

Annual Report 2025/26

Braintree District Councillor George Courtauld

General:

I am very lucky to share the representation of the four parishes in the Colnes Ward with Councillor Gabrielle Spray and I continue to find a reason to thank her almost every week for her wisdom, experience and advice.

As ever she has submitted her own annual report concentrating on planning issues and the Local Plan, (her particular area of expertise as Cabinet Member for Planning and Chair of the Local Plan Sub-Committee,) the new Waste Collection System, and the Council's initiatives to mitigate the cost of living crisis.

The Council has also been preoccupied this year with the impending Local Government Reorganisation, which will see the roles of County and District Councillors combined in a new Unitary Council. The District Council will cease to exist in May 2028. Despite this, and significant financial pressures, the officers and members of Braintree District Council have maintained the standard and scope of our exemplary services this year, and will continue to do so next year with no rise in their share of the 2026/27 Council Tax, and a balanced budget. This is a significant achievement.

My Role:

In my capacity as Chairman of the BDC Corporate Policy Development Committee I have attracted a significant number of questions about the Local Government Reorganisation, its timing, cost, value and democratic legitimacy. The answers to many of these questions are only becoming apparent now.

I am also Chairman of the Airfield Liaison Committee, and received fewer complainants last year about noise levels than in any year since I took over the role in 2019. Perhaps aircraft are getting quieter.

I have particularly enjoyed my trusteeship of the Earls Colne and Halstead Educational Charity, which gives out around £40,000 worth of grants annually to local students.

Being a trustee of other local trusts involved in housing, farming, hospitality and the church has undoubtedly helped me understand some of the challenges many are currently facing, and try to help.

Our Ward:

I attend all Parish Council Meetings if I am at home unless there is an unavoidable clash and take full advantage of my BDC community grant and other grants.

I am proud to have been able to help several local businesses, institutions and individuals access BDC resources in the last 12 months, or point them to help elsewhere.

I am very grateful for the diligence, commitment and support of so many of my fellow County, District and Parish councillors, and the expertise of the officers at Causeway House and the parish clerks.