the progress Braintree District Council (the Council) made against key health and communities priorities and to agree the proposed process for the development of the LiveWell Strategy 2024-2028.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Council is asked to note the progress and achievements from the Livewell Strategy 2019 - 2023.
- 2.2 The Council is asked to note the summary report for COVID response – 2020-2023
- 2.3 The Council is asked to receive an update on the response for residents on cost of living issues.
- 2.4 The Council is asked to agree the process for the development of the next Livewell Strategy during 2023.

## **3. Summary of Issues**

- 3.1 The Council's Livewell Strategy is coming towards the end of its term and this report provides an opportunity to provide an update on progress and achievements from the strategy as well as the process for developing the new strategy.
- 3.2 During the life of the strategy, a global pandemic necessitated a change in priorities and activity from the original agreed strategy and a redirection of resources to deal with the public health emergency.
- 3.3 Subsequently, further global events have led to the Council's residents facing significant cost of living issues which required the Council to flex its priorities again to deal with emerging community needs.

- 3.4 Alongside these emerging priorities and the Councils' LiveWell Strategy, the Council has been working in partnership with NHS colleagues to provide support through the reorganisation of local public health services, through the creation of Primary Care Networks and latterly the Integrated Care System.
- 3.5 Due to the interrelated nature of these issues, this report summarises the activities and outcomes undertaken in each of these areas and sets out a proposed partnership approach to reviewing the LiveWell Strategy during 2023.
- 3.6 **Livewell Strategy 2019 - 2023 update** – Appendix A summarises the progress and achievements over the period of the current LiveWell Strategy
- 3.7 **COVID Response report** – Appendix B summarises the scope of activity and outcomes in response to the pandemic, with a particular focus on health and communities.
- 3.8 **Cost of Living update** – Appendix C summarises the current progress made to date in responding to the current cost of living issues that are affecting residents of the district.
4. **LiveWell Strategy 2024 – 2028**
- 4.1 The delivery of the current LiveWell Strategy has become ever more reliant on working across systems and partners in local authorities, NHS, other statutory partners, businesses and crucially the communities and voluntary sector across the district.
- 4.2 The Districts voluntary sector has continually demonstrated its ability to tackle problems in an efficient and effective way with support from key statutory bodies and has produced successful and sustainable outcomes.
- 4.3 The Council are also part of Mid Essex Alliance, an alliance whose role is to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities across Mid Essex. This partnership includes representation from Braintree District, Maldon District and Chelmsford City Councils, as well as Essex County Council, NHS and community and voluntary sector. Resource and funding is devolved to the partnership to tackle health issues at Mid Essex level and over the next term of the Councils Livewell strategy it is likely that more resource will be targeted at activity designed to improve outcomes across Mid Essex.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the learning is taken from the delivery of the current strategy and that it is aligned to the Mid Essex Alliance 5 year plan to ensure a partnership approach to the development of health improvements, with a greater involvement in its design from the community and voluntary sector.
- 4.5 One of the areas that was successful in the current strategy, was the use of evidence-based decision making, using a range of data sources, including

clinical and partner data and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This ensures that different partners with different decision-making systems can align with agreed evidence-based priorities and therefore ensure maximum effectiveness of shared resources. It is proposed that this evidence-based approach is continued through the development of the LiveWell Strategy 2024 – 2028. This will be supplemented by the recently commissioned Thriving Places Index, which will provide an invaluable source of data and research that will help to target interventions more effectively.

4.6 The proposed high-level plan with key milestones is set out below:

Phase 1 – Evidence and Research		
Activity	Deliverable	To be complete
Work with partners and the community to understand collective needs	1. Evidence Base Report	July 2023
Gather evidence and research		
Phase 2 – Analysis and Strategy Development		
Work with partners to undertake a collective analysis of the evidence base	1. Draft LiveWell Strategy	October 2023
Form a set of priorities and consult with key stakeholders		
Draft LiveWell Strategy		
Phase 3 - Adopt Strategy and Delivery Plan		
Approve Draft Strategy through Health and Wellbeing Board and Mid Essex Alliance	1. Approved Strategy 2. Delivery Plan – Year 1 3. Monitoring Framework	January 2024
Approve Draft Strategy through Cabinet		
Consult on Draft Strategy with communities		
Develop Year 1 Delivery Plan		
Develop monitoring framework for measuring success		

## 5. Consultation

5.1 No consultation is being undertaken as a result of or prior to this report.

## **6. Options**

- 6.1 Option 1 - To agree the process for the new LiveWell Strategy. Option 1 is the preferred option as it will implement a new fit for purpose strategic approach to Health and Wellbeing in line with our partners.
- 6.2 Option 2 - To not agree the process set out in this report and suggest an alternative approach to the development of the strategy.

## **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report. It is likely that there will be resource across a number of partners to deliver the new strategy, but this will be set out in the delivery plan when drafted.
- 7.2 Where projects require funding, these will be subject to consideration and will proceed through the appropriate governance process to ensure approval for future spend is obtained.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There is no legal implication arising out of this report. Any legal implication arising from an individual project coming forward as a result of the Strategy will be considered at the earliest opportunity, as part of the Councils business case for that particular project.

## **9. Other Implications**

- 9.1 There are no other implications identified as part of this report.

## **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 Appendix A - Livewell Strategy 2019 - 2023 update
- 11.2 Appendix B - COVID Response report
- 11.3 Appendix C - Cost of Living update

## **12. Background Papers**

- 12.1 Livewell Strategy 2019 - 2023  
<https://www.livewellcampaign.co.uk/app/uploads/2020/03/livewell-strategy-2019.pdf>



Livewell  
Strategy  
2019-2023  
update  
March 2023

Braintree District Council plays a crucial role in reducing health inequalities and improving population health and has been involved in system wide health partnerships, since the health and social care reforms over a decade ago. Braintree District Council is the co-ordinating authority for the place-based health and wellbeing partnership, a key partner of the Mid Essex Alliance and Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Board.

The changing health landscape and response to recent public health issues means that nationally, regionally and locally there is an increasing focus on Health and Wellbeing and the role of local authorities in supporting health improvement through the wider determinants of health, recognising that a considerable proportion of health issues are derived from socio-economic factors that are within the sphere of influence of local authorities.

Braintree District Council are a lead partner in the development of the Livewell campaign which has now been rolled out across all Essex local authorities. The Livewell Strategy 2019-2023 is the joint health and wellbeing strategy for the Braintree District and is supported and delivered by a range of partners to develop the LiveWell themes.

The Braintree District Health and Wellbeing Partnership is collectively responsible for the delivery of the LiveWell Strategy and consists of several partners, including:

- ♥ Mid Essex Alliance
- ♥ Essex County Council Public Health
- ♥ Community360
- ♥ Citizens Advice
- ♥ Active Braintree Foundation and Network
- ♥ Department of Work and Pensions
- ♥ Eastlight Community Homes
- ♥ Fusion Lifestyle
- ♥ Active Essex
- ♥ Essex Wellbeing Service

In 2019 the Council published its current Livewell Strategy 2019 - 2023. The purpose of the strategy was to identify what the Braintree Health and Wellbeing Panel considered as the key Public Health challenges, the key objectives for the Panel and the outcomes to be achieved. The objectives under each of the Livewell Themes were:

**startwell** - We will endeavour to help young families have the best start in life.

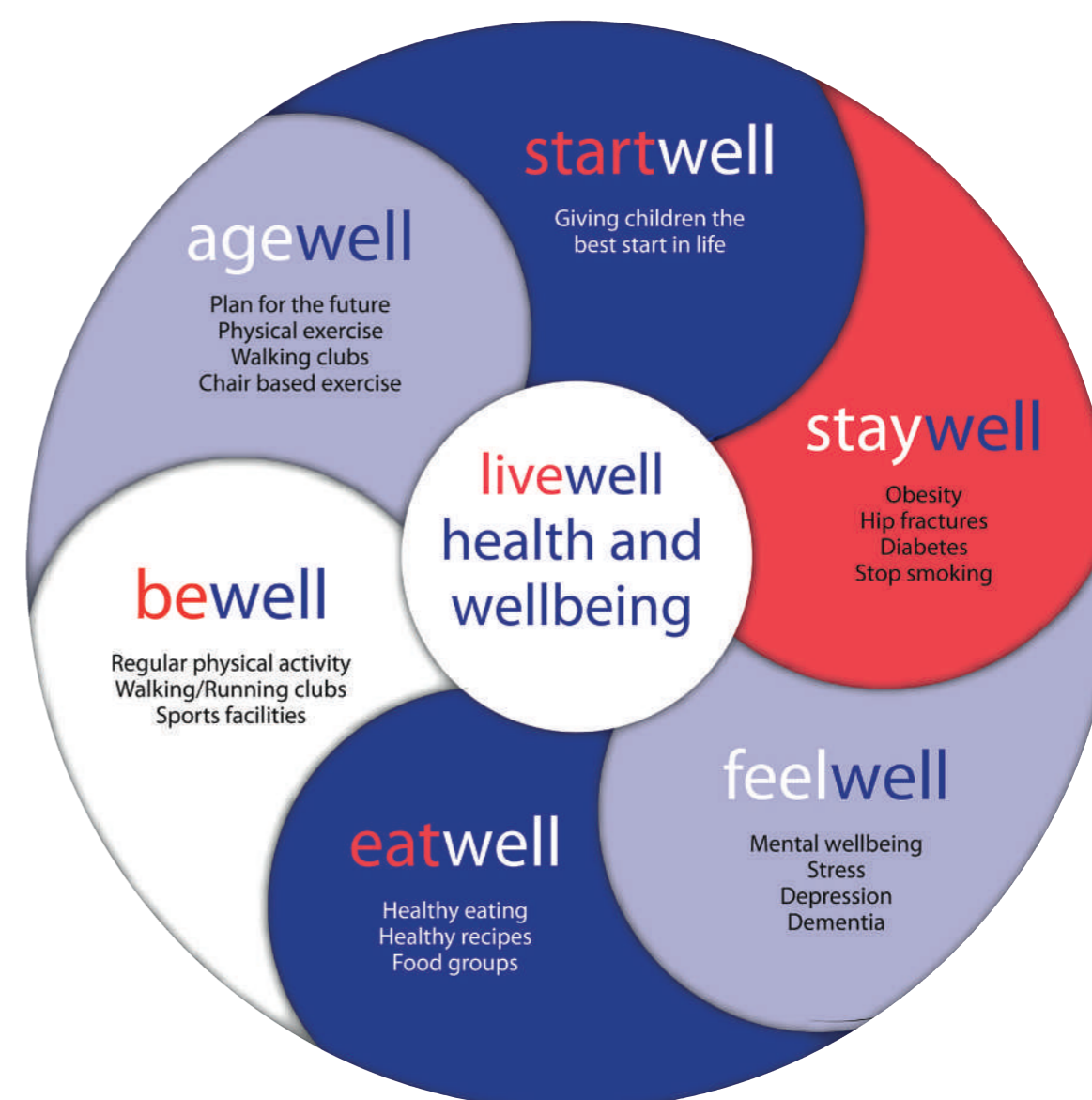
**bewell** - We will encourage more people to undertake regular physical activity, which will in turn produce longer term health benefits.

**staywell** - We will work together with the community and professionals to ensure our residents have access to the best clinical services.

**eatwell** - We will raise awareness across the district about healthier eating.

**feelwell** - We will improve the access to services that address mental wellbeing.

**agewell** - We will endeavour to encourage people to look at improving their health and wellbeing now, to be able to lead a better quality of life in the future. We will also encourage and provide opportunities for our elderly population to be more active during their retirement years.



During the term of the current strategy, the COVID pandemic and more recently the Cost of Living issues have had a significant impact on health outcomes and have required an emergency and long term response at a national and local level.

These emerging issues made it difficult to achieve some of the original planned Livewell Strategy activities as it was difficult to access our target cohorts, particularly those in schools or our most vulnerable due to the nature of the pandemic. Also, the necessitated redirection of resource to prioritise our emergency response meant that there were a number of planned activities that were not able to be undertaken during periods of the pandemic.

The current strategy lifecycle has also seen emergence of national policy around Levelling Up. As a district, our investment plan has been linked to our LiveWell Strategy objectives in relation to reducing health inequalities and improving population health. A proportion of our Shared Prosperity Fund has been allocated to the Mid Essex Alliance to reduce health inequalities and improve overall population health. We are working with partners across Mid Essex, including NHS, Maldon District Council and Chelmsford City Council to tackle this collectively.

The Livewell action plan consisted of 48 projects across the six themes led by a range of statutory and voluntary partners. Whilst there has been some impact on the original programme due to COVID and the ability to effectively measure some of the outcomes originally intended, there has been a wide range of activity undertaken and some examples of this have been added throughout this document by LiveWell theme.



What happens in pregnancy and early childhood impacts on physical and emotional health all the way through to adulthood. Supporting good maternal health is important for safe delivery and good birth weight to give babies the best start. During the first 2 years of life the brain displays a remarkable capacity to absorb information and adapt to its surroundings therefore positive early experience is vital to ensure children are ready to learn, ready for school and have good life chances.



Our Start Well projects were tailored to needs in the Braintree District. Some of the projects delivered included:

♥ **Healthy Habits** – This project was undertaken with Becker’s Green Primary School and Community360. It was a targeted programme using a weight management service to encourage families to form healthy habits around food and physical activity. Four family units started the programme with one family completing the full 12-week course. The adults within the programme saw a weight reduction averaging just under 4 kilos per adult. The children all saw a reduction in their BMI (Body Mass Index).

♥ **Holiday Activity Programme**  
Our partnership Holiday Activity Programme is targeted at children who are entitled to free school meals or from low income families. It has been in place for holiday periods since the relaxing of restriction following the pandemic. The programme is operated from a range of venues, including our Leisure Centres across the district and Braintree Museum, providing a variety of physical activities, creative activities and healthy meals. During lockdown restrictions, food vouchers and activity packs were provided to those who needed them. In 2022 28 clubs were provided during February Half Term, Summer and Christmas, these were mainstream clubs, SEND and mental health hubs. 7,490 spaces were available and benefitted 1,733 children and young people.

♥ **Emotional Health and Wellbeing in schools** – Following the pandemic, grants were provided to schools to undertake projects to support students coming back into school. These were school led and funded by Braintree District Council Health and Wellbeing funding. Schools tailored projects to the needs of their students and included arts projects, school garden projects and opportunities to discuss and process the impact of the pandemic on students.

♥ Mid Essex CCG have also responded to the need to support young people with emotional health and wellbeing issues. A **mental health support team** is in place for some schools across Braintree and the **Kids Inspire Counselling Service** is now in operation across Mid Essex.

Our flagship LiveWell Child project completed its three year pilot in 2019 and was due to be extended in 2020 and beyond to better understand the longer term impacts of the programme. Unfortunately, this work had to be suspended during the pandemic and it has been difficult to re-engage with schools subsequently. This project is planned to be considered as part of the development of the new LiveWell Strategy to identify demand and potential engagement opportunities.

# bewell



Tackling physical inactivity is critical to delivering many of the Livewell priorities (e.g., dementia, obesity and giving every child the best start in life) This priority encourages residents to be more physically active by providing a range of existing and new opportunities to undertake regular physical activity. These include:

- ♥ **Active Braintree Network** - The Active Braintree Network is the “delivery arm” of the Active Braintree Foundation and focuses on increasing participation in physical activity, improving health and wellbeing, widening access, enhancing education, skills and employment, and strengthening organisations and partnerships. The network has supported and funded a range of groups including:
  - ♥ Sport 4 Confidence to restart their programs for those with disabilities
  - ♥ Braintree Foyer to provide fitness sessions for residents & the wider community
  - ♥ Braintree Hockey Club for Walking Netball sessions
  - ♥ a gardening project at Fern House GP Practice
  - ♥ Move it or Lose it activity for older people

♥ **Finding your feet** - Led by Community 360, walks are delivered across the district. 47 people have attended walk motivator training which enables them to volunteer as walk leaders and 15 new walks have been established across the district.

♥ **Man vs Fat Football** - a male weight loss programme, supporting men with a BMI higher than 27.50 through joining a football league. There are 12 weeks per season and within 3 seasons 81 participants had a total weight loss of 379.2kg.

♥ The **Active referrals scheme** operates from Fusion managed Leisure Centres and provide a low-cost prepaid option for residents who are referred exercise by their doctors. 187 referrals have been made in total from approximately 20 referring organisations into the scheme. Referring organisations include First Stop, Provide, Job Centre and the Mental Health and Wellbeing team.



# staywell



Our ability to stay well throughout life is partly determined by our lifestyle choices. By maintaining a healthy weight, avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol consumption we can all improve our health and reduce our risk of disease.

Recognising that there are times when we all need clinical services, a range of work has been undertaken in the community and with professionals to safeguard those clinical services and improve the offer.

Braintree District Council’s role in the provision of health facilities is various: in an engagement capacity, to represent the community voice; as an enabler in terms of holding S106 funds on behalf of the NHS; and as a landlord for several facilities across the district.

Braintree District Council works with the local health bodies to collect requested S106 agreements from new developments in the district to support the delivery of new or improved facilities. On the larger development sites, or where there is a particular local need, this can include land for a new facility, however, in most cases an offsite contribution is requested to upgrade existing facilities.

Key recent achievements in the development of health facilities across the district include:

- ♥ **Victoria Square:** Braintree District Council financed and delivered a £30 million mixed use development which includes a LiveWell Hub and pharmacy. The building completed in early 2022 and the Hub has been leased to Provide since April 2022. A series of health services are already being provided within the Hub, including regular sexual health, diabetic, wellbeing, ear nose and throat, and paediatric clinics, amongst other services including support for Long Covid. Agreements are also being finalised for GPs to locate within the building alongside a new pharmacy provision.
- ♥ **Sible Hedingham Health Facility:** After several years of trying to get a new health facility established in Sible Hedingham on land given to the Council through a S106 agreement, we have worked proactively with the Mid Essex ICS and partners to establish a financially viable route to its delivery. As the ICS comes to the final stage of its business case assessment process, we look forward to transferring the land to One Medical Group at the earliest opportunity to allow them to develop this exciting new facility.



### Witham:

The Council has worked closely with Witham Town Council and the ICS, to understand the health facility needs and opportunities for Witham. Whilst appreciating it has been difficult to come to a final solution in the time of this strategy, this engagement has shown the determination of both Braintree District Council and Witham Town Council to support the community with new healthcare facilities. We are confident that at least an interim solution will be found in the coming year.



### Silver End:

As owner of the property within which the current surgery is provided, and in recognition of considerable housing growth in the area, the Council has been working with the ICS to explore options to expand provision within the village. We look forward to continuing to work with the ICS to understand their final requirements and to explore the business case for expanding the existing provision.

Braintree District Council has more recently been working alongside health colleagues to build effective partnerships between a range of organisations at “Place” (including local GPs) as this is an underlying principle of Primary Care Networks and the Integrated Care System.



Healthy eating means consuming the right type and quantity of food from all food groups in order to lead a healthy life.

Most people in eat and drink too many calories, too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit, vegetables, oily fish or fibre.

The following work has been undertaken to raise awareness across the district about healthier eating.



**My Weight Matters** is a 12-week weight management programme following NHS guidelines providing individual support to help residents to manage their weight. Sessions are held at various venues across the district.



Essex Children and Families wellbeing service led a **Slow Cooker project** to support healthy cooking on a low budget. United in Kind have also worked with Foodbanks to deliver **cooking courses** to support people to learn how to cook from the ingredients their foodbank supplied



Colne Valley Primary Care Network have led a **Low Carb programme** designed to encourage a low carb diet to reduce obesity and type 2 diabetes. A total of 606 new referrals and self-referrals were received by the PCN Low Carb Programme in 2021/22.



Mid Essex CCG have led **Tier 3 weight management support**, for referred patients with a BMI of over 30 as part of a 12 month programme including psychological and dietetic and medical support. 41 referrals have been made in the Braintree District since February 2022.

In addition to this work Braintree District Council continues to support communication using different media platforms to encourage healthy eating which includes updates on healthy recipe ideas and recipe reels shared on social media.



# feelwell



Good mental health and wellbeing are fundamental to our physical health, our relationships, our education, our training, our work and to achieving our potential. The benefits of positive mental health and well-being are wide ranging and significant both for individuals and for society as a whole. Positive mental health is associated with an increase in life expectancy, improved quality of life, improved physical outcomes, improved education attainment, increased economic participation, and positive social relationships.

♥ **The Dementia Action Alliance** is an alliance a range of activities are available for those living with dementia and their carers, these include walks, dementia cinema, choir & afternoon teas. Together in Sound has been led by Braintree Museum and Saffron Hall to provide a free music therapy group to those living with dementia and their companions.

♥ The **Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum** brings together key partners working in the district who are addressing social isolation and loneliness. The forum encourages partnership working to maximise the impact of the work being done to address social isolation and loneliness, share information and expertise to better understand what can help to reduce social isolation and loneliness, identify areas of need and groups of people and individuals who are lonely to ensure

appropriate focus of activity, provide appropriate signposting, encourage joint/district wide communications and pool resources or identify funding opportunities for specific pieces of work where appropriate.

Partners regularly engage with residents and as part of Social Isolation and Loneliness Awareness Week 2022 held 3 pop up lounges in the 3 towns and took a minibus tour of 15 villages engaging with over 250 residents to seek their views, signpost to groups and services and raise awareness.

♥ The **Mental Health Forum** brings together statutory and voluntary partners either in a commissioning or delivery role to address emotional health and wellbeing across the district. The priorities of the forum initially focused on referral pathways, awareness raising, children and young people and data. The forum is currently focusing on the impact the pandemic has had on mental health and how collectively this can be addressed.



# agewell



The population in the Braintree District is ageing and more people have long-term illness.

This priority focusses on allowing our older residents to lead healthy and fulfilling lives as independently as possible, but when needed to get joined up care with the best outcome.

♥ **Walking Sports** provide an opportunity for those who may have stopped participating in sport due to age or ability to run. Weekly sessions have now been established for football, hockey and netball in conjunction with Fusion.

♥ The **Slipper Exchange** is a scheme where individuals can swap ill-fitting and worn slippers for a new non-slip pair, designed to keep people out of hospital through providing the right footwear and in turn avoiding slips, trips and falls. 560 pairs of slippers have been given out.

♥ Each year partners work together to provide winter warmth packs to support those in need. In 2022 C360 put together 200 winter warmth packs which were distributed to residents.

♥ Partners across the district council and community and voluntary sector, have developed a range of pop up lunches, afternoon teas, day trips and community events to encourage older people in communities to come together post lockdown to improve confidence and tackle **social isolation and loneliness**.

♥ **Chair Based exercise** programmes have been rolled out in care homes and supported accommodation, led by Braintree District Council and Eastlight Community Homes to provide an opportunity for older people to participate in more low impact physical activity.

♥ Our printed **'Here to help guide'** was distributed to the older population, providing information on all the support that is available.

♥ Introduction of more mobility swim sessions and group exercise classes for older people at all Fusion centres





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# COVID COMMUNITY RESPONSE SUMMARY REPORT

MARCH 2023





# CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION ..... 4
- INITIAL **RESPONSE** ..... 5
- RE-OPENING **THE DISTRICT SAFELY** ..... 8
- COVID COMMUNITY **RECOVERY PLAN** ..... 9
- KEY RESPONSE **ACHIEVEMENTS**..... 10
- LESSONS **LEARNED** ..... 11

# INTRODUCTION

In February 2020, Braintree District Council started planning for the largest and longest emergency response that had been required in its history. The Council had a pandemic flu plan in place for a number of years prior to this which outlined our role in relation to supporting our district, working with our partners and keeping essential services running. This plan had been exercised and reviewed regularly. This summary is focussed on the community response to the pandemic but also provides a high-level outline summary of other areas of response for context.

As a category one responder, Braintree District Council is required to ensure that emergencies are planned for and responded to, whilst considering the business continuity impact.

Before national announcements were made a strategic co-ordination structure was put into place. Management Board took the officer lead with a rotating strategic command and the wider Corporate Management Team provided a rotating tactical command throughout the response period. Whilst this arrangement and regularity of meetings was adapted during the response according to need, this structure was in place until the Summer of 2022.

# INITIAL RESPONSE

There were a number of initial actions that were put into place to protect the community. These were communicated through a range of channels and were linked through from national messaging and our Local Resilience Forum. Critical services to the community were identified and staff were redeployed to ensure that these continued, and other staff were redeployed to the response effort.

The nature and breadth of the role of district councils during the pandemic makes it difficult to detail every area of activity that the organisation supported, however the below outlines our role around key themes.

## ● STRATEGIC CO-ORDINATION GROUP (SCG)

Senior officers were part of the wider system response to COVID, co-ordinated through the SCG across Greater Essex. This was chaired by the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer and included colleagues from UK Government, Local Authorities, Director of Public Health, NHS, Community and Voluntary Sector, Faith Communities, Ministry of Defence, Public Health England (later UKHSA), and others. The purpose of the SCG was to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the County and liaise with the government.

## ● WARN AND INFORM

This was the cornerstone of our response and was essential to ensure maximum effectiveness of decisions that had been made and support provided. The BDC Communications Team led this workstream with support from strategic and tactical command and its purpose was to ensure that key messages were shared, stakeholders engaged and that issues and queries were responded to in a timely manner in a factual and considered way. Braintree District Council were highlighted by the LGA during the pandemic response as an example of best practice in the way that communication was managed.

## ● ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Whilst this is traditionally an internal focus, the nature of the demand and support required from our communities meant that it was essential that services were kept going and even increased where required. A traditionally office based organisation adapted in under three weeks to be largely home and community based. Over 250 laptops were sourced and deployed in less than a month and five hundred staff and members were trained to use remote video conferencing facilities to ensure ongoing effective communication. Services that were not able to operate were stopped and staff deployed where possible to assist those who had seen an increase in demand or towards the pandemic response. Some services (including waste collections) were adapted to ensure that they could operate safely whilst still providing vital services to our residents.

## ● COMMUNITY SHIELD

A national programme was put into place, to be operated at district level. The programme was designed to support those that were shielding and those deemed clinically vulnerable residents with access to food, medication, befriending services as well as signposting to other support needed. This was co-ordinated by the Community Services Team who quickly set up a Community Hub, working in conjunction with Parish and Town Councils, community groups, neighbours and Essex Wellbeing Service.

Rough sleepers were required to be urgently accommodated by the housing team and continued to be accommodated throughout the lockdown. Adaptations were also made to housing legislation to reduce the risk of people becoming homeless during this period, which was delivered by the Housing service.

## ● **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

The Environmental Health Team have a statutory role to deal with communicable diseases and were well qualified and experienced to respond to the pandemic. The majority of normal services were suspended and staff redeployed to support the COVID response. This covered a wide range of duties, including supporting ECC and health to deal with excess death plans, track and trace services, offering advice and guidance to residents and businesses, advising on communications from a public health perspective, supporting risk assessments for key activities, translating emerging regulations and guidance into practical advice and providing enforcement where required. Our officers were influential at a local and national level, feeding back issues in a professional and considered way to policy makers.

## ● **ECONOMIC & BUSINESS SUPPORT**

Whilst not directly community focussed, our teams were key to ensuring that businesses received advice, guidance and signage around emerging policy changes and were able to access financial and practical support in a timely manner.

## ● **FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES**

A range of government grant schemes were available to businesses throughout the pandemic and in the recovery phases. These were often required very quickly, as businesses and employees were reliant on these funds. The Business Secretary praised our Finance team for getting more than £24.4 million out to businesses in under four weeks as part of one of the schemes that was operated.

## ● **TESTING AND VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

Initially support was required to co-ordinate the testing programme locally, and later the vaccination programme. This involved logistical management, sustained engagement with partners and the public and support through resources. Causeway House was used as a test kit distribution centre as part of the pilot phase of the large scale home testing. In a four week period, over 7,000 test kits were distributed to residents. BDC also jointly co-ordinated the setting up of local testing sites across the district, alongside Essex County Council.

## ● **COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

From the beginning of the initial lockdown, Parish Councils, Town Councils and community groups provided support and assistance to those most in need within their communities. They mobilised staff, councillors and volunteers to ensure that the most vulnerable in the community had the support and assistance they needed. This was essential to ensure that the community hub model worked well and often relied on a small number of clerks and councillors co-ordinating efforts alongside our District Community Hub and Essex Wellbeing Service.

Local community and voluntary sector groups set up support operations in their local areas, providing assistance with shopping, prescriptions, transport to appointments and befriending services as well as providing advice and guidance to their communities and supporting the Council's communications campaigns. Other groups provided hot meals to hospital staff and care home workers and linked up school children with care homes safely.

Businesses stepped in to provide support to those in the front line of the response, including free hot meals, free haircuts, donations of PPE, and even in some cases changing an entire business function to make PPE or denatured alcohol for hand sanitiser.

Local landmarks were lit up to show support for the NHS and shared on social media for residents to see.

At the beginning of the first lockdown, our Braintree District Together Heroes' campaign was launched, which aimed to shine a light, celebrate and say thank you to the heroes in our community who did incredible and heartfelt things in the battle against COVID-19, as well as our community groups. This highlighted some of the amazing stories about businesses who stepped up to help out.

## ● **GRANTS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Two grant schemes were administered to those community and voluntary groups supporting residents deemed clinically extremely vulnerable during the pandemic and in recovery to mobilise communities. As a District Council we refocussed our Councillors' Community Grant Scheme to encourage projects that were related to COVID response and recovery.

## ● **TRACK AND TRACE SUPPORT PAYMENTS**

These payments were to support people on low incomes who were unable to work from home if they were told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and lost income as a result. They could also apply if they were looking after a child who had been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and would lose income as a result.

## ● **HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

As part of the first lockdown, most of the access to existing health and wellbeing

opportunities was curtailed. This included our leisure centres, and access to sports clubs, play areas, schools and community facilities was stopped or severely restricted. This had an impact on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of our communities. Teams focussed on giving advice on how to stay healthy and stay connected with each other safely and worked closely with Active Essex to promote online workouts to help residents stay active. This was alongside working with partners to understand and prepare for the longer term health impacts caused by the pandemic.

## ● **SAFEGUARDING**

With schools closed and access to services restricted, concerns were raised early in relation to safeguarding issues that may have been exacerbated. Communications and signposting were adapted to ensure that there were ways for people to get the help that they needed safely and ensuring that regular contact was made with residents that we and partners were aware of to ensure that they were safe and check to see if they needed support.

## ● **PARISH COUNCIL SUPPORT**

Parish Clerks across the district were often the only member of staff employed by Parish Councils and were dealing with a wide range of requirements whilst being fairly isolated. A Supporting Communities forum was initiated to run throughout the response and recovery stage to ensure that clerks had a forum to discuss issues, governance, latest government guidance and provide a support network to each other. This forum is still in operation with a revised focus on supporting our communities through emerging challenges and providing ongoing support to each other. In addition all Parish Council's received weekly newsletters from BDC providing relevant information.

# RE-OPENING THE DISTRICT SAFELY

As the initial national lockdown was eased, there were a number of further roles that the Council took on, to ensure that our district could reopen safely. Over time some of these arrangements were adapted for local areas to consider variances in COVID levels and therefore required careful planning and communication. An organisation wide team was brought together to co-ordinate the response, supporting our residents and businesses.

**Key roles included:**

- Providing a comprehensive communications plan, responding to national guidance and interpreting it into practical advice for residents, businesses, schools, care homes and community organisations
- Providing tailored advice, equipment and signage for businesses, community organisations and events to help them to operate safely.
- Working with organisation wide departments, the police and ECC to provide regular visits, visibility of key officers in the community, marshalling and enforcement where required to ensure that regulations were adhered to and people felt safe in our high streets, restaurants and licensed premises, shops, accommodation, community venues, places of worship, workplaces and open spaces.
- Providing access to funding for businesses and community organisations swiftly
- Managing Outbreak Control Plans in a variety of settings

- Providing an ongoing contact tracing service, supporting the national and countywide track and trace services
- Provision of covid ambassadors who provided a visual presence in the towns, villages, parks and open spaces. The Covid ambassadors provided advice and guidance to residents and businesses, and distributed face masks and boxes of Lateral Flow Tests.



# COVID COMMUNITY RECOVERY PLAN

As with any emergency response, the Council is required to consider recovery from the emergency whilst still in the response stage. It is unusual that an emergency should continue for a period as long as the pandemic has, so the response and recovery stages have had significant periods of overlap. The recovery plan was initiated in 2020 and continued until 2022, with some elements of recovery still ongoing. The community recovery plan was part of the wider COVID recovery plan and considered the following areas:

## HOUSING



- Homelessness/Rough Sleeping
- Affordable Housing
- Housing market issues
- Private Rented Sector
- Increased Unemployment
- Domestic Abuse
- Tenancy Retention

## PEOPLE



- Employment Support
- Debt and Poverty
- Education and Development Impact
- Welfare and Safeguarding
- Exploitation and Scams

## COMMUNITIES



- Community Confidence
- Volunteers
- Charities and community Groups
- Impact of Social Distancing
- ASB/Noise
- Hard to reach groups
- Community Assets

## HEALTH



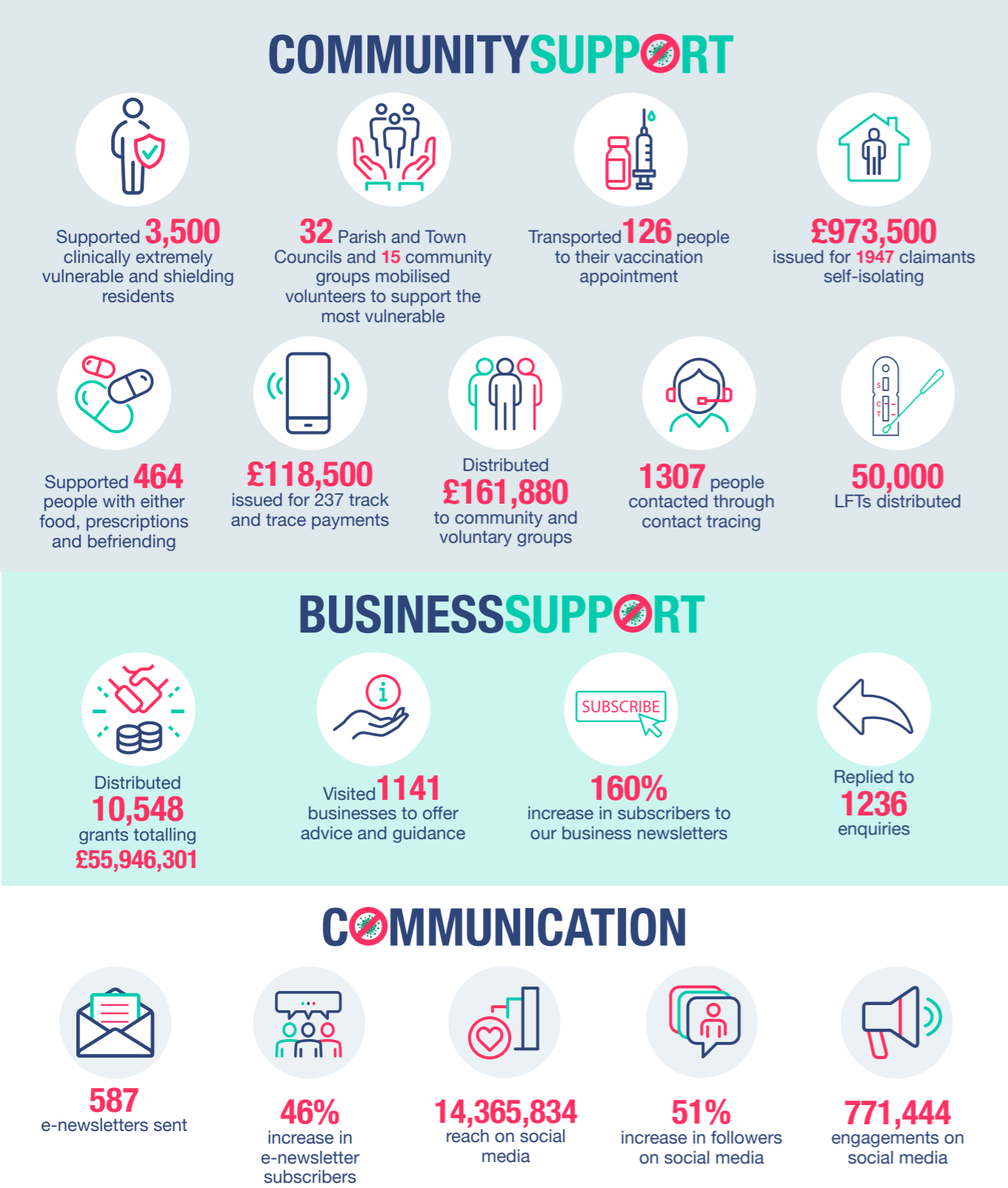
- Long term community shielding and vulnerability
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Bereavement Support
- Health Inequalities
- Livewell opportunities

Recovery has been co-ordinated across partnerships, including the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, Community Safety Partnership and the Mid Essex Health Alliance. Members will be familiar with the scope and updates have been provided through Cabinet Member reports and Members evenings.

Other elements of the COVID recovery plan included Economic Recovery, Service Recovery, Financial Impact and Communications.

# KEY RESPONSE ACHIEVEMENTS

Measuring the full impact of the response to the pandemic is difficult, given the wide range of external influences and variables that our communities faced. The following is a range of outputs that give an idea of the scale of activity and feedback from our residents:





Braintree District Council  
Causeway House,  
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CM7 9HB

# **COST**

**OF LIVING**  
**RESPONSE**  
**UPDATE**

**[www.braintree.gov.uk/  
costofliving](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/costofliving)**



# Introduction

Following the easing of some public health restrictions that were put into place as a response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, some international economic activities rapidly rebounded in the early part of 2022. This increase in demand was not matched by an increased availability of supply as public health restrictions remained in place in some geographies. This position was further worsened by the war in Ukraine and the economic sanctions placed on Russia and its allies in response. This has resulted in a rapid uplift in prices of commodities across the globe and households are now facing inflationary price increases of everyday goods and services at a rate not seen for decades.

Both organisationally and in partnership, services across the Council mobilised to respond to the evident increase in cost of living that is now apparent.

The Here to Help initiative was launched in June 2022, its purpose to provide advice on available benefits, grants, support, and debt advice for residents within the district that are impacted by the Cost of Living. Internally Ease the Squeeze was launched to provide support to council staff.

In August 2022, a district wide Cost of Living Partnership was established to respond, support, and tackle the effect of the national cost of living crisis on Braintree District residents. The purpose of the partnership was to identify ways to collectively respond through coordinated joint working and as a

multi-agency partnership to take a strategic but practical approach to problems and bring a different perspective to ongoing situations.

The partnership includes representatives from the statutory, community and business sectors. This partnership superseded the Fuel Poverty Working Group.

## The Cost of Living Partnership focuses on several themes:

- Fuel and Energy Poverty
- General Financial Advice
- Food and Essentials
- Housing
- Health and Wellbeing
- Winter Resilience
- Crime
- Data and Horizon Scanning

Following a motion to Council in June 2022, a joint scrutiny committee was set up to review Braintree District Council's response to Cost of Living issues that may affect our district. This was presented to Full Council on 10th October 2022 and contained 22 recommendations.

On 3rd January 2023 Council received a response to the recommendations from the Cost of Living Scrutiny report from Cabinet which detailed current and ongoing plans to respond to the crisis.

# Initial Focus Areas for Response

There have been a number of focus areas of response, which have previously been highlighted to members in the October Members update and Cost of Living Scrutiny response. Initial focus areas included:

## Information and Signposting for residents

- Energy advice
- Money saving tips
- Signposting to financial support, advice and credit unions
- Regular communications campaigns

## Key Projects in progress

- Warm Spaces
- Winter Resilience Programme
- Holiday Activity Programme
- Foodbank support

## Key Services

- Discretionary Hardship Payments
- Exceptional Hardship Provision
- Essential Living/Household Support Fund
- Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme



# Activity Update

## – March 2023

A key role for the Authority is to support the vulnerable members of the communities in our district. Listed below are some of the highlights of work now being undertaken by the Council in response to the Cost of Living crisis.



### Fuel and Energy Poverty

The Sustainability Team manage an energy advice line and email [energy.advice@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:energy.advice@braintree.gov.uk) where residents/businesses can call via the switchboard. Residents/businesses are provided with advice on every aspect of energy efficiency and utilities including billing, guidance on payment plans and if the resident is vulnerable will liaise with utilities on their behalf. This work is undertaken along with partner organisations such as Citizens Advice and Community 360 who also refer residents to this service line. Citizens Advice continues to run the warm homes project.



### Food and Essentials

Partners including Braintree Area foodbanks and First Stop have seen a significant increase in the district's residents requiring support to access food.

100 slow cookers have been distributed to individuals and families via Community 360.



### Health and Wellbeing

A&E stats have highlighted a trend in young children attending with respiratory issues. The Active Braintree Foundation are establishing a hardship fund for sports clubs to enable them to identify those that are struggling to pay their membership or subscriptions.



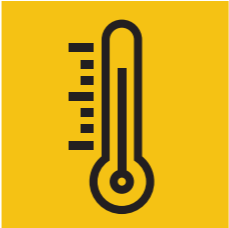
### Housing

There has been a sharp increase in people reporting damp and mould within their properties, both for private rented and social housing. The Environmental Health Team have been conducting visits and a Registered Housing Providers Forum is being set up to work with our districts' Housing Associations to share best practice and support and raise awareness around damp and mould. The Council has produced a leaflet to support this work.



### Winter Resilience

Community360 in conjunction with Braintree Village have distributed 800 winter warmth bags to identified vulnerable individuals across the district. The bags included blankets, powdered food, scarves and gloves.



### Warm Spaces

Contact has been made with community and voluntary groups, Town and Parish Councils, faith groups, community centres and village halls to establish whether they have plans in place to support their local community with a 'warm space' or already have something in place. This information has been collated in a database and an interactive map is available on the Council's website showing where all warm spaces are being offered. Over 70 warm space activities are available across the district. Promotion is ongoing of the 'warm spaces' through the map and other channels.

# Investment into Cost of Living Response

Across the Braintree district there has been further investment into a cost of living response to support residents.

Public health projects funding in 2022/23 was focussed on the cost of living response, and £20,000 was allocated to the delivery of warm spaces and extending the Holiday Activity Programme for children who access free school meals or who have identified vulnerabilities.

In our investment plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, £29,000 was allocated to projects which supported residents with cost of living issues.

**£1 Million investment to support residents with Cost of Living Issues**

In January 2023, Braintree District Council announced that it is investing £1 million of its proposed New Homes Bonus into a two year programme to tackle the issues caused by the Cost of Living crisis, in particular:

- 1. To provide food security and access to essential goods across the district, making it easier for everyone to reach, including those living in our most rural areas.
- 2. To help the most vulnerable by supporting community groups and organisations to do more. These groups are already doing some incredible work and are well placed to identify and support those who need help most.
- 3. To enable physical and emotional health and wellbeing for anyone, especially young people, struggling to afford vital access to leisure activities and sports clubs.

Teams from across the Council are working with partners including Braintree Area Foodbanks, C360, Active Braintree Foundation, Fusion Lifestyle, Mid Essex Health Alliance and other community and voluntary sector organisations to design a programme that has both swift impact to support residents whilst also providing longer term sustainable support to those who need it most.



Braintree District Council  
Causeway House,  
Braintree  
Essex  
CM7 9HB

<b>Report Title:</b> Celebrating Apprenticeship Successes at Braintree District Council	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2023	<b>For:</b> Noting
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> DP/2023/08
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor John McKee, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Suzanne Bennett, Corporate Director <a href="mailto:suzanne.bennett@braintree.gov.uk">suzanne.bennett@braintree.gov.uk</a>	

## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides background to a presentation to be made at the meeting of Full Council celebrating the successes of the Apprenticeship programme at Braintree District Council (the Council).

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council are asked to note the contents of the report and the information presented at during the meeting.

## 3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The current national apprenticeship policy was introduced by the UK Government in 2015. Braintree District Council (BDC) was already using apprentices to develop its own talent and had a good foundation to introduce the national policy. The Council can also access funding from Government to help fund training for apprentices as part of the Apprenticeship Levy that was introduced in 2017.
- 3.2 Some of the Council's apprentices have been hired as new members of the organisation and some are current staff that are accessing training to upskill in their current roles.
- 3.3 Apprenticeships can start at different levels; level 2 apprenticeships provide on the job training and qualifications equivalent to two GCSEs, all the way through to degree level apprenticeships. At BDC we support level 3, equivalent to 2 A Levels, all the way through to level 7 which is equivalent to a Master's degree.
- 3.4 Apprentices are able to earn while they learn, gain hands on experience in roles as well as more traditional learning and will gain a qualification that is nationally recognised.
- 3.5 In total 78 apprenticeships have been supported using the apprenticeship levy since 2017 of which 30 have completed their apprenticeship. Currently

the Council have 25 live apprenticeships. 22 were stopped when they left the Council to move to another employer and one is currently paused.

- 3.6 The Council is able to ensure that the right skills are developed through the organisation using the apprenticeship scheme and enables us to both recruit and retain members of staff.
- 3.7 The majority of the Council's workforce are Braintree district residents, and this programme increases the numbers of skilled workers within the district.
- 3.8 During the meeting a presentation will be given which will highlight some of the successes and achievements made in BDC as part of the scheme.
- 3.9 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
  - Delivering and innovating – modernising the way we work to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services
  - Promoting prosperity – ensure skills and training provision is aligned to meet the needs of the local economy now and in the future

<b>Report Title: Cabinet's Report to Full Council</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Date:</b> 20th March 2023	<b>For:</b> Noting
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>Decision Planner Ref No:</b> N/A
<b>Report Presented by:</b> Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council	
<b>Enquiries to:</b> N/A	

## **OVERALL STRATEGY**

### **1. Councillor Graham Butland - Leader of the Council**

- 1.1 As this is the final meeting of the 2019-23 Administration, I thought it would be appropriate for the Council to reflect upon the significant work that has been carried out and the many achievements over the last four years.
- 1.2 The four years have been unlike any other in history of the Council since it was formed. The COVID pandemic brought huge challenges for the whole organisation and new and different ways of working had to be learnt at speed.
- 1.3 Our staff stepped up to the challenge and we were able to maintain an excellent level of service throughout the period. We were also highly successful in implementing many new requirements asked of us by Central Government. I am sure that all members will wish to thank staff for their efforts.
- 1.4 It was also challenging for members as we got to grips with virtual meetings and responding to the advice, "You're muted".
- 1.5 Below each Cabinet Member has set out a review of the work done within their portfolios.
- 1.6 Members elected in May 2023 will face new challenges. Although our financial position is much stronger than most other Authorities there will be a financial gap to close and tough decisions will need to be taken.
- 1.7 In addition the face of local government is likely to change significantly over the term of the next Administration and it will be important to ensure that the District is well positioned in any new arrangements.
- 1.8 Finally, I would like to thank all members for their contributions since 2019. This election will see several long serving colleagues standing down and a lot of experience of public service will be lost. I am sure the Council will want to wish all retiring members the very best for the future.

2. **Councillor Frankie Ricci – Cabinet Member for Communities**

**Community Safety Achievements 2022/23**

- 2.1 Braintree District Council is the coordinating organisation for the Braintree District Community Safety Partnership chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities. The partnership is made up of the regulatory authorities working in the district and is a statutory responsibility. The partnership and the Council have achieved several pieces of work including working in partnership with the Essex Office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner secured £297,000 funding from the Home Office Safer Streets initiative (with an additional £150,069 match funding from all partners) for an area in Witham. This project includes working with Essex Police, CARA, Fusion Lifestyle, Neighbourhood Watch and Witham Town Council to deliver interventions over a 2-year period in efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood crime, Violence Against Women and Girls and overall perception of crime and safety in the area.
- 2.2 The Council also recently secured £29,000 from Essex County Council via the Changing Futures fund to provide an SOS Bus (a medically equipped mobile vehicle) in identified locations across the district providing those with complex needs and vulnerabilities with access to a range of services in one place including drugs and alcohol, mental health, housing, debt).
- 2.3 An additional responsibility of the Council is to oversee the Community Triggers process and request giving victims of Anti-Social Behaviour the right to request a review of their case and bring agencies together to take a joined-up approach to problem solving. In the last year alone 7 requests have been received and undertaken with the Council as the lead authority.
- 2.4 The Community Safety team working with other services have set up two operational subgroups: A Housing Support subgroup to work with those at risk of losing their accommodation due to ASB and a Domestic Abuse subgroup to better support victims of abuse where housing is a factor. The Council has also recruited a Domestic Abuse specialist officer to better support victims who approach the organisation. The Council in their role in the Community Safety Partnership work with other agencies to either share or create social media campaigns to raise awareness. A recent example includes a domestic abuse social media campaign targeting both victims and perpetrators and 10,000 people were reached.
- 2.5 In addition, 25 participants from a wide range of organisations including ECFRS, faith groups, local businesses, and local government, attended a J9 Domestic Abuse Awareness raising session hosted by the Council Community Safety team.
- 2.6 The Community Safety team have developed and led on a local exploitation group for a range of professionals to discuss issues of exploitation locally and

work to combat exploitation and also continue to train local businesses, sports clubs and individuals through the Spot it Stop it scheme.

### **Braintree District Museum**

- 2.7 The partnership between the Council and the Braintree District Museum has gone from strength to strength with the Council providing continuous grant funding on an annual basis. The museum works hard to achieve its own objectives whilst aligning with Braintree District Council priorities. Examples of work that has been achieved by the museum includes the Warner Textile Archive opening as a research centre for textile design and history by appointment or online off the back of the Covid pandemic. The museum also has hosted Special Exhibitions in the last 4 years to encourage people back to the museum including Space Fact & Fiction, The Art of Friendship by Denise Hoyle & Marianna Straub, Dinosaurs from Egg to Extinction and the Wonderful world of Ladybird book artists.
- 2.8 The museum works with the Council to ensure it is inclusive to all audiences and hosts the governments Holiday and Food (HAF) activity sessions in the school holidays ensuring those children who receive free school meals can access free activity and lunch in the school holiday's and providing an alternative to sporting and physical activity. They have also introduced warm spaces sessions giving free access to the museum for those either struggling with cost-of-living issues and heating their own homes. The museum works in collaboration with and in support of the Braintree Cultural Education Partnership delivering continuing professional development, grant programmes and projects to schools throughout Braintree District. It also hosts a number of other events include Braintree Textile Fair, East Anglian Festival at Hedingham Castle, Braintree Christmas Light Switch on and workshops since returning from Covid lockdowns.
- 2.9 40 people attended the Together in Sound Sharing Event at Braintree Museum and Braintree Town Hall celebrating participation of those living with dementia, their companions and family members, Guests included the Chairman and Leader of Braintree District Council, Deputy Lord Lieutenant High Sheriff, Chief Executive of Saffron Hall, Professor of Music Therapy at Anglia Ruskin University.
- 2.10 There are new tenants at the museum café Something scrummy which re-opened up in August 2022 and offers a range of food and drink.

### **Cycling Strategy**

- 2.11 Since the Cycling Strategy was adopted in September 2021 work has taken place over the last 17 months on cycling project activity and behaviour change communications.
- 2.12 The Active Travel Fund cycle route is being implemented this year, including Healthy School Streets, 20mph limits and a cycle route from Braintree railway station to the north of the town centre.
- 2.13 Cycling and Walking Plans are being developed for both Braintree town and Witham town which will give Braintree District the opportunity to coordinate the

delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure for example through new development, or other roadworks or maintenance programmes as well as having schemes ready for funding opportunities.

- 2.14 We have established good partnership working with local cycle clubs which resulted in successful grant applications being received for 3 cycle groups, established relationships with cycle retailers who are now offering discounts to residents, promoted active travel plans to schools and businesses and worked closely with colleagues in Essex County Council.
- 2.15 The production of a range of cycle maps of the district has been a great step forward in promoting routes to both families and leisure cyclists.
- 2.16 Cycling communications have promoted initiatives and opportunities for businesses, residents and visitors to support our Cycling Strategy and make changes to everyday life.

### **Councillors Community Grants 2019 – 2023**

- 2.17 Since April 2019 288 grants have been awarded through the Councillors Community Grants scheme to a total value of £245,847. This makes the average grant over the time to be £854. Awarded grants ranged from £95 to £6,000. The smallest, £95, was given to fund a sign for the village toddler group. The largest, £6000, saw 13 councillors contributing to the costs of providing the “Space – Fact or Fiction” exhibition at Braintree District Museum Trust. Whilst there were multiple grants for noticeboards, defibrillators, equipment, running costs and planting projects some of the more unusual activities included recording a CD for a brass band’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, speed sign stickers and a potato rumbler. Grants were provided to help with Covid related activities, celebrations for the Queen’s Diamond jubilee and most recently cost of living help. The latter will include a fund provided to Community360 for cost of living support.

### **3. Councillor Peter Tattersley – Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing**

- 3.1 It is tempting to look back over the past 4 years and consign to memory some of the difficulties we all faced during the pandemic and its aftermath. Queuing outside supermarkets, closed schools and offices, travel restrictions, inability to meet family and friends, lost loved ones, health uncertainties, vaccine availability, face masks, cancelled holidays, closed football grounds, swimming pools and other leisure activities, and many, many others.
- 3.2 I remain very proud of my fellow councillors, council officers and communities across the District who pulled together to recognise the problems and health issues faced by all residents and helped organise vaccines, make Covid testing kits available, arrange food and prescription deliveries, providing emotional support, looking after the most vulnerable. These and many others activities all created many unsung and uncredited heroes.
- 3.3 Even now, there are still residents cautious about leaving their homes and some who continue to need support. Council staff and our partners in both the

voluntary and private sectors have introduced a number of schemes and initiatives to recognise the ongoing issues.

- 3.4 The accompanying report "Healthy Communities" features all of these issues outlined here, including lessons learned in a much more descriptive and meaningful manner, but above all reflect on a huge number of achievements in the Council's Health and Well-being activities.

## **INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

### **4. Councillor John McKee – Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation**

#### **Covid Support to businesses and individuals**

- 4.1 In the two years 2020/21 and 2021/22 the total amount of Covid related grants & reliefs provided to businesses and individuals was £59m and £2m respectively.
- 4.2 Grants and reliefs were provided to businesses across many different schemes covering varying periods of the Covid pandemic and reflecting different levels of lockdown and local restrictions in place. Mandatory and discretionary schemes were administered and included some collaboration with Essex County Council on several schemes.
- 4.3 Financial support given to individuals included the Council Tax Hardship Fund, and payments under Test & Trace for self-isolation.

#### **Energy Rebates**

- 4.4 In 2022/23, £7.7m of Council Tax Energy Rebates paid to eligible households in Council Tax Bands A to D.
- 4.5 A discretionary scheme was also administered providing a further £213k of financial support to households not included in the core scheme and 'top-ups' to those households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support.

#### **Council Tax Support Fund**

- 4.6 Administration of a new government funded Council Tax Support Fund in 2023/24 providing up to £25 discount to those who are on Local Council Tax Support, with additional discretionary support to be provided by the Council for exceptional hardship – in total over £200k of financial support.

#### **New Homes & Growth Dividend**

- 4.7 Up to £25 provided to all eligible council taxpayers at the time of annual billing distributing around £1.6m to c 64,000 households.

#### **Savings & Efficiencies**

- 4.8 Over the period of the current administration savings and additional income have been identified and agreed as part of the annual Budget totalling £2.5m, whilst also protecting and investing in key service priorities.

## **Council Tax Level**

- 4.9 The Council has consistently remained the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest Council tax rate set in Essex amongst City/ Borough/ District Councils. The Council's Band D rate has also been below the shire district average for England and has increased at a lower rate.

## **Shared Payroll Service**

- 4.10 The Council was one of the original partners in the establishment of a Shared Payroll Service and is the Lead Authority. The service has generated financial benefits for partners alongside strengthening resilience and creating a centre of payroll expertise. The service was expanded in April 2021, with the addition of three Essex councils taking the total number of authorities supported by the service to six.

## **Treasury Management**

- 4.11 The Council's debt portfolio consisted of a long-term debt of £6 million in two private sector loans structured as Lender's Option Borrower's Option (LOBO) Loans. These loans were historic at unattractive interest rates and terms. The lender Commerz Bank were open to repayment of the loans at subsidised repayment terms and with Arlingclose as advisors, repayment was made, and the debt refinanced with more attractive interest rates as part of the Treasury Management activity in May 2022. This act reduces the risk to authority and has a net positive benefit of approximately £1million over the residual term of the loan.

## **Governance**

- 4.12 In 2020/21 a full review was undertaken of the Council's Constitution and the Council's Governance arrangements. This was the first full review for many years and looked to bring consistency to the contents of the Constitution, remove duplication, simplify and standardise the language used and bring its contents up to date to reflect the practices of the Council and ensure compliance with its statutory obligations. The review ensured that the Constitution remains a useable document for our Members, Officers, and residents of Braintree District. The review was undertaken through a programme of works which ensured Members were engaged and revisions were considered through a variety of gateways before formal approval at the Council's AGM in April 2021.

## **ICT**

- 4.13 The Digital Strategy 2017 to 2021 laid out the how the authority would meet its cost and service challenges using technology, and when the Covid-19 virus caused the authority to review its working practices the delivery of the strategy was accelerated. This enabled staff, members, partners, and customers to continue to function through distributed working supported by technology underpinned by the infrastructure of the council. During 2022 a revised and updated Digital Strategy 2022 to 2026 was developed and agreed by Cabinet

and Council. The infrastructure is being upgraded to support the greater use of mobile devices, home working, increased use of online service provision.

### **Shared Procurement**

- 4.14 This opportunity for efficient and cost-effective procurement is led by BDC officers with ECC supplier specialists. During the second half of 2021 the terms of reference were agreed and initial collaborative sourcing opportunities identified and in early 2022 training of officers involved shared procurement process. The authorities taking part vary across contracts and categories but include: Essex CC, Harlow, Uttlesford, Southend, Thurrock, Brentwood, Castlepoint, Epping, Colchester, Basildon, Maldon and Tendering. The new approach, already tested, will be launched summer 2023.

### **Learning Management System – Learning Hive**

- 4.15 We have learnt that since the pandemic people want more bitesize learning. There will always be a place for classroom training however, we recognised that our people wanted more self-directed learning options.
- 4.16 In May 2022, we introduced a new Learning Management System enabling the Council to offer a wider range of online bitesize learning and provide learning pathways for people keen to develop. Mandatory courses have been reviewed and relaunched and the system provides management dashboards to comprehensively track and report on completion.
- 4.17 There is an extensive portfolio of online courses allowing our people to access learning and development at a time that is convenient to both the organisation as well as the individual and we have developed the system to provide additional resources for our people to access further information regarding Health & Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion and apprenticeships.
- 4.18 The next steps in the development of the learning system will be to provide a comprehensive on-line learning programme for members to compliment the induction programme and provide access to further on-line personal development courses.

### **EELGA Recognition**

- 4.19 The HR and OD&L team at the Council received recognition by the East of England Local Government Association who produced an article in their January edition of HR dispatches for initiatives introduced over the last couple of years to support our people.
- 4.20 The article focused on 'Power Hour' sessions which are bite sized keynote talks to people on various hot topics which have been very well received not only by our own employees but by neighbouring authorities too. In addition, the article talks about the work undertaken in training a group of employees to deliver mental health support and support for employees affected by menopause. The team collect anonymised data on sessions run by the mental health first aiders and menopause mentors to help us to better understand the needs of our people enabling us to continue in our development of this area as well as to understand the efficacy of the service we are already providing.

## **Customer Service Excellence**

- 4.21 In September 2022, the Council was successful in retaining the Customer Service Excellence accreditation for a seventh year in a row. The Customer Service Excellence Standard is nationally recognised and designed to drive customer-focused change. The accreditation is a testament to the hard work of our people and the results of the assessment applauded the Council's strength in using customer insight to determine service delivery. This was particularly highlighted in our quick reactions and the depth of the support provided to residents, communities, and business through the pandemic and now the cost-of-living crisis which can only be made possible through the continuation of a number of years of understanding customer needs.
- 4.22 The assessment also concluded that the Council performs well, can evidence strong partnership working and has high customer satisfaction rates.

## **5. Councillor Mrs Wendy Schmitt – Cabinet Member for Environment**

### **Parks, Open Spaces Parks & Cemeteries**

- Planted 200,000 bedding plants.
- Refurbished 16 play areas across the District.
- Installed new inclusive play area at Halstead Public Gardens with PiPA accreditation (Plan Inclusive Play Areas).
- Achieved Gold Award for Halstead Public Gardens in Anglia in Bloom and Best Overall Park.
- Won Gold for the fourth year running in the Anglia in Bloom 'Best Medium Sized Park' category for Halstead Public Gardens.
- Won Silver Gilt for Halstead Cemetery in the Anglia in Bloom competition.
- Installed fencing/bollards to protect various open spaces across the District to prevent unauthorised access.
- Renewed the synthetic surface to the Artificial Grass Pitch at Great Notley County Park.
- Received 140 awards from the Essex Playing Fields Association for the quality of our parks and open spaces.
- Installed drainage to the sports pitches in Deanery Gardens & King George V Playing Field, Braintree.
- Extended the Cemetery at Bocking to create additional burial capacity.
- Held 1,077 funeral services at our four cemeteries.
- Delivered a community project that planted 78,000 bulbs and 31,700 tree saplings.
- Completed grounds maintenance work to 40 schools in the District.
- Took 69 bookings for use of the Council's parks and open spaces.

### **Street Scene**

- Removed over 3,344 fly-tips across the District.
- Installed 57 litter bins on the A12 & A120.
- Introduced Anti-Littering signage to discourage littering.
- Investigated 1,621 reports of Abandoned Vehicles.
- Collected 280 stray dogs.

- Emptied 0.5 million litter and dog bins.
- Removed 219 incidents of graffiti.
- Issued 309 Fixed Penalty Notices and secured 22 prosecutions for various environmental offences.

### **Environmental Services**

- Covid – update provided as part of the Climate Strategy Update Report
- Climate Change – Update provided as part of the Climate Strategy Update Report.
- Emergency Planning and Business Continuity - refreshers with The Essex Resilience Forum and Parish and Town Councils continue.
- The Handy Man service is going from strength to strength with the installation of many key safes and mobility rails in order to facilitate the discharge of patients from hospital.
- Food, Health and Infectious Diseases continue to be investigated.
- Health and Safety and Fire Safety training modules continue, also First Aid training.
- Public Health Team continue to deal with cases.

## **6. Councillor Richard van Dulken – Cabinet Member for Operations and Commercialisation**

### **Waste Management & Recycling**

- Collected 214,707 tonnes of waste and recycled 106,435 tonnes, an average recycling rate of 49.57% over the 4 years.
- Provided a commercial collection service to over 1,000 businesses and organisations.
- Negotiated and commenced 10 year contract with Suffolk County Council at the recycling facility (MRF) at Gt. Blakenham, Suffolk, for plastics and paper/cardboard.
- Consistently low figure of missed bins – averaged only 3.65 per 100,000 over the period.
- Cross-party agreement to an ambition to reach a 75% recycling rate in the District.

### **Parking**

- Maintained Park Mark (Quality and Safety) Accreditation at the Council's car parks.
- Upgraded the lighting at our car parks to low energy consumption LED lamps.
- Introduced two new car parks – Victoria Square (covered) and The Plaza.

### **Licencing**

- Policy Reviews of Licencing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005.
- Supported Covid 19 response by the Council (licensed premises and taxis in particular).

- 6,024 applications received and processed, and 1,021 taxi and Knowledge Tests completed.
- Increased size of Licensing team in 2023 to manage a significant increase in licence applications.

### **Commercialisation**

- Creation of a sales function supporting improved income generation through advertising, sponsorship and events.
- Creation of a shared Venues team for bookings at BDC venues – including new venues at I-Construct and The Plaza.
- Procurement of a hybrid mail solution (currently awaiting final approval) to deliver savings and increase efficiency of the Council.
- A Commercial.Gov review of opportunities for increased or new commercial income was undertaken, and the results are being analysed and acted upon.

## **CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES AND PROSPERITY**

### **7. Councillor Tom Cunningham – Cabinet Member for Economic Growth**

- Supported the economic strategy that master planned 65 acres of employment land at Horizon 120 and The Plaza Enterprise Centre.
- Pedestrianised Braintree High Street with works planned in Witham and Halstead to begin shortly.
- Supported town centre initiatives to increase footfall in our three town centres.
- Developed I Construct innovation hub to support the development of new goods and services in the innovative construction sector.
- Dispatched tens of millions of pounds of Government grants to support businesses during the pandemic.
- Worked with neighbouring north Essex authorities to pool Government funding to offer business support, promoting economic recovery - post pandemic.
- Developed a new economic strategy for the Braintree District and launched 'Locate Braintree District' to promote the district and to continue to attract inward investment.

### **8. Councillor Kevin Bowers – Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Skills**

#### **Homelessness**

- 8.1 Between March 2018 and January 2023, the Housing Options Team prevented homelessness for 1,156 households and helped another 477

households to secure accommodation after becoming homeless. This work continued throughout the pandemic, ensuring that some of the most vulnerable members of our community were protected.

- 8.2 19 individuals were accommodated during the pandemic under the 'everyone in' initiative, the majority of whom were supported into longer term housing.

### **Affordable Housing**

- 1280 affordable homes were completed between 2018 – January 2023
- In the last full year, 417 affordable home completions were recorded, which is the highest number ever delivered by Braintree District Council
- We continue to set a high target and are on course to exceed that again this year

### **Rough Sleeper Initiative**

- 8.3 Funding was secured through the Rough Sleeper Initiative which, in partnership with ECC and some of the other Essex Housing Authorities, has enabled the provision of an outreach service to anyone found to be rough sleeping in the district. Other RSI funding has been used to provide a 6-bed scheme, with support, for former rough sleepers and/or those at risk of rough sleeping, with a further 3-unit scheme, due to come on-stream in summer this year. Some RSI funding was also re-purposed during the pandemic to trial a Mental Health Navigator role, shared between BDC and Epping Forest District Council. The value of this post was recognised by all, and funding has been extended for a further 3 years (until 2024/25).
- 8.4 Braintree worked as part of the Mid Essex Sleeper Initiative which won a 'Working in Partnership' Award and came second in the Covid-19 Recovery category in housing.

### **Housing Strategy**

- 8.5 We have been developing our new Healthy Housing Strategy, to guide the approach to housing need and demand up to 2028, which has gone through a nine-week public consultation process. The three main commitments from the Council in the draft strategy have been facilitating a consistent programme of high quality, affordable homes which best meet the needs of the current and future residents, supporting communities and enabling housing across the district to meet the needs of all our residents, especially those who are vulnerable, and improving access to and the quality of the Private Rented Sector and make best use of assets and existing properties.

### **Asset Management Review**

- 8.6 The Council has conducted a review of its portfolio of investment property assets, to ensure we have the right resources and focus on this important area of work

- 8.7 The review, completed by Lambert Smith Hampton, has offered several recommendations that the Corporate Director for Growth is taking forward with officers across the Council
- 8.8 This work will give the Council a clearer focus on how its asset portfolio is arranged and managed and a clearer commercial focus in support of the Councils MTFS position

### **Victoria Square**

- 8.9 The £30 million town centre regeneration, commissioned by Braintree District Council, was completed in 2022 which included the build of:
- 35 high quality affordable apartment homes
  - 70-bed Travelodge
  - A Livewell hub with capacity to serve 20,000 patients
  - A pharmacy
  - A restaurant or café and retail unit
  - A new modern bus interchange with added capacity to support future improvements in the bus network
  - Public toilets
  - A garden and plaza area to complement Braintree's historic Town Hall
  - A twin-level car park
- 8.10 While resident in Braintree, Kier created apprenticeships and job opportunities, as well as supported small businesses and the local supply chain during the construction phase.

### **Horizon 120**

- landmark £24m investment by BDC to secure 65 acres of prime employment land, stalled by the private sector
- Delivered the Councils first Local Development Order to promote development of the site
- Site infrastructure completed in July 2021, with 27.6 acres, of a developable 38 acres, now having been sold
- 6 buildings now completed, including The Plaza.
- 9 buildings nearing completion as part of the EoS 'grow on space' development
- Another building (Essex Xray) will begin development on site within the coming months
- New wildlife area, 470 trees, thousands of plants & shrubs, swales & wild-flowers, Public art, links to country park
- New electric on-demand bus service, Digigo, delivered in partnership with ECC.
- Have agreed at Cabinet to assign the land we have under option, known as H120 phase 2, to Marshgate Developments, which if and when planning is agreed will release another 26 acres of employment land to the market.

## **The Plaza**

8.11 The Plaza, Braintree District Council's new £15.6 million enterprise and innovation centre created to support start-ups and small businesses, officially opened in 2022.

8.12 The three-storey centre consists of:

- 42 private offices for small businesses
- A co-working space with dedicated desks and hot desks
- Shared meeting and seminar rooms with roof terrace
- Conference and event spaces
- Café Plaza

## **9. Councillor Mrs Gabrielle Spray – Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure**

9.1 After several years of hard work and preparation by Officers and Members, and an examination by two Inspectors, Section 2 of our District Local Plan was finally approved in July 2022. Whilst it remains disappointing that this District is not able to proceed with two of the Garden Communities, this important document sets out our planning policies to 2033 and performs a key role when deciding planning applications. We welcome many of the Secretary of State's proposed planning reforms and have submitted our response to the consultation.

9.2 In tandem with the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans also have a role to play in where our towns and villages want to see development in their area. Neighbourhood Plans take time to pull together and require the dedication and effort of a group of local volunteers together with the support of their Parish Council and BDC Officers. We have seven Neighbourhood Plans in place with another eight in progress.

9.3 The structure of the Development Management team underwent a review resulting in some positive changes to staffing levels and responsibilities. Alongside this, a new Scheme of Delegation was introduced which led to only major planning applications coming before the Planning Committee, with the minor applications being decided by officers under delegated powers. There is still the opportunity for minor applications to come to Committee, with the Chair and Vice-Chair using their discretion as to the suitability of applications for a wider debate. This streamlining of the Planning Committee's work is widely accepted to be a positive development.

9.4 The Planning Committee members are always conscious of their responsibilities in ensuring that developments are appropriate for our District. In that respect, good design is a key factor when making decisions and the Committee has set a high bar when approving applications and impressing upon developers the need for quality housing for the benefit of our residents.

9.5 In 2022, as part of the budget discussions, and following a successful Member Reference Group scrutiny, it was agreed that the Enforcement team would

receive additional funding of £200k to boost staff resources and improve the back-office processes. This has resulted in much improved efficiencies; the Enforcement officers are to be congratulated in obtaining some excellent results following particularly difficult investigations, including two cases that went to the High Court and resulted in judgements in favour of Braintree District Council.

- 9.6 In addition to planning applications that are decided by the District Council, an increasing number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) have come forward. Together with the support of Officers, Councillor colleagues and other bodies such as Essex County Council, the Cabinet Member has been working on a number of schemes including the A12/A120 upgrades, Longfield Solar Farm, East Anglia Green energy upgrade and the Bramford-Twinstead energy project. These schemes are time-consuming and complex; discussions and, importantly, consultation with residents are ongoing.
- 9.7 As part of our aim to improve travel around Braintree town itself, Braintree DC is collaborating with Essex County Council on producing the Braintree Town Transport Strategy. Meetings have also been held where we have been able to input our views on the wider and vital Transport East project.
- 9.8 The Cabinet Member also represents Braintree District Council on the Essex Coastal Forum and the Essex Planning Portfolio Holders Group and regularly attends these meetings.
- 9.9 Working with the Planning Development Manager, the Cabinet Member approved the establishment of the Members Forum for the Planning Committee. This gives developers the opportunity to present an application at an early stage to the Committee, and relevant Ward Members, take questions and receive feedback on their scheme as a whole. It's early days for this Forum, but already appears to be beneficial to all concerned.
- 9.10 The Cabinet Member has received, and answered, numerous emails and phone calls from District Council colleagues, Parish/ Town Councils and residents asking for help and advice, which she has been pleased to provide.
- 9.11 Finally, the Cabinet Member would like to acknowledge the excellent support and advice provided by the Officers of the Economic Development team and the Development Management team, without which it would not have been possible to achieve so much over the last four years.