

Annual Report from Braintree District Councillor for Yeldham Ward
to Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Council
April 2024

This is my ninth year, and third term, as your District Councillor – thank you to those who voted for me once again last May, though I will of course continue to represent all residents in the Ward as well as possible at our well-run and financially stable District Council. As a fairly local resident (Castle Hedingham) I do my best to represent the interests of our communities in the north of the District and promote the rural way of life at the Council.

2024 is by the way the 50th anniversary of Braintree District Council!

As some will be aware, I am a Deputy Cabinet member and I continue to serve on the Licensing and the Governance & Audit Committees, as well as representing our District on the Essex Flood Partnership Board and the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee (STACC), both of interest to many residents in Yeldham Ward. All of this keeps me busy while I endeavour to attend as many of your (usually monthly) Parish Council meetings in Great Yeldham, Stambourne and Toppesfield & Gainsford End.

In Toppesfield & Gainsford End I often attend your monthly Farmers Markets to meet local residents and sample the local produce, as well as having an ongoing interest in the health of your three community enterprises, the existence of which are an important part of making Toppesfield & Gosfield End such a unique village.

I have intervened on occasion in matters relating to Essex Highways (potholes and drains) and attended several school and other activities while always trying to help residents with local issues which concern them.

I was pleased to be able to make grants from my Councillors' Community Grant Fund during the past year - £300 towards the Little Chestnuts Anniversary celebrations, and £100 to St. Margaret's Church for the Summer Holidays Club Day.

In wider terms of Braintree Council, it has continued with its priorities of delivering high quality statutory services in difficult times, of working to a balanced budget unlike so many other Councils and Boroughs you may hear about on the news, and developing a transformation and shared services programme with the aim of improving financial efficiency and performance.

The forward-looking Corporate Strategy for 2024-28 was adopted at the Full Council meeting in March.

BDC continues to receive awards for its maintenance of parks and open spaces, and remains committed to responding quickly (and successfully pursuing many offenders!) to fly tipping. The introduction of the all-year-round subscription garden waste

collection service was necessary to ensure the continuance of this non-statutory service, and the additional income from the 50% of eligible residents who have signed up has brought in over £1 million to support the cost of garden waste collection.

The Council currently has a 5 year housing supply, and Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Funding are being rolled out in the District. The Livewell Strategy for 2024-28 has been adopted, and of particular interest to those of us in the area, BDC has worked tirelessly to facilitate the new Medical Centre in Sible Hedingham which we assured will have a start date for construction announced very shortly.

Also of interest to our locality, while on the one hand strenuously objecting to the provision of a migrant facility at RAF Wethersfield as being an inappropriate site, BDC has been playing an import in the Multi-Agency Forum to support the installation and the local communities – the latest word is that the Home Office have decided to cap the usual number of residents at Wethersfield at 800 rather than the originally planned 1,700.

Thanks to Parish Councils and residents for your support during the past year.

Cllr. Richard van Dulken, BDC

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