

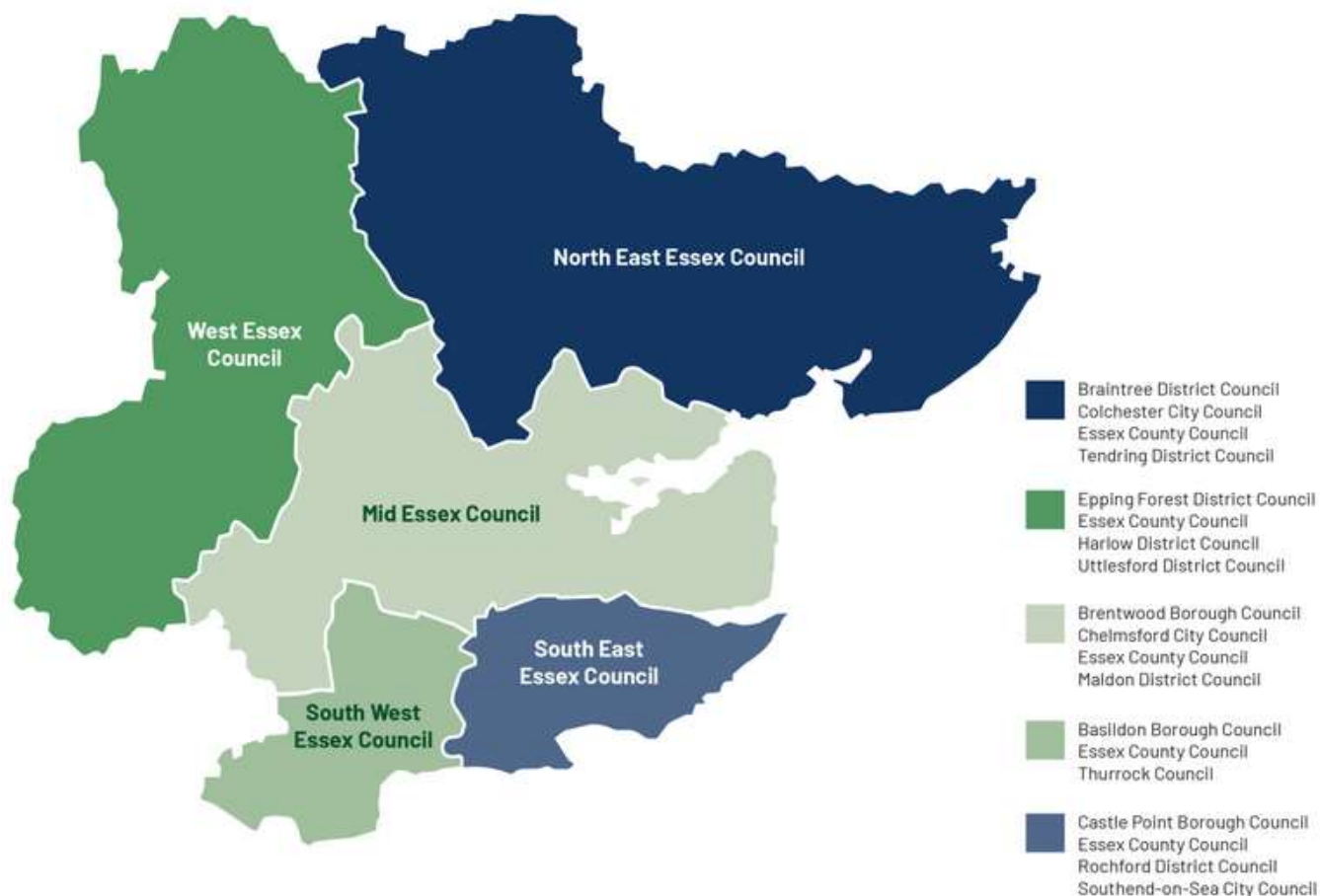
District Councillor's Annual Report - April 2026

Cllr. Diana Garrod - Braintree District Council Member for the Bumpstead Ward

As your District Councillor, I have pleasure in providing this end of year report which outlines some of the activities and achievements relating to Braintree District Council. It is not exhaustive, but contains subjects which will likely have an impact on the Bumpstead Ward.

Local Government Reorganisation

On Wednesday 25 March 2026 the government confirmed its preference for five new unitary authorities in Greater Essex. As of 1st April 2028, our existing county and district councils will be abolished and replaced with North East Essex Council. Braintree District Council will join with Colchester and Tendring.



The Government are preparing a Structural Changes Order which should be disclosed in June 2026. The Order will replace any scheduled local elections in May 2027 (e.g. BDC). Elections for the new unitary councils will take place in May 2027. After the elections, a shadow council will be set up. A shadow council is a temporary body made up of the newly elected councillors. Its role is to:

- prepare for the official launch of the new councils
- agree budgets, policies, and governance arrangements
- ensure everything is ready for the transfer of services from 1 April 2028 (vesting date)

100 councillors will be elected for a first term of five years with the subsequent election in 2032, after which the standard four-year term will apply. This is in line with recent reorganisations and brings benefits of stability, with new councillors serving most of their first year on the 'shadow' council.

The Secretary of State has agreed to provide funding of £900,000 per new unitary authority to assist with the transition costs. BDC has also set aside £1m.

Until 1 April 2028, Braintree District Council continues to operate as normal. The focus remains on delivering excellent services for our communities and ensuring a smooth, well-managed transition to the new unitary authority.

Elections

Essex County Council elections will take place on 7th May 2026.

Parish elections will be aligned with the new unitary elections and will take place in May 2027.

Mayor election will take place in May 2028.

A Selection of Budget Information

BDC has frozen its share of Council Tax for 2026-27. This meant that the headline Band D rate will remain at £206.01 (£3.96/week), helping to ease the financial burden on households across the District.

Example:- Council Tax rates for Band D Property in Sturmer:-

Essex County Council	Increase 3.75%	£1641.96
Essex Police	Increase 5.74%	£ 275.31
Essex Fire Service	Increase 5.65%	£ 92.52
Braintree District Council	No increase: 0%	£ 206.01
** Sturmer Parish Council	Increase 4%	£ 74.32
TOTAL:		£2290.12

** Precepts for parish councils in the Bumpstead Ward:-

Birdbrook Parish Council (including Baythorne End & New England)	£ 83.11
Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council	£ 80.86
Sturmer Parish Council	£ 74.32
Helions Bumpstead Parish Council	£ 69.86

Alongside the freeze, there will be no cuts to council services and additional investment will go towards supporting residents and local communities, with more money for community support, pride-in-place, economic development and improving accessibility to our services through digitalisation.

Through the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, the Council expects to provide £8.5 million in support to over 7,000 low-income households, whether they are of working age or pension age. In addition, the Council are also making over £200,000 available through the Exceptional Hardship Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments, offering further help to those facing acute financial difficulties.

The Councillor Community Grant continues, with funding per Councillor rising from £1,250 to £1,500 enabling more support for local projects and initiatives. I welcome applications from local groups and organisations in the Bumpstead Ward from around mid-May 2026. To find out more:-

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/community-health-wellbeing/councillors-community-grant-scheme>

Some of the key priorities shaping this year's budget are that over the next two years, the Council is committing £400,000 to initiatives that would directly support residents with the cost-of-living crisis. This is in addition to a £1 million fund, which had delivered, and continued to deliver, a successful programme of support and funding initiatives such as community supermarkets, food banks and community fridges.

New Council Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Website

This website contains information which details what does and does not constitute ASB. This resource has been shared with all Town & Parish Councils. This proactive approach aims to ensure residents, partners and stakeholders have a shared understanding of ASB, enabling more effective response and improved community outcomes. <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/community-health-wellbeing/antisocial-behaviour>

Examples of activities likely to be considered ASB include:

- Noisy neighbours (e.g. shouting, swearing, amplified music)
- Playing amplified music at disruptive volumes
- Persistent noise including dog barking
- Fly tipping and littering
- Dog fouling
- Graffiti
- Accumulation of waste
- Abandoned vehicles
- Vehicle noise
- Noise in open spaces
- Dangerous dogs

Examples of everyday behaviours NOT considered ASB include:

- Children playing in the street or communal areas
- Young people gathering socially
- Babies crying
- Normal use of domestic appliances
- Civil disputes between neighbours (e.g. shared driveways, fences, hedges)
- Parking availability outside one's home
- Occasional or one-off events (e.g. birthday parties, barbecues)
- Everyday living noises (e.g. walking, conversations, door closing, lawn mowing)

Changes to Waste Collections – June 2026

The Environment Act and Simpler Recycling now requires the collection of recycling materials from households, and not from bring banks, so all councils must start collecting a wider range of recyclable material from the kerbside and provide a weekly food recycling collection from all households. This is not specific to BDC. The Council also wants to divert as much waste as possible from landfill, or incineration, and capture more of this for recycling to support our climate aspirations. The Council wants to meet the targets set nationally and, as part of the new Waste Strategy for Essex, to recycle at least 65% of household waste by 2035. It also aims to reduce the cost of waste collection and disposal as part of these changes.

Ahead of the changes in June, residents will receive more information, including a printed collection calendar showing the new collection days for each property.

There are different types of; communal, standard or a non-standard waste collection. The new (standard) kerbside waste and recycling collections will include:

- a weekly food waste collection
- an alternate fortnightly collection of paper and card
- an alternative fortnightly collection of glass bottles and jars, metals, plastics, food and drink cartons
- a fortnightly collection of garden waste (*garden waste subscription fees remain frozen for 2026*)
- a three-week collection of general waste

Bulky Waste

Braintree District Council will introduce improvements to its Bulky Waste Collection Service from 1 April 2026. As part of the council's new waste policy, the bulky waste collection service has been reviewed to ensure it provides residents with a cost effective and efficient service that aligns with the ambitions of the council's waste policy. The changes will see improvements to the pricing schedule based on how many items are booked for collection and an update to what items can be collected.

Leader of BDC Stands Down

After 22 years as Leader of Braintree District Council, Cllr Graham Butland has announced his intention to stand down as Leader at the Council's AGM on 28th May 2026. He intends to remain a BDC Councillor until the council ceases to exist (01/04/2028). Cllr Butland was first elected to Braintree District Council in May 2003 and represents Great Notley & Black Notley ward. Cllr Butland joined the council's Cabinet in June 2003 and was appointed as the Cabinet Member for Health and Community. In 2004 he was appointed Leader of the Council. The process to appoint a new Leader will take place in line with the council's constitution.

Local Plan Review – The Draft Now Out For Consultation With You Until 17th April 2026

The Council needs to allocate sufficient land to provide 18,959 new homes over the next 15 years. This figure has been calculated in accordance with the government's standard method. Around 9,327 of these will be built on sites which were allocated previously within the existing Local Plan. The first of two consultations on the Draft Local Plan Review are open until 5pm 17th April 2026 - it sets out where future development should go and the policies that guide it up to 2041. This is the time for everyone to have their say! For example; if you would like a green buffer between the Bumpstead's villages and Haverhill (not just now, but for the future), let BDC know. Look at the sites that have been selected (and not selected) in the Draft Local Plan and tell BDC what you think.

BDC says that the plan promotes new homes, jobs and infrastructure to be delivered in the right places, in a sustainable way, while protecting the environment and our district's character.

All councils are required by Government to prepare a Local Plan. Without one that's up to date, national rules mean BDC would have to approve most planning applications. Even if refused locally, developers could appeal and potentially get permission anyway, leading to unplanned or "speculative" development. To meet mandatory Government targets, BDC must plan for around 1,300 new homes a year until 2041. Some of this growth will continue in existing allocated areas, while other sites are newly proposed. Wherever new development happens, it must be supported by the right facilities and services.

Timetable:

Preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18)	3 March - 17 April 2026
Pre-Submission Consultation (Reg 19)	Summer 2026
Submission to Planning Inspectorate	November 2026
Review Complete	Adoption June 2027

NB: View the short webinar on YouTube: Braintree District Local Plan Review Tuesday 24th March 2026
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tae-Djekjls>

Renters Rights Act

The Renters Rights Act 2025 is bringing significant changes to the private rented sector. The Government will implement the first changes on 1 May 2026.

Landlords

- Tenancies will become assured periodic tenancies, running on a rolling basis.
- It will be an offence to discriminate against potential tenants who are on benefits or have children and tenants will be able to ask to keep a pet in the property.
- No payments should be taken before the tenancy agreement is signed, properties should be advertised with an asking price.
- To increase the rent, tenants must have at least 2 months' notice. You cannot increase rent more than once a year.
- It will no longer be possible to evict tenants using the section 21 process and you will need a legal reason to evict them.
- You will need to register yourself and your let properties on the Private Rented Sector database, once it goes live. Civil penalties for non-registration could start around £7,000.
- We will have new powers to investigate, collect and act on evidence if you break the law.

For more information visit: www.nrla.org.uk/resources/renters-rights

Renters

- If you are currently in a fixed term assured shorthold tenancy, it will become a periodic assured tenancy with no end date and operating on a rolling monthly or weekly basis.
- You will need to give 2 months' notice to end your tenancy, but your landlord will be able to agree to shorter notice. Your landlord can only end your tenancy by going to court.
- Your landlord will not be able to ask for more than 1 month's rent in advance.
- Your landlord will only be able to put your rent up once a year and you will get at least two months' notice of a rent increase. You will be able to go to a tribunal if you think a rent increase is too much.
- You will be able to ask to keep a pet in your rented home. You will need to write to your landlord to ask for permission and include a description of the pet you plan to have.
- Your rights will not change on 1 May 2026 if your landlord gives you a valid eviction notice before this date

For more information visit: <https://england.shelter.org.uk/>

Braintree District Council - Key Achievements 2025

- £1m invested in upgrading community assets and open spaces
- 983 solar panels and LED lighting installed at Witham Leisure Centre, saving 60 tonnes of carbon annually
- 667 trees planted for a greener future
- 968 people connected with employers at 4 job fairs
- 272 residents connected with organisations at 2 AgeWell fairs
- 11,000 residents healthier because of popular Beat the Street campaign
- £331k invested in initiatives to support residents with the cost-of-living crisis
- Over £2.4 million spent on projects from Section 106 contributions secured from developers such as 3G football pitches, games and play areas and tennis courts.
- £167k in grants allocated to rural businesses and community groups from Rural England Prosperity Fund
- 338 tonnes of bulky waste collected and disposed of responsibly (equivalent to more than 27 London buses)
- 229 affordable homes delivered to support families
- 781 fly tips cleared, with 97% cleared within 1 working day of being reported