

Report for Parish Councils – Sept 2026

Cllr Iona Parker – Braintree District Council

1. Local Government Reorganisation - You will no doubt have heard the news that, following legal advice, the Government has decided to withdraw the decision to create 5 unitary Councils in Essex to replace the current 2 unitary Councils (Southend and Thurrock), Essex County Council and the District/Borough Councils. The Government will now be reviewing plans for LGR across the country, except for Surrey where the creation of 2 unitaries will proceed. This means that the elections for the Essex unitaries which were due to take place in May will not take place. However, elections already scheduled for May, including for Braintree District Council, will go ahead.
2. Local Plan – There will be a full Council meeting to approve the draft Local Plan on 21 Sept. The Plan will then go out for a further round of consultation before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate at the end of December. It is absolutely vital that the Plan is submitted by this date, otherwise we will have to start the process all over again under a new system which comes into effect next year. The timetable has been very tight and the officers have been working very hard to make sure that all the evidence needed to support the Plan has been obtained so that the Plan will be found to be sound by the Inspectorate. The key evidence has been on transport infrastructure, viability and the level of affordable housing, infrastructure requirements at the strategic growth locations of Braintree, Halstead, Kings Dene (a new settlement near Kelvedon) and Hatfield Peverel, heritage impact, water cycle and ecology.
3. Local Plan – Policies – The Local Plan will also include updates to policies. One policy which is being revised is the policy on rural business which will be more permissive in order to support and encourage rural business. There will also be a revision to the renewable energy policy to align it with the updated national policy in the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
4. Planning enforcement – Officers have been working on a revision to the Planning enforcement policy. This has been reviewed by the corporate policy committee and will be going to cabinet on 28 September. The new policy is much easier to follow and clearly sets out the steps the Council will take when a planning enforcement enquiry is received.
5. Waste collection – 3 full months have now elapsed since the new waste system was introduced. Officers are now reviewing the data that has been collected to see if any modifications need to be made.
6. A12/A120 – BDC are continuing to lobby Government for improvements to both these roads. It is important to keep pressing Government on the urgent need to address the traffic issues that occur daily and are hampering development and economic growth in the region.

7. Wethersfield – The Government has recently announced an increase in the number of asylum seekers to be housed in Wethersfield. The BDC position remains – the centre should close. Until it does, BDC are continuing to work with partners and are looking to secure more resources for safety management.
8. BDC switchboard/customer service centre – We are aware that there have been significant delays in answering calls and we have put in additional resource to address this. Waiting times are now coming down.
9. Tree planting – Parish Councils should have been notified about a grant for tree planting on community land. Do follow up if of interest.
10. Councillor Community Grant Scheme – I have £1300 remaining in my allocation from the CCGS. Do contact me if you are aware of any community projects looking for a small amount of funding. I will also post on Facebook.