

# District Councillor's Annual Report to Bulmer Parish Council for 2024/2025

By Councillor David Holland, Braintree District Council Member for Stour Valley South

What follows is a personal report by your District Councillor of matters across 2024/25, that I feel are relevant to Bulmer. It is not a report of all matters relating to Braintree District Council. Those are more than adequately covered by regular press releases that are widely distributed to councillors, the press and thus, to residents.

This report is provided in writing as I have to attend another meeting on the evening of the 29th May, which I am told has to take priority. I therefore apologise for not attending in person.

## Planning

Planning and development control is a key responsibility of the District Council. I sit on the Planning Committee and am its Vice Chair. There are two aspects of planning on which I have sought to support the Village: individual planning applications and also, the **Call for Sites**, which is part of the current process by which the District's Local Plan is being refreshed. The Local Plan contains the policies by which planning decisions are made and also the strategic sites for future development. A number of sites have been put forward for Bulmer and will be put before the Local Plan Subcommittee on the 12th June. My chief objective with respect to this issue is to support you in any way I can on this matter, specifically in representing your views at the Subcommittee meeting if that is what BPC requests: please let me know.

With respect to regular planning applications, I support your Councillors with impartial advice that supports your work without in any way offering an opinion on the application under consideration. This is a necessary approach on my part as I must never express an opinion that might suggest that I am predetermined about the proposals. That is my legal obligation with respect to my role on the Planning Committee.

## Waste Services - it will be all change due to new Government Legislation

Over the last year, Braintree District Council has been developing a new Waste Strategy and has considered a good number of options (more than a dozen) for how to deliver to the new Government's recent legislation on waste and recycling. The number of options has undergone a process of elimination as one by one, options have been discounted because more practical and cost effective ones have been identified. The number of options was reduced by this process first to nine, then five, and finally from those five, one "preferred option" was selected to be presented to Cabinet for final selection as the one to take forward for implementation in early summer 2026.

The Officers at Braintree have done a great deal of work to deliver this piece of work and their calculations of costs for each show that the chosen option is the only one to deliver year on year savings compared to the current waste service in this District.

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The preferred option for the form the new waste service will take went before BDC's Cabinet this week and was agreed. This therefore is the final decision of Braintree District Council.

So what will the new service look like, you ask? The answer is in keeping with what I have described to BPC earlier this year. Put as simply as I can, you will still have a dark grey bin for waste that goes to landfill or incineration. The current recycling bags will go to be replaced by two new colour-coded bins, one for paper and card, and the other for tins, plastic and glass. It is noteworthy that this means that glass bottles and jars will be collected from residents' homes in future and thus will not have to take them to a bottle bank. Bottle banks however, will stay in place for now for those who wish to continue to use them.

Why this approach? So that the recyclable waste is kept clean and thus has the highest value within the recycling industry. If the Council receives more money from the recyclable materials it collects, then our council taxes will be kept down.

The green food caddy (bin) will be retained and residents will be reminded that all food waste needs to go into this food caddy. This is very important because in the last decade, around 30% of what people put into the grey bin has been food waste and because that has gone to landfill, it has unnecessarily cost us all a staggering total of £1million! That sum has come from our council tax and so using food caddy's correctly will also help keep taxes down.

Absorbent Hygiene Products such as disposable nappies are now to be collected from residents who request collection of these products in discrete heavy duty polythene sacks. The service will be more regular than grey bin collections and will be free of charge, but residents needing this service will have to sign up for it.

**Importantly, printed bin collection calendars will be supplied to all homes** so that using the entire new service will be a simple matter of following a chart that you can put up somewhere convenient in your house.

There will be a lot of publicity around this new service leading up to its being introduced in June 2026 so I will not expand further on what I have already said here. I do however assure you that I have looked carefully at the case presented to councillors by our Braintree District Council officers and based on what I have seen, the final choice of scheme is sound. That said, it will not suit everyone though the research suggests the option that has been selected will work for well over 80% of residents. For those it does not suit, alternative strategies will be devised and implemented. Please keep your eyes peeled on social media and Facebook in particular for more information on this major change to your waste collections.

## **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

### **An Elected Mayor for Greater Essex**

I joke with your Parish Councillors that you are lumbered with me until one year later than originally envisaged due to the Government's move to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. It is that move that resulted in the cancellation of this year's local elections. Devolution will involve the election of a Mayor for Greater Essex and that Mayor will have significant powers at a strategic level. You will hear much of this leading up to the May 2026 elections for the first to occupy this role here in Essex.

### **Unitary Authorities - Deliverers of ALL Local Government Services**

Local Government Reform involves disbanding all of the 15 authorities in Essex from District, through Borough to County Council level and replacing them with perhaps 3, 4 or 5 Unitary Authorities that each cover all local government functions within their area. 5 Unitaries seems to be the popular number amongst most leaders of councils thought perhaps not out own Leader at BDC. Our Unitary as one of five would probably comprise Tendring District, Colchester Borough and us in Braintree District Council areas. My own view is that a more economically sustainable grouping here in the north of Essex would also include Uttlesford District and less Unitaries in total, though that is a personal view.

So, a Unitary Authority would therefore necessitate the merger (aggregation) of all 3 or 4 councils Planning and Waste services plus the splitting up (disaggregation) of County Council services such as Adult Social Care and Highways, and the integration of the parts into the geographically relevant unitary authority.

This will be a huge task and a complex issue which you will hear much of in the local media and from the current authorities and councillors including me via social media.

In all of this, the future role of Parish Councils and Parish Councillors has yet to be fleshed out in any detail at all. As a Parish Councillor myself, I am keen to ensure that this level of local government is given due consideration as I believe Parish Councils will have an even more important role in delivering truly local representation under Unitary local government than it does now, because individual councillors on a Unitary assembly will represent far more people than I do as a District Councillor. So as we enter a new council year, we need to work together to ensure that the local voice is effectively transmitted into a reorganised local government.

## Helping keep you abreast of impactful planning matters

There are, of course, other things I am known to be active in for our communities here in Stour Valley South. Perhaps the one I'm best known for is the pylons issue, and of particular interest in Bulmer is the substation whose development continues apace. This site sits on the border of your Parish and will facilitate significant energy infrastructure connection, prospectively in the parishes that surround it. At the time of writing, one huge super grid transformer has been installed on site, and National Grid are currently working on the underground cable installation that will deliver a connection from the substation to the local electricity distribution network. Residents have already seen new pylons appear in the fields at National Grid have the infrastructure built to connect the underground cable to the distribution network. Our communities successfully argued for better screening of all of this infrastructure, but we need to monitor what is happening to make sure National Grid do indeed deliver the least worst solution, as was consented. To that end, I provide Stour Valley South and other residents with regular photographic updates via social media of the latest progress as the substation is built out. Going forward, I hope we can, in our local communities, build on our past success in making the case for better outcomes through constructive engagement with the planning system. I, for one, will be doing all I can to support that objective as future infrastructure planning applications inevitably come forward.

## To conclude...

So, the above are the key matters that have arisen across the last year of my being your District Councillor and I remain grateful for your electing me to this role.

I hope you are aware that I am highly accessible, living in the next village, happy to be contacted on the phone, letter or email. My contact details appear on every page of this report and I am always keen to do what I can in my role as your District Councillor.

I attend as many local social events as I can and am happy to chat about your local issues then, and I do this across the Stour Valley South Ward, from Bures to Gestingthorpe via Wickham, Bulmer and the Hennys.

In reporting all of the foregoing, I hope I have painted a picture of the sort of matters I bring to your community, the work I do to support both residents and your representatives on the Parish Council in addressing the issues that concern your community.

### STOUR VALLEY SOUTH



Councillor

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