District Councillor's Report to Parish Councils November 2026
Cllr. Diana Garrod - Bumpstead Ward

Scheduled Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders & Roadworks

Local Scheduled Road Closures can be viewed at**:** https://one.network/en-gb

The emergency closure of Finchingfield Road whilst Anglian Water repaired a broken stop tap is expected to be complete by 10th November.
Closure of B1057 Bumpstead Road, Sturmer/Haverhill Road, Steeple Bumpstead
8th - 10th November 2026 – Anglian Water undertakes overbanding and remedial reinstatement.
Intended closure of Water Lane, Steeple Bumpstead, scheduled for 11th January 2027 for 3 nights (20:00-05:00) whilst ECC undertakes surfacing works. https://one.network/?tm=GB152709513
Intended closure with access only to Birdbrook Rd, Finkle Green, The Street, Moat Road, Station Road 11th to 13th January 2027 whilst Anglian Water undertakes works including stop tap replacement.
Intended closure of Hempstead Road, Steeple Bumpstead, scheduled for 11th January 2027 for 3 nights (20:00-05:00) whilst ECC undertakes surfacing works. https://one.network/?tm=GB152709501

Free Parking in Braintree

Parking charges will be waived on five weekends on Council-owned car parks before the festive period (Causeway House, George Yard, Station Approach and Victoria Square will offer free parking on:
14-15 November – to coincide with Braintree Christmas Street Market
Also 28-29 November, 5-6 December, 12-13 December and 19-20 December

Parking at Braintree Village is consistently free of charge. They will have their Magical Ice Rink from 12th November to 3rd January 2027 and have some new shops opened recently, including The Christmas Cabin, Jigsaw, The Label Yard, and Mint Velvet. Opening soon are Sweaty Betty, Next and Superdry.

Braintree Business Futures Conference

Businesses in the Braintree District can attend this conference FOC. Hosted by Braintree District Council, the event will take place at Braxted Park, Great Braxted, on Thursday 26 November from 9am to 1.30pm.

Delegates will hear from Michael Wilson, economist, broadcaster and former Sky News business correspondent, as he shares his expert perspective on the national economy and what businesses should be preparing for in the years ahead. Professor Eric Smith, Lecturer at the University of Essex, will provide an academic perspective on the forces shaping the local economy, helping delegates consider the trends, evidence and implications behind the headlines. The conference will also explore future growth and investment opportunities, emerging economic priorities and the factors influencing business success across the wider region. Attendees will have the opportunity to take part in one of five practical workshops focused on:

- Devolution
- Skills and workforce development
- Sustainability
- Inward investment opportunities
- Supply chains and business growth

The workshops will be led by expert organisations including Local Government East, Colchester Institute, Groundwork and the Essex Growth Agency. The aim of the conference is to raise awareness of the Braintree District as an investment location, increase confidence among investors and businesses, generate future enquiries and strengthen relationships with key economic stakeholders.

Businesses can reserve a spot at: www.braintree.gov.uk/BraintreeBusinessFuturesEvent

Planning – Scheme of Delegation

This Government has changed how planning applications are decided. A scheme of delegation is the set of rules which determines whether a planning application is decided by the Planning Committee or by planning officers under powers given to them by the Council. From 31 October 2026, under The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026*,* new national rules will change how councils across England make these decisions.

Under the new rules, residential developments of up to 9 new homes or minor commercial development must be decided by planning officers. The effect of these changes means that there will no longer be the ability to consider whether applications for 3 to 9 new homes should be referred to Planning Committee after being called in by a ward councillor or by a town/parish Council. For other applications, including larger developments, a new 'Gateway Test' will determine whether there are significant planning or local issues that mean the application should be referred to the Planning Committee.

For other applications, including larger developments, a new 'Gateway Test' will determine whether there are significant planning or local issues that mean the application should be referred to the Planning Committee.

The way you can view and comment on planning applications is not changing. The changes are about who makes the final decision. Where the Gateway Test is used, we will publish a record of the decision and the reasons for it as a report through our Planning Committee, so residents can see how the decision about referring an application to committee was reached.

BDC has no choice but to follow the new laws and has updated its Constitution accordingly. However, I feel that this law is stripping councillors of their planning powers and local democracy is being dismantled.

- It establishes officer decision-making as the default, effectively bypassing planning committees for a massive tier of routine applications.
- Planning committees have had their memberships capped at 13 members.
- Local ward councillors can no longer "call in" specific planning applications to a committee for public debate, and standard trigger thresholds (like a high volume of resident objections) have been abolished.

The Government says it wants to give power to communities (devolution) but is doing the opposite. Last week a delegation of the LGA Conservative Group, led by Cllr Kevin Bentley and Katie Lam MP Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, presented a petition to Downing Street calling for the National Scheme of Delegation to be repealed. I was one who signed this petition. I also met with Katie Lam on Saturday 7th November, where we discussed this matter at length.

Landlords

Braintree District Council & NRLA Winter 2026 Landlords Forum is FOC on **Wednesday 2 December 2026, 6-8pm** at Causeway House, Braintree. Get clear, concise updates on:

- The Renters Rights Act: What it means for landlords and tenants. Understand the new rules, obligations and next steps.
- Registering for the new national private landlord database, and
- The upcoming Making Tax Digital (MTD) changes that will affect your rental business.

Hear from Josie Falco: Head of Environmental Service (Braintree Council), Chris Norris (NRLA) and Joe Henry (Taxd) as they explain what's changing, what you must do, and how to prepare. You will receive practical guidance, real-world implications and there will be a live panel Q&A to get your questions answered. This is essential for every landlord planning for the 2027 changes.

Landlords should register now to stay compliant, avoid penalties and protect your rental income.

Reserve a Free Place: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/braintree-private-landlord-forum-meeting-tickets-2004373258372

Landlord Database

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 introduced a new requirement for landlords in in England to register their property on a database and provide key information when they register.

The NRLA has published guidance on the Landlord Database in England if you would like to do some prior reading ahead of the forum:
https://www.nrla.org.uk/resources/renters-rights/landlord-database-register-your-rental-property-service

Essex Police Let's Talk Sessions
Thursday 12th November 11.00am – 12.00pm: St. Mary's Church, Steeple Bumpstead
Friday 13th November 11.00am – 12.00pm: Community House, The Street, Birdbrook
Monday 23rd November 11.00am – 12.00pm: The Reading Room, Great Yeldham

Cost of Living Small Grants Scheme
The Cost of Living Small Grants Scheme provides grants of up to £5,000 to organisations delivering projects that support residents experiencing financial hardship and cost of living pressures within the Braintree District. The scheme aims to support practical, community-led solutions that improve financial resilience, increase access to essential services and help residents manage the challenges associated with the cost of living. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and will remain open until all available funding has been allocated. Full details at: https://www.braintree.gov.uk/costoflivinggrants

Wethersfield Update
BDC has been informed by the Home Office that they have submitted an application for Urgent Crown Development (UCD) to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to the proposed extended use of the Wethersfield site for asylum accommodation. At this stage MHCLG will need to decide whether the proposal is eligible to be considered using the UCD method.

BDC's position remains unchanged: using this setting for such a purpose is wholly unsuitable, and the site should close as soon as possible. This news is deeply disappointing, and the Home Office plans have totally ignored feedback from our communities who have to live with the impact of the asylum centre. The Leader of BDC, Cllr. T Cunningham will be writing to the Minister to require urgent clarification on the timescales and process for the consideration of this application as well as further details. He intends to make BDC's position clear on a further attempt by the Home Office to bypass local planning routes for the third time. BDC will consider what the implications of this route are and what options are available through the legal and planning framework.

Money Management Courses for Residents
Adult Community Learning (ACL) is offering a range of free money management courses designed to help people build confidence with budgeting, saving money and managing finances online. Topics include:

- Introduction to Online Banking & Shopping (Witham ACL)
- Budgeting for Everyday Life (Online Live)
- Making Money Go Further (Online Live)
- Surviving Christmas: Budgeting Tips (Online Live)
- Maths - Understanding UK Money (Online Live)
- Maths - Cooking on a Budget (Online Live)

These courses may be particularly useful for residents who are looking to improve their financial confidence or make their household budget stretch a little further. For more information and upcoming course dates, please visit https://www.aclessex.com/

Midlife Employment, Skills and Health Fair in Braintree

Residents aged 45 and over are invited to attend the Midlife Employment, Skills and Health Fair at Braintree District Council's Causeway House on **Wednesday 18 November from 10am until 1pm**.

The free event will bring together employers, training providers and support organisations to help people explore employment opportunities, develop new skills and access advice on health and wellbeing.

Visitors will have the opportunity to speak directly with organisations offering careers advice, training opportunities, health support and practical resources to help them achieve their personal and professional goals. The event is designed to support those considering their next steps in later life and demonstrate the range of opportunities available across the district.

Remembering

The Remembrance Service held on 8th November at Steeple Bumpstead was very well attended. The National Service of Remembrance commemorates "the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts". It is important to pay tribute to all those who served us, including those who gave their lives for our peace and freedom.



Picture left – over 1000 poppies knitted by residents at the Moot Hall.

Cllr. Diana Garrod
Braintree District Councillor - Bumpstead Ward