

Bumpstead Ward
Braintree District Councillors' Report
2018-2019



As your District Council Representative for the parishes within the Bumpstead Ward, I provide a bridge of communication between Parish Councils, businesses, community groups and residents and the District Council.

The last year has been both interesting and challenging for all at local government level. Funding from central government is being reduced in a number of areas and by 2020 the Council will no longer receive the revenue support grant. We have therefore needed to find £8.6 million pounds of savings since 2010, but by a proactive approach and careful investments we have generated £4.4 million of additional income and have also announced a £100 million investment boost to the District. We have developed our Commercial and Investment Programme generating income and savings through a number of actions to reinvest in our front line services and those which matter most to our residents. Braintree Council has an excellent track record and has again received the externally assessed Customer Service Excellence Standard for the fourth consecutive year, demonstrating the high standard of customer service provided.

Investment is planned into the Millennium Way Slip Roads to ease congestion at Galleys Corner in Braintree, where we have secured £10 million external funding. We are aiming to regenerate Braintree Town Centre and have plans for a bus interchange, 70 bed hotel, 35 residential units, car park, Livewell Hub, café and enhanced public open space. We have also prepared spatial plans for the improvements to Halstead Town Centre. We have completed the acquisition of a strategic employment site at Great Notley providing additional land to support business growth and create up to 2,000 jobs and completed the transfer of the Sible Hedingham work hub providing accommodation for start-up businesses more locally. We have launched the District Tourism Plan to support the growth of the visitor economy to encourage visitors to our beautiful villages such as this one within the Bumpstead Ward. One example is the work done with the friends of Bocking Windmill to develop it as a heritage attraction for the district.

Sadly, child exploitation is something to be aware of in our district and the Council has sought to raise awareness through providing training to licensed premises and taxi drivers through the 'Spot-it, Stop-it' campaign. We have also delivered a domestic abuse campaign highlighting the support available to both victims and perpetrators.

To ensure that our environment remains a good place to live, work and play, we have installed fencing and bollards to protect some of our larger open spaces from unauthorised access and illegal encampments. We have worked with other Essex Councils and the University of Essex on a number of initiatives to gain a greater understanding of residents' recycling habits and encourage residents to minimise their waste and recycle more. We currently achieve a recycling rate of 50.9%. We have removed over 800 fly tips within 24 hours of being reported and served over 80 fixed penalty notices and prosecuted 12 residents in relation to littering, dog fouling and fly tipping to keep the district looking clean and tidy. Additionally, we have launched a litter reduction campaign aimed at social media and younger audiences and provided a seven day cleaning programme in Town Centres including litter picking, bin emptying and sweeping.

We are a growing district and have granted planning permission for over 1200 dwellings supporting the delivery of much needed housing, this has not been without problems as some developers are reluctant to start work. However, we have enabled the delivery of 154 affordable homes and will continue to fight against appeals for inappropriate development from speculative developers.

We have approved funds to develop up to five council-owned sites to deliver new mixed tenure homes across the district and have prevented over 200 households from becoming homeless.

Health and communities are of significant importance to our residents and in response to this need we have expanded the Handyperson Scheme to help disabled and frail residents lead more independent lives. Additionally, we have established a monthly shopper bus trip supporting rural villages that no longer have access to a public transport route. We have introduced a number of activities to benefit those living with dementia and their carers such as dementia friendly cinemas, tea dances, swimming and walks.

The Councillor Community Grant has seen funding supplied of just over £104,000 and this year I have personally overseen funding to Steeple Bumpstead Congregational Church for a new boiler, Steeple Bumpstead Bowls Club for a carpet storage unit, Birdbrook Parish Council for a village sign, Sturmer Parish Council for a leaf blower and Helions Bumpstead Parish Council to restore a 1960's caravan for their community. I am really pleased to undertake this work and help with issues affecting my local area with like-minded people in this lovely corner of Essex.

Cllr. Diana Garrod

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