



CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, 22nd November 2023 at 7.15pm

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

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.
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<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

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

Councillor J Abbott
Councillor J Beavis
Councillor J Bond
Councillor G Courtauld
Councillor P Heath (Chairman)
Councillor D Holland
Councillor J Martin

Councillor I Parker
Councillor R Ramage
Councillor W Taylor
Councillor E Williams
Councillor T Williams
Councillor J Wrench

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

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

Public Question Time – Registration and Speaking

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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](#).

Health and Safety

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

Documents

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

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

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Webcast and Audio Recording

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The meeting will also be broadcast via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Comments and Suggestions

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

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declaration of Interests - Scrutiny Committee

1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.

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

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 20th September 2023 (copy previously circulated).

4 Public Question Time

Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time. Please see the agenda notes for guidance.

5 Scrutiny of the Council's Initial Budget Proposals for 2024/25

To receive a presentation from the Cabinet on the financial challenges and options and proposals for 2024-25 and to consider the latest Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2027-28.

Note:

1. The report for this item has been prepared for the publication of the Cabinet agenda for the meeting on 27th November 2023 and will be circulated separately.
2. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee is invited to note the report.
3. All Members of the Council are invited to attend this meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as part of the Member Development Programme to enable them to understand the Council's financial challenges and options and proposals for 2024-25.

6 First Quarter Performance Report 2023-24

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To note the performance of the Council for the period April 2023 to June 2023.

7 Decision Planner

To note the [Decision Planner](#) for the period [1st December 2023 to 29th February 2024](#).

Report Title: First Quarter Performance Report 2023/24	
Report to: Corporate Scrutiny Committee	
Date: 22 nd November 2023	For: To inform
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/32
Report Presented by: Tracey Headford, People and Performance Manager	
Enquiries to: Tracey Headford, People and Performance Manager tracey.headford@braintree.gov.uk ext 2442	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Council provides a report to demonstrate the performance of Braintree District Council (the Council) at the end of the first quarter (April 2023 to June 2023). The performance report was presented to Cabinet on the 25th September 2023.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The report is to inform the Corporate Scrutiny Committee of the performance of the Council following its presentation and noting at Cabinet on the 25th September 2023.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The Council keeps a record of its performance which is reported to Cabinet every quarter for consideration and noting.
- 3.2 As at the end of the first quarter, one project is complete with 52 projects on track and three projects have an amber status with reasons for delays varying from costs coming in over budget to planning recommendations requiring additional work.
- 3.3 Eight performance indicators have met or exceed target, two performance indicators have missed target by less than 5% and four performance indicators have missed their target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the number of stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale (<5%), collection rates for business rates (<5%), cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (>5%), recycling rates (>5%), percentage of DFG's dealt with in timescale (>5%) and enquires resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre (>5%).
- 3.4 The Finance section of the report sets out the current budgetary position, information on capital spending and resources, details of treasury

management activity and the estimated movement on General Fund unallocated balances.

- 3.5 The review of income and expenditure against budget and forecast for the year indicates a net overall position variance of £218,000.
- 3.6 Staffing expenditure is currently projected to be underspent at service level and achieve the corporate efficiency target; however, the latest Employers' annual pay increase offered from April 2023 is estimated to cost an additional £568,000 over budget. At this current time, the pay award has not been settled with the trade unions and therefore final cost is still to be determined.
- 3.7 Other expenditure is forecast to be £500,000 over budget, and the Council is also accruing legal costs in relation to the Wethersfield asylum centre appeals.
- 3.8 Offsetting the projected additional staffing cost and other expenditure is an overachievement of income currently forecast to be £1.4million, which is mainly attributable to treasury management investment income.
- 3.9 Details of the main variances are set out in the Finance Section of the report.
- 3.10 Capital spend to the end of the first quarter was £595,000, mainly incurred on the disabled facilities grant programme. Capital spend typically increases in later quarters. Currently, there is an estimated positive variance against the capital projects of £126,000.
- 3.11 The estimated movement on the General Fund unallocated balances is a net withdrawal of £547,000.

4. Options

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

5. Next Steps

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

6. Financial Implications

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

7. Legal Implications

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

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 A summary of complaints received each quarter, analysed by outcome (justified, partially justified, or not justified) is provided.

8.2 The Enhancing our Environment priority has a number of actions that are designed to have a positive impact on the environment and climate change. An update on the progress of the actions in the Climate Change Action Plan is included classified under the themes of the Climate Change Strategy.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

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

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

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

9.3 Equalities and diversity issues are considered fully in the Council's key projects. Where appropriate, an equality impact assessment is prepared and considered for any key projects identified.

10. List of Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – First Quarter Performance Management Report 2023/24.

11. Background Papers

11.1 Previous performance reports are published on our website once noted by cabinet. They are published at [Our performance reports – Braintree District Council](#)



FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

1 APRIL 2023
TO 30 JUNE 2023

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Section 1: Introduction and Summary






Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the performance of the Council at the end of the first quarter of 2023/24 in relation to our Annual Plan 2023/24. This sets out the key activities being implemented to deliver our corporate priorities and summarises the measures in place by aligning key performance indicators to our priorities within the Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and health and safety.






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

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

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




Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Connecting People and Places	0	14	2	0	0
Enhancing our Environment	1	14	0	0	0
Supporting our Communities	0	9	0	0	0
Promoting Prosperity	0	5	1	0	0
Delivering and Innovating	0	10	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	52	3	0	0

KEY:




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

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

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

Corporate Priorities	Status of indicators			
				Data Only
Connecting People and Places	1	0	1	0
Enhancing our Environment	2	0	1	0
Supporting our Communities	1	0	1	2
Promoting Prosperity	0	0	0	3
Delivering and Innovating	4	2	1	1
TOTAL	8	2	4	6

KEY:

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

Summary Position

The performance in the first quarter is broadly in line with expectations with the majority of projects now underway and progressing well. Three projects have an amber status and the reasons for the delays vary from costings coming in over budget to planning recommendations requiring additional work.

Eight performance indicators have met or exceeded target and six have not met target. For the performance indicators that have not met target, two have missed target by less than 5% and four have missed target by more than 5%. The areas of underperformance are in relation to the number of stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale (<5%), collection rates for business rates (<5%), cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (>5%), recycling rates (>5%), percentage of DFG’s dealt with in timescale (>5%) and enquires resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre (>5%).


Some key areas of the business are experiencing an increase in demand on their services and we will continue to monitor these areas and our performance to focus our resources and achieve our corporate objectives.

Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy












Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Complete the physical improvements to Witham and Halstead town centres to improve public realm		
A contractor has been appointed to carry out the improvement works to Witham and Halstead town centres. Initial meetings and site surveys have been carried out and the contractors are creating a revised programme for the works, consulting with Essex County Council on any necessary areas of the works. The improvements planned are the result of a number of consultation events and further engagement with the High Street businesses will take place prior to the works starting.	December 2023	
Improve the district's housing stock by addressing energy efficiencies and exploring best practice to tackle empty homes		
Meetings between registered housing providers have been set up and the first networking meeting took place in May. The sustainability team presented to the group on energy efficiency opportunities. Eastlight Community Homes have submitted a bid for improvements to 150 homes to the second round of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.	March 2030	
An Empty Homes Working Group has been established to focus on best practice approaches and methodologies in managing the empty homes process. The empty homes in the district are currently being mapped and research has been carried out with other local authorities regarding empty homes processes and private rented sector incentive schemes.	March 2025	
Develop a revised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2024 to 2028		
The evidence for the revised strategy is currently being collated. This will help to inform the priorities over the next four years.	March 2024	
Improve our health and leisure facilities by replacing the studio and sports hall floors at Braintree Leisure Centre and refurbishing the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead Leisure Centre		
The works to replace the sports hall floor at Braintree sports and health leisure centre is awaiting the completion of a grant agreement to confirm Loxford Academy's commitment regarding the capital funding required.	March 2024	
The works to replace the studio floor at Braintree sports and health leisure centre is awaiting the completion of a grant agreement to confirm Loxford Academy's commitment regarding the capital funding required.	March 2024	

The works required to refurbish the wet and dry changing facilities at Halstead leisure centre are being reconsidered in line with a revised budget as the initial designs and costings came in over budget.	March 2024	
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Actions carried out in partnership with others




Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Engage in the pre-application and examination processes for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in and around the district		
Longfields Solar Farm – The secretary of state has consented to the Development Consent Order and the Council is now awaiting the developer to confirm the next steps and the timeline.	December 2026	
A12 Widening scheme – Consultation has taken place regarding proposed changes to the Development Consent Order and the results are being analysed. Further surveys and ground investigations are taking place to provide technical information ahead of the next phase of more detailed scheme design.	December 2028	
Bramford to Twinstead reinforcement – The Planning Inspectorate has accepted an application from National Grid for development consent. The pre-examination process has now started and anyone with an interest in the project needs to register by the 18th July 2023.	November 2028	
Norwich to Tilbury – National Grid launched a second non-statutory public consultation in June running until 21st August 2023 on the latest preferred draft alignment and anything that needs to be considered as they develop proposals further.	March 2030	
Rivenhall IWMF and Energy Centre – Public consultation launched in June 2023 on the plans to increase electricity generation. The consultation closes on the 23 rd August 2023 and the feedback will be taken into consideration when preparing the Development Consent Order application.	December 2025	
Develop our plans to introduce walking and cycling networks across the district		
The Council has been working with consultants to identify network routes which the consultants are now auditing before public consultation takes place.	December 2025	
Enable the delivery of a new build, multipurpose community centre in Witham bringing people together to socialise, learn and access key services		
The previous planning application submitted resulted in queries that are being looked into regarding the transfer of the freehold. Indicative costs have been received from the construction consultants.	November 2024	
Continue to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built medical centre in Sible Hedingham		
The Integrated Care Board are awaiting sign off from NHS England on the increased costs for the outline business case before this can move forward. It is hoped this will be signed off in the second quarter.	October 2023	
Work with the Integrated Commissioning Board to enhance the delivery of health and wellbeing services at the Victoria Square development		
Provide have been contracted to manage the facility at Victoria Square and have moved some of their services into the building. Conversations are taking place with Mount Chambers practice regarding moving over to the site but are yet to fully sign the legal documents.	March 2024	

ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT








Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Enhance biodiversity by refurbishing the wildlife garden in Halstead Public Gardens		
The Council has started working on the specification to refurbish the wildlife garden.	November 2023	▶
Improve the facilities in our skate parks at Weavers Park in Braintree and Spa Road in Witham		
The Council has appointment consultants to project manage the implementation stage of the skateparks and a detailed programme of works is expected to be received in the summer.	November 2024	▶
Deliver improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road, Halstead		
The improvements to the recreation ground at Ramsey Road consist of a skate park, extension to the play area and soft and hard landscaping. The council has appointed consultants to project manage the works and a detailed programme is expected to be received in the summer.	July 2024	▶
Respond to the requirements of the Environmental Act 2021 in relation to air quality, biodiversity, water and waste reduction		
National Strategy was published in May 2023. A National strategy and methodology review for air quality briefing has been shared with Management Board and the recommendations in the report will now be actioned.	March 2024	▶
The Council continue to work at an Essex wide level to prepare for the introduction of biodiversity net gain in November.	March 2024	▶
The Council is still waiting for the release of guidance regarding the legislative changes required to the household collection methodology to inform a review on the consistency of collections to contribute to a reduction in waste.	March 2024	▶
Protect our communities by implementing the requirements of Martyn's Law		
The Bill is currently in the Pre-Legislative scrutiny phase and is likely to become Law later this year. In the meantime, the Council is developing a list of Council owned properties that come into either the Standard or enhance Tier alongside developing a list of event venues or buildings not owned by Council.	March 2024	▶
Deliver campaigns and work with our communities to:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise food waste to help households save money and avoid unnecessary waste • Improve awareness and understanding of climate change 		
The campaign to report litter offenders who throw litter from their vehicles is currently being designed	March 2024	
The Council continues to support the Love Essex Campaign on minimising food waste which runs until December 2023. The Love Essex campaign in the first quarter included a shopping list challenge with the chance to win £60 supermarket vouchers. 126 residents in the Braintree district signed up to the challenge.	March 2024	
The Climate Change Action Plan is currently being reviewed and regular climate change campaigns will be identified once this plan is finalised. In the meantime, regular climate change communications are ongoing including Environment newsletters to just under 7,000 recipients and promotion of external support for residents and businesses including the programme to support young entrepreneurs with a green business idea and Essex County Councils climate change app. Social media activity includes encouraging planting to support bees, Heddingham School's Eco status, national bike week, linking to Essex County Councils consultation on the new Essex Electric Vehicle Charging point strategy, £2 bus fare cap extension and the chance to grab a discounted water butt and composter.	March 2024	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Deliver projects in our Climate Change Action Plan to contribute to our long term aims of being a carbon neutral district such as working with communities and businesses to build climate resilience, developing baseline data for a tree strategy, piloting the ECC green accreditation scheme (before rolling out to businesses) whilst continuing to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels		
Details of the projects being delivered in our Climate Change Action Plan are detailed in the next section of this report. The Climate Change Action Plan is currently being revised to include any new projects for 2023/24.	March 2030	
Develop opportunities for increasing the renewable energy and fuel security within the district		
The Council is in discussion with Essex County Council in relation to joint funding a renewable energy project in the district. Central Government has stated that it is likely that on-shore wind planning restriction will be removed/reduced and the Council is awaiting further information around the anticipated timeline for this and the relaxation of planning requirements.	April 2025	
Increase biodiversity and the attractiveness of the district by re-wilding open spaces and wild seed highway verges		
Rivenhall Parish Council have permission for the rewilding work to take place on the verges and the rewilding areas adjacent to The Albert Moss playing field. Hatfield Peverel and Castle Heddingham have also left areas uncut ready to rewild. The next areas for Sustainable Planting are programmed in for the Autumn of 2023 at Braintree Cemetery and Braintree Leahurst (opposite St Michaels's Fountain). Sustainable Planting will replace all summer and winter bedding, apart from paid graves and possible partnership working with Halstead in Bloom for Halstead Public Gardens.	December 2025	
As part of a two-year safer streets programme, tackle enviro crime in the focused area of Witham		
The Councils Grounds Maintenance team continue to regularly review the environment of Cut Throat Lane to ensure it is maintained. No works were	March 2024	

required in the first quarter.		
The official launch of the Dog Watch Scheme took place on 15th April 2023 in Witham with over 200 visitors. The aim of the event was to encourage local residents to sign up to the Essex Police led Dog Watch Scheme where local dog owners will become guardians for the local area while exercising their dogs, reporting criminal damage or ASB. A total of 65 people signed up to the Dog Watch scheme on the day.	April 2023	



CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

In the first quarter, focus has been on collating the performance of all the 2022-23 Climate Action Plan actions and on collecting data for The Council’s carbon emissions in preparation of completing the 2022/23 final performance report. Carbon emissions have been recorded to date and we await the carbon value from DESNZ for our final reporting.

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

Resources

Ricardo have completed modelling of three options around co-mingled collections with twin stream which includes glass and have produced a draft report. Draft documents have been developed with Essex County Council for a Sustainable Procurement and Social Value policy – once approved, the Council will then consider how to embed this within our own Procurement Policies. Continuing promotion of several schemes to residents have taken place on social media and via the Environment Newsletter, including the promotion of the Love Essex food waste campaign and the subsidised water butt scheme.

Energy Conservation

A report is being drafted on the principles for transitioning from diesel powered vehicles to HVO and/or Electric vehicles (climate change v affordability) and start the procurement process for replacing 34 vehicles as part of the 2023/24 vehicle replacement programme. A funding bid has been submitted for the HUG2 scheme and £3.6m of funding has been allocated to the Council to deliver support to off gas areas. At the first Registered Social Landlord (RSL) forum organised by Housing, partnerships were strengthened and discussions are now underway to support some smaller RSL’s with developing Climate Action Plans which included energy saving measures for households.

Built Environment

The adopted Local Plan includes policy support for renewable energy on new developments. Essex County Council guidance on how to install renewable on listed buildings has now been completed as part of the Essex Design Guide and a viability study to confirm the costs of net zero for new homes has been completed and published.

Transport

Essex County Council have successfully secured bids from bid OZEV & LEVI for developing a programme of electric vehicle charging installations across the county. The Council took part in Essex County Council's Green Travel Plan survey- the survey was shared several times with staff

including frontline staff. The Green Travel Plan is reaching completion. Alongside this, an information page has been created for staff awareness within Climate Change Communication – this includes the promotion of salary sacrifice for bikes and promoting walking to work. A number of cycling films and content were published on our social media channels to coincide with National Bike week. The Council continues to work with Community 360 to promote organised walks across the district and the uptake remains positive. The revised taxi policy is currently being drafted and shall be ready for approval by the Licensing Committee later in 2023.

Business and the Green Economy

Two officers attended the day-long networking and working group meeting led by Essex Rivers Hub and hosted by Anglian Water. The meeting was very successful in securing future partnership work and partners are very keen to access the data from the Tree Canopy Survey once published. Partners discussed sharing environmental asset mapping to identify grant-funded and match-funded projects.

Early scoping work has begun on the Council's new galaxy website for Climate Change and opportunities for signposting businesses to carbon footprinting tools (as well as other Climate related tools) has been identified as useful content. Meetings have been held with Essex County Council regarding 'A Great Start' which is Essex County Council's new sustainable business accreditation scheme. The Council and Uttlesford Council will both be the pilot councils for 'A Great Start'. Essex County Council have a consultant looking at whether 'A Great Start' can potentially be aligned or amalgamated with the Levelling Up for businesses and the Green Skills programme.

Natural Environment

Rivenhall Parish Council have permission for the rewilding work to take place on the verges and the rewilding areas adjacent to The Albert Moss playing field are now being left to rewild. Hatfield Peverel and Castle Hedingham have also left their areas uncut ready to rewild. Castle Hedingham, Bures and Steeple Bumpstead were allocated £5k each of UK Shared Prosperity funding for community garden projects. The Council and Essex County Council have reached an agreement for Essex County Council to plant and maintain ten trees for flood alleviation in Bradford Street, Braintree. The Treeconomics Tree Canopy Survey has now been completed and is due for presentation to Management Board in July 2023. A meeting with Essex County Council is scheduled for July 2023 to discuss opportunities to offer grant funding to communities for Community Orchards. The secondary legislation from the Environment Act relating to air quality has now been published by central government and we now have an understanding of the requirements of Central Government's revised Air Quality Strategy 2023 published in May 23.

Adapting to Climate Change


Summer resilience communications are ongoing to include residents dealing with heat and drought occurrences. Creation of Beat the Heat messages have gone out through socials and e-newsletters including yellow weather, thunderstorm warning messages. A meeting with the lead officer at Essex County Council who manages the Water Strategy was held and the Council offered their skills with local knowledge regarding flooding, drought and water management. The Corporate Risk Register is up to date. Regular meetings with the ERF continue.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES









Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

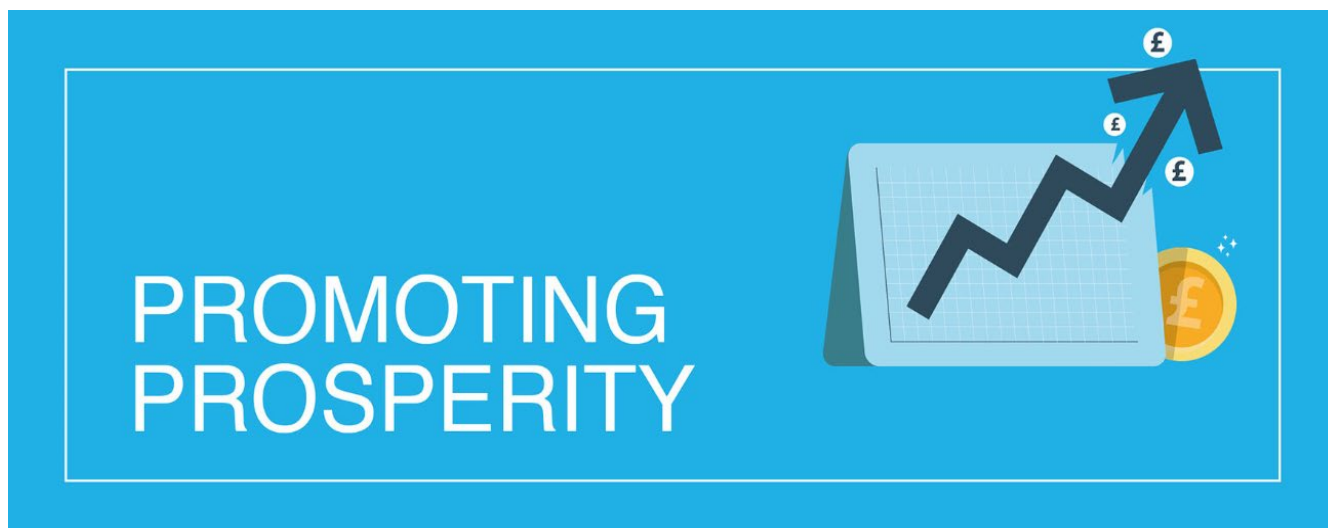
Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<p>Over a two-year period, use £1m of New Homes Bonus to support residents of the district through the continued cost of living crisis by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing food security and access to essential goods across the district • Helping community groups and organisations provide additional support to our most vulnerable residents • Enabling physical and emotional health and wellbeing support with a focus on young people who find it difficult to access these services 		
<p>The cost of living partnership continues to meet every other month with representation from a wide range of statutory and voluntary partners, the meeting focuses on the key themes and enables partners to share information on the current issues being faced by residents. As part of the £1million investment, the Council has provided Braintree Area Foodbank with £98,951 to develop its offer to Braintree residents and ensure those who need access to food and essentials the most receive this support. This includes enabling additional open days for a food collection service in Braintree and recruitment of more staff to deliver food parcels and increase deliveries in rural areas of the district. Alongside this, Braintree Area Foodbank received a donation from a resident of the district which has enabled them to purchase a second van to carry out the delivery service. In May, a further foodbank parcel collection point was launched in Hedingham in partnership with Hedingham Baptist Church. To support the voluntary and community organisations across the district, current considerations are being given to the possibility of a grant scheme for the group sector, where they can apply for funding for schemes that will mitigate the impact of the cost of living for our most vulnerable residents. The council also continues to work with partners including the Active Braintree Foundation, Fusion Lifestyle and the Braintree District Museum Trust to enable physical and emotional health and wellbeing support for residents. A meeting has been held to discuss options to expand the 'keep moving scheme' to support individuals and families to continue sport and physical activities as well as expanding the holiday activity scheme across the district particularly in rural areas.</p>		▶
<p>Support local projects and initiatives through the Councillor Community Grants scheme</p>		
<p>Following the elections, each ward member has been allocated £1,250. In the first quarter, 10 grants have been awarded to the value of £6,080. Projects supported so far are range from planting for Silver End Secret Community</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	▶

Garden, contributing towards costs of running a play day for children during the school holidays, contributing to faith groups for community activities and a coronation woodland project and an energy audit on a village hall to help make it more energy efficient.		
Support people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless on their pathway to independent living through supported housing and move-on accommodation		
This is a partnership project with Peabody to deliver 3 self-contained units of accommodation, with visiting support. Additional funding is required to secure the shortfall in funding required to enable contractors to redevelop and convert an empty property in the district.	December 2023	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build more resilient communities to response to emerging issues		
This is funded through UKSPF with a budget of £30k to support people accessing basic skills to respond to issues that commonly arise and the actions to support this are being scoped out for delivery in 2024.	March 2025	
Equip young people with the skills required to face challenging situations by delivering crucial crew workshops to schools across the district in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership		
Three crucial crew events have been organised to take place in the first week of July 2023. 16 primary schools have confirmed their attendance.	March 2024	
Review our Livewell Strategy to support the changing needs of our residents and wider health and care priorities		
The health team are compiling the evidence to better understand the priorities of the Livewell Strategy moving forward. A stakeholder engagement session will be held in August/September.	December 2023	
Address the health inequalities of the district through the Mid-Essex Alliance partnership by designing integrated health services in local communities and neighbourhoods		
The Council is working with the Mid Alliance partners to develop the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams approach with three workshops taking place during the first quarter, focusing on the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams across Mid Essex. The current timeline is for these to be fully operational by October 2024. The Integrated Neighbourhood Teams philosophy is based on a 'no wrong door approach' for residents to access support via multiple agencies working closer together under the Mid Essex Alliance banner. The Council is also working with the Mid Essex ECC Childrens Commissioner to develop the Mid Essex Feel Well subgroup, focusing on collaborative approaches to supporting children, young people and parental health & wellbeing.	October 2024	
Oversee the delivery of a safer streets programme to tackle perception of violence against women and girls in the night-time economy and neighbourhood crime for identified areas in Witham		
Various community engagement events have taken place in the first quarter including the Dog Day event at Guithavon Green, the Community Safety Impact Night in Witham Town Centre and train station and two Essex Police football tournaments. Tournament attendees were asked about their views of safety and a total of 85 people shared their views. Steering group meetings have taken place in April and June and the next meeting is in August 2023.	March 2024	
Deliver two changing places toilets in Witham and Halstead allowing people with complex needs to have greater access to public places to take part in everyday activities		
Macegreen are the appointed consultants overseeing the management of the project and have provided the Council with the JCT contract for feedback and signing. Plans for the changing places toilets have been submitted to Muscular	March 2024	




Dystrophy UK for approval by the Council. A pre-start meeting will be held with the consultants and contractors carrying out the works in August and it is hoped to be able to start on both sites at the end of the second quarter/start of the third quarter.		
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Actions carried out by Braintree District Council

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Build on the current success of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park by selling the remaining site plots and promoting the development of the phase 2 land		
A planning application has been submitted following the outcome of a valuation report stating the potential for improved capital receipt.	November 2023	
Continue to develop the Witham Enterprise Units to bring forward new business premises for SME's		
It has been agreed to carry out a further feasibility based on the recommendations from Planning on the design and build.	October 2024	
Develop and deliver a business support programme based at the Plaza to help District businesses start, grow and increase productivity, especially in key sectors		
<p>A Sole Trader Support Scheme has been drafted to offer 40 funded annual memberships to access The Hatchery at The Plaza, through shared prosperity funding. The aim of the project is to create jobs and increase productivity of lone workers, of which 40 new users of The Hatchery will create an organic coworking and networking experience for sharing ideas, collaborations and new leads. A reduced rate has been agreed and an application form has been approved and the scheme will be launched shortly.</p> <p>In June, a breakfast business networking event was held at the Plaza where speakers from various sectors shared information on grants, business support, cyber security, green accreditations, sustainable transport and health and wellbeing in the workplace. The Council also unveiled its economic strategy and the priorities set to support and grow the local economy over the next five years.</p>	March 2024	

Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
<p>In partnership with NEEB, deliver a shared prosperity funded programme of support focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial and debt management support and advice alongside signposting to other areas of financial support to create and safeguard jobs across north Essex Digital skills support to businesses across the district enabling them to grow digitally 		
<p>The North Essex Economic Board is funding a two-year business support programme with Let's Do Business Group to help businesses in North Essex by delivering high-quality, independent advice to businesses either looking to start or established businesses looking to take their next step and grow. Let's Do Business Group, offers not only 1-2-1 advice and workshops and webinars to help, but are also an accredited delivery partner for a number of business loan providers. Early take up proving successful, especially 'Starting my biz' workshop.</p> <p>Tech Talent is delivering support, offering a level 2 qualification in cloud security. We Are Digital are continuing to offer support to residents without access to data or equipment and to date over 40 tablets and 1000GB in data have been provided.</p> <p>The NEEB Strategy has been approved by the Members Board and will start the process of being ratified by the individual districts.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	
<p>Facilitate a series of employer led school visits/workshops to introduce students to new industries and sector course pathways</p>		
<p>Officers have been preparing to support the Hedingham School Enterprise Challenge taking place in July which provides year 12 students with the opportunity to develop skills by working on an organisational project gaining insight into the way decision making impacts on a business and providing them with an opportunity to gain more of an understanding of the roles available within the public sector. Officers are also preparing for an apprenticeship event taking place in George Yard, Braintree in August and a Jobs Fair in October.</p>	<p>March 2024</p>	
<p>Support productivity and prosperity in our rural areas through the allocation of grant funding from the Rural England Prosperity Funding</p>		
<p>The Council has been awarded £589,191 of Rural England Prosperity Funding to spend on rural areas between April 2023 and March 2025 and a report to agree the decision-making process for allocating the funding will be taken to Cabinet in July.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	





DELIVERING AND INNOVATING



Actions carried out by Braintree District Council







Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Develop plans to sustainably close our budget gap by capitalising on commercial opportunities to increase our income stream and identifying a deliverable efficiencies programme		
The Council commissioned a review by Commercial Gov to look at opportunities to increase income across the Authority. A number of opportunities have been identified with three taken forward around reviewing fees and charges, increasing existing traded service income and acquiring new business.	March 2024	▶
Develop an Asset Management Strategy to implement a more coherent approach to all property interests across the district		
It has been agreed to twin track the development of the Asset Management Strategy with the development of the Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028. Work on this will start later in the year.	March 2024	▶
Consider an operating model for residents and businesses to potentially subscribe to the garden waste collection service		
A report will be taken to Cabinet in July 2023 regarding the options for the Garden Waste Service	March 2024	▶
Continue to develop our online and digital services to support changes in customer demand and expectations		
Officers from the Digital Services team are meeting with services to better understand individual requirements, how we inform customers and how customers in each service engage with and transact with our services. This phase of the project is expected to be completed in July 2023 and the information from this will be used to inform the development of an online platform and roadmap for future improvements.	March 2024	▶
Understand the impacts of the reforms to national planning policy and mainstreaming biodiversity net gain in the planning system		
The Council continues to work with other Essex authorities to prepare for Biodiversity Net Gain being introduced in November for large sites. An internal working group will meet for the first time in July.	January 2024	▶
Provide fit for purpose car parking machines across our car parks		
Quotations have been received to provide eight machines to be installed in George Yard Multi Storey Carpark.	March 2025	▶









Actions carried out in partnership with others

Project description and comments	Target Date	Status
Inform and influence negotiations with Government around a Greater Essex Devolution deal to ensure the benefits are felt locally for residents and businesses		
The second negotiation meeting with officials from the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) has taken place. A summary was provided as to the Greater Essex position in relation to the governance arrangements being considered for any new Combined County Authority. Officials were very happy with the work being carried out to ensure fair representation and influence from all local authorities, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) and others in any new institution that would be created.	November 2023	
Deliver on the plan for North Essex Authorities to work more closely together on shared priorities and improving resilience		
Leaders and Chief Executives from across Essex have been discussing how we can build on the strong relationships we built through Covid and explore potential options to share support services.	March 2025	
Drive forward Levelling Up for the district including the rural pilot with Essex County Council		
Tricordant consultants have been appointed to facilitate conversations through community engagement events, the first of which was held on 22nd June 2023 at the Plaza with attendees from statutory organisations, voluntary sector, organisations and local community representatives. The purpose of the event was to come together and discuss where we currently stand and what we hope to achieve. A range of data was presented looking at pay and employment, achievement levels of children at key stage 2, public transport connectivity and broadband coverage. Results from the resident's survey asking what could be improved in their local area were also shared with the top 3 areas for improvement being road & pavement repairs, public transport and access to health services. Two further engagement events will be held in July and September and in between these events, community reference groups will be established to deeply engage with and hear from those living and working in rural Braintree with the aim of building a plan of action that provides real impact.	March 2025	
Review and adopt a new Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex		
An update on the draft Strategy was given to the Essex Waste Management Member Advisory Board in June. Further meetings are planned with Chief Executives Group in early July and Leaders and Chief Executives prior to formal public consultation which will start in the second half of the year.	March 2024	

Section 3: Managing the Business

Our Performance Indicators in Detail

Performance Indicator	2023/24						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACES							
Number of affordable homes delivered	77				63		
Cumulative number of homes granted planning permission (outline and full)	140				199		<i>The breakdown between full and outline permissions are as follows: Full – 85 Outline - 55 The annual target is 795 and when divided by the four quarters, the quarterly target has not been met. As we progress through the year, the annual target should be achieved.</i>
ENHANCING OUR ENVIRONMENT							
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	52.73%				60%		<i>The recycling target is an aspirational target set by the Essex Waste Partnership. At the time of writing, the outturn figure is awaiting validation by ECC. The recycling performance in this quarter reflects the fact that the volume of residual waste was lower than in the previous quarter by 52 tonnes, and recycling was 3,415 tonnes higher mainly due to the increased tonnage of green waste collected following the winter suspension. The seasonal conditions in the first quarter resulted in a 'spring flush of growth with an additional 1,000 tonnes of green waste collected compared to the same quarter in 2022/23.</i>
Kilograms of residual household waste collected per household	110kgs				117kgs		
Percentage of accessible non-hazardous fly tips on public land cleared within 24 hours of being reported (number of flytips in brackets)	100% (309)				100%		
Number of residents assisted in installing energy saving measures	Annually reported						
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES							
Percentage of DFG's approved within timescale	62.5%				80%		<i>In the first quarter, the team dealt with 40 DFG's with 25 approved within the timescales. The team are looking at how to improve the time from referral to live which will greatly improve overall performance. The average waiting time is currently 134 days for substantial and simple DFG's against the target of 130 days.</i>

Performance Indicator	2023/24						Comments
	Q1 Outturn	Q2 Outturn	Q3 Outturn	Q4 Outturn	Target for the Quarter	Status at the end of the Quarter	
Participation levels across all our sports centres	177,126				170,951		
Participation of adults being active for 150 minutes per week	Annually reported						
Number of measures carried out through the Handyman scheme	79				n/a	n/a	
Number of homelessness cases prevented	53				n/a	n/a	
PROMOTING PROSPERITY							
Percentage of people in the district claiming out of work benefits rate (aged 16 – 64)	2.7%				n/a	n/a	
Number of new business start-ups across the district	271				n/a	n/a	
Number of businesses that have contacted us for business support	63				n/a	n/a	
DELIVERING AND INNOVATING							
Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the Customer Service Centre	64%				70%		<i>The Customer Services Team dealt with 12,475 calls out of 19,516 calls at first point of contact. In the first quarter there has been a higher than normal volume of calls requiring a more in-depth answer mainly relating to the Elections in May, Housing Options and Assessment calls, Planning enquiries, licensing enquiries and Council tax enquiries</i>
Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt	98.50%				97%		
Number of people transacting with us online	33,995				n/a	n/a	
Time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims	17.13 days				18 days		
Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes	2.89 days				5 days		
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 7 working days	88.61%				90%		<i>Represents 70 out of 79 stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale. Delays in responses occurred in Planning and Operations due to additional time required to investigate the complaint.</i>
Collection rate for Council Tax	30.50%				30.10%		
Collection rate for Business Rates	30.12%				31.26%		<i>Marginally under target and expected to improve over the course of the year.</i>

Complaints

The quarterly complaints analysis for the first quarter of 2023/24 is detailed below. This is compared with 2022/23 figures shown in brackets. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

Complaint Category	Q1 2023/24	Q2 2023/24	Q3 2023/24	Q4 2023/24	TOTAL
Justified	43 (40)	(87)	(45)	(57)	(229)
Not Justified	23 (61)	(65)	(32)	(39)	(197)
Partially Justified	13 (27)	(15)	(28)	(29)	(99)
Not known	0 (0)	(0)	(1)	(0)	(1)
Total	79 (128)	(167)	(108)	(125)	(526)

Comments

In comparison to the previous quarter and the preceding year, the Council has seen a decrease in the number of complaints received during the first quarter of this year. No complaints were escalated to stage 2 or stage 3 of the complaints process in the first quarter.

The Operations service area continues to receive the highest number of complaints, primarily related to missed waste collections due to access issues, contaminated waste, and missed assisted collections. The additional bank holiday for the Kings Coronation was announced after the waste collection calendars were printed resulting in a higher number of missed collections around this time. The Council continues to promote and encourage customers to sign up to the text messaging service to notify customers of changes in collections to ensure customers put their bins out on time when collection days are moved.

A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:

In the first quarter of 2023/24, the LGO received no new complaint enquiries.

In respect of other complaints already being dealt with by the LGO, a decision notice was issued for a complaint against the planning service which the LGO declined to investigate.

Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	482				- 4	-
Total staff FTE	435.98				- 1.69	-
Level of employee turnover	3.94%				+0.65%	-
Number of leavers	19				+ 3	-
Number of starters	15				+ 7	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee	1.34 days				- 0.96 days	8.0 days
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	84.56%				N/A Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1078				- 437	-
Number of delegates	200				- 509	-
Number of apprentices **	19				-	-

Year on Year Headcount Analysis	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2023/24
	466	481	492	499	492	486

** BDC's apprenticeship programme runs throughout the year. The figures reflect various apprenticeships ranging from level 3 through to a degree level 6

Health & Safety

The following is a selection of our health and safety performance measures. The data is for information purposes only.

Health and safety is a crucial responsibility of everyone within the organisation. This information is used to improve the management of health and safety of staff, our customers, residents and other non-employees we come into contact with. Monitoring is undertaken by the corporate health and safety committee and action plans will be put in place where necessary.

Health & Safety: Indicators of Performance	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
	<i>(2022/23 figure in brackets)</i>				
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13 (13)	(5)	(15)	(13)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12 (12)	(5)	(15)	(13)	<i>The most common causes of accidents/incidents to employees in the first quarter are injuries whilst handling and lifting.</i>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0 (0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1 (1)	(0)	(0)	(0)	<i>A visitor cut their finger whilst cutting a cake at the Plaza</i>
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	14 (37)	(35)	(16)	(1)	<i>The 14 days relates to one incident where a waste operative was left with a swollen knee when a car drove into the waste vehicle.</i>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	1 (3)	(2)	(1)	(5)	<i>Member of staff in the Cemeteries service was verbally abused by a member of the public</i>
Number of near miss incidents	2 (1)	(1)	(2)	(0)	<i>The near miss incidents relate to a wire sparking and a burst hydraulic pump</i>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2 (2)	(1)	(0)	(0)	
Number of claims settled	0 (4)	(0)	(1)	(1)	

Financial Performance: First Quarter Review and Projected Year End Position

Background

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

General Fund Revenue Spending

The table below shows the projected outturn for the year by service as forecast at the end of Q1.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Forecast Spend for the year £'000	Current Forecast Variance £'000	Forecast RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,814)	(2,407)	407	R
Community & Leisure	772	798	26	A
Corporate Management Plan	1,619	1,611	(8)	G
Economic Development	231	211	(20)	G
Environment	912	970	58	R
Finance	1,261	6	(1,255)	G
Governance	1,307	1,280	(27)	G
Housing Services	921	925	4	A
People & Performance	1,003	991	(12)	G
ICT & Facilities	2,009	1,960	(49)	G
Marketing & Communications	642	660	18	A
Operations	7,214	7,087	(127)	G
Strategic Investment	36	-	(36)	G
Sustainable Development	1,448	1,449	1	A
Service Total	16,561	15,541	(1,020)	G
Corporate Financing	1,334	981	(353)	G
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	-	162	162	
Est. Impact of Proposed Pay Award	-	568	568	
Efficiency & Income Allowance	(425)	-	425	
Net Total	17,470	17,252	(218)	G

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

¹see below for commentary on Strategic Investment Team

General Notes:

- **Staffing Changes** - projections are based on known changes at the end of Q1 and include allowance for changes in current vacant posts as advised by the relevant service. Vacancies and other staffing changes are likely to occur during the year and will be reflected in subsequent updates to projections.
- **Staff Pay Award** – a central provision has been made at this stage that reflects the latest National Employers' proposed offer. The estimated increase in pay costs for the year is c6% against the budget provision of 3%. The Trades Unions have rejected the pay offer and are currently consulting their members. There is a risk that the final pay award settles at a higher amount than provided.
- **Efficiency & Income Allowance** – the budget includes an allowance of £300k for staffing and £125k for income to reflect that historically staffing costs are lower than originally budgeted due to churn and changes in hours, grades & scale points, etc; and fees & charges income has over recent years been overachieved.
- **Wethersfield Legal Challenge** – costs are those incurred to date (£10k was accounted in 22/23 – total £172k). There will be further costs incurred which will be picked up in future updates.

The table below breakdowns the forecast variance:

Business Plan Service	Forecast £'000	Variance by Category		
		Staffing	Other Expenditure	Gross Income
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	407	(110)	262	255
Community & Leisure	26	6	(11)	31
Corporate Management Plan	(8)	(9)	1	-
Economic Development	(20)	(20)	-	-
Environment	58	150	-	(92)
Finance	(1,255)	(46)	170	(1,379)
Governance	(27)	(68)	7	34
Housing Services	4	-	7	(3)
People & Performance	(12)	(11)	(1)	-
ICT & Facilities	(49)	(17)	(32)	-
Marketing & Communications	18	(16)	49	(15)
Operations	(127)	10	(48)	(89)
Strategic Investment	(36)	28	0	(64)
Sustainable Development	1	(206)	48	159
Service Total	(1,020)	(309)	452	(1,163)
Corporate Financing	(353)	(19)	49	(383)
Wethersfield Legal Challenge	162	-	162	-
Est. Impact of Proposed Pay Award	568	568	-	-
Efficiency & Income Allowance	425	300	-	125
Net Total	(218)	540	663	(1,421)

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

Asset Management

- The Plaza – Net operating cost higher than budget provision (+£33k) with a shortfall of income being offset by having a lower staffing establishment than was assumed in the original business case. The main area of reduced income is from the Maker Space (+£95k).
- Victoria Square – additional site operating costs (+£125k) primarily due to unrecoverable service charges, including charges in respect of units currently unlet. Other costs include a backdated business rate adjustment and increased insurance premia. Reduced lease rent income due to void units (+£64k).
- Staffing variance is net of additional cost of interim management arrangements and additional surveyor engaged to complete outstanding rent reviews (+£49k).

Environment

- Building Control net additional agency costs due to ongoing difficulties in recruitment combined with continuing high service demand (+£192k), partially offset by increased fee income (-£25k) and additional income from a new fees and charges schedule for non-statutory ancillary building control services (-£58k). The service is investigating potential partnership working to mitigate costs but will need to address position as fee earning activity is subject to statutory trading account requirements.
- Net underspend from vacancies within Environmental Protection and Carbon Management Unit (-£52k).

Finance

- Net underspend on employee costs due to vacancies, reduced hours and staffing starting at lower scale points than budget (-£46k).
- Local tax and housing benefit cost recoveries are lower than budget reflecting recent outturns (+£111k). The cost-of-living crisis is impacting on recovery as most of the liabilities relate to low-income households.

- Housing Benefits net cost of benefits paid (+£107k) – due to increasing number of claimants in temporary/ bed & breakfast accommodation used by Housing, and claimant in supported housing schemes.
- Unbudgeted new burdens grant funding in relation to DWP grants and Energy Rebates / Household support payments (-£86k).
- Treasury Management investment income due to higher interest rates / cash balances (-£1.4m)

Governance

- Difficulties with recruitment into legal services has led to underspends in the first quarter (-£59k), partially offset by costs incurred via the Local Legal Partnership (LLP) where extra capacity has been provided (+£19k).

ICT & Facilities

- Corporate ICT systems maintenance (-£49k) and staffing variances (-£18k).

Operations

- Savings from vacancies has meant that the additional waste collection costs from catch-up after the extra public holidays in this financial year has largely been mitigated (Net +£10k)
- Other expenditure is lower across waste management and street cleansing due a combination of a reduction in the market price of diesel; and changes in tonnages of material collected; diversion of waste disposal to alternative site from Cordons Farm; and additional vehicle hire and maintenance costs (Net -£182k)
- Other expenditure variances across Operations (+£134k) include: provision for dilapidation costs at Unit 4; statutory parking order advertisement; and car park & cemeteries maintenance; and delay in the transfer of community assets which was included as a budget saving.
- A reduction in income from dry recycling material due to a fall in market prices has been offset by higher income from glass collected from the recycling banks where market prices remain significantly higher than was allowed in the budget.
- Increase in income due to higher demand for the bulky waste collection service (-£45k)
- ECC recycling credits are lower due to reduced tonnage being collected (+£100k).
- Increase in waste management income under the Inter-Authority Agreement from ECC (-£43k)

Sustainable Development

- Majority of the staffing variance due to current vacancies within the service (including enforcement roles/ landscape services (-£206k).
- Overall, planning income is forecast to underachieve by £165k. A shortfall of planning application income is forecast (+£250k). Planning Performance Agreement income is projected to exceed budget by (-£100k), partially offset by lower Pre-application income (+£20k). Application income can be variable and subject to economic conditions.

Strategic Investment Team (SIT)

- Staffing cost higher than allowed in the original budget to reflect the extended arrangements for interim staff with partial mitigation through a vacancy. A higher proportion of staff time and therefore costs has been charged to capital projects. The net variance for the service is offset by a reduction in use of reserves.

Corporate Financing

- Council Tax sharing agreement –Council Tax collection performance at Q1 results in a forecast for the year that is better than the scheme baseline leading to a projected increase in share-back from preceptors (-£208k).
- Business Rate income is projected to be higher due to taxbase growth (-£200k)

Capital Programme

Capital programme totals £12.8m (excluding prior year spend) of which £6.6m is profiled into 2023/24:

	Budget Profiled 23/24 £000	Actual Spend 23/24 £000	In-year Variance 23/24 £000	Slippage (-or deduction from future budget) £000	Forecast Project Variance 23/24 £000	Expected Remaining Spend 23/24 £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	501	87	414	0	0	414
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	282	0	282	0	-92	190
Manor Street regeneration	142	0	142	0	0	142
Maltings Lane Community Facility	200	6	194	0	0	194
Town Centre improvements	619	0	619	0	0	619
Industrial estate improvements	58	0	58	0	0	58
Property planned maintenance	485	3	482	0	-14	468
Information technology systems & equipment	630	18	612	0	0	612
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	792	7	785	0	-9	776
Cemetery improvements	95	3	92	0	0	92
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	60	0	60	0	0	60
Operational equipment	429	18	411	0	-5	406
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	435	0	435	0	0	435
Climate change initiatives	21	0	21	0	0	21
Shared / Rural Prosperity Fund	180	0	180	0	0	180
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,357	370	987	0	0	987
Capital salaries	329	83	246	0	-6	240
Total	6,616	595	6,020	0	-126	5,894

Capital Resources

- Eastlight agreements: Right-to-Buy sales – 3 sales were completed sales in the first quarter generating c£195k. A further 14 applications are in progress; however, with recent increases in interest rates, together with wider economic uncertainty, sales have slowed down. Receipt from the VAT shelter £60k.
- Better Care Funding received £1.06m which is used to fund expenditure on disabled facilities grants.
- Other minor receipts totalling £45k.

Treasury Management

Investment activity

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

Amount Invested at start of the year	Activity for the year		Amount Invested at end of June
	New Investments	Investments Matured	
£47.1m	£27.0m	£10.1m	£64.0m
Average amount invested for the year to date			£67.5m
Highest amount invested in the year to date			£71.2m

Investments totalling £19m were maintained across a range of long-term pooled funds with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets. The remaining balance of investments have been held in short-term investments comprising money market funds; Debt Management Office Account (UK Government); bank deposits; and liquid cash held in a current account with Lloyds Bank.

Dividend income earned to the end of the quarter was £313k and interest on short-term investments was £479k, a total of £792k, or an annualised return of 4.97%.

The market value of shares and units in long-term pooled funds at the end of the quarter was £20.5m, representing an unrealised gain of £1.5m over the amount originally invested.

General Fund Balances

General Fund balances are held for the following reasons:

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

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

Balance at 1 April 2023	£'000
	8,093
Addition/(deductions):	
Budgeted reduction	(644)
Funding for one-off investment	(121)
Forecast variance	218
Sub-total Net Budget Variance	(547)
Balance at 31 March 2024	7,546

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

- The Budget for the year was approved based on using balances of £644k.
- An anticipated reduction in balances for the initial net operating costs of the Plaza (£121k) – the actual amount used will depend on the final operating position for the centre.
- The projected outturn variance for the year at Q1 is an overall positive variance of £218k.