

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL –15th February 2010

Agenda Item 11(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Mrs Joanne Beavis

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Customers & Communication

Portfolio covers:-

- Member Development
- Rural and Locality (Place Shaping) Development
- External Communications and Marketing Strategy
- Customer Access Strategy
- Democratic Support
- Corporate Consultation
- Customer Standards and Relationships

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 14th December 2009 and ending 15th January 2010.

Communication and Corporate Consultation.

The views of our residents from all around the district have definitely helped to shape our focus in this year's budget setting process. I embrace this. The Peoples Panel Questionnaire along with a range of other consultation methods has provided us with essential feedback with some interesting results.

Cllr Bebb has been looking into the representation of the People Panel to verify the uniformity of respondents from the recent questionnaire. A review is being undertaken in preparation for the next Peoples Panel Questionnaire. Initiatives to further increase the membership of the Peoples Panel are also in hand.

The Community Achievement Awards.

It was a pleasure to meet with the Chairman of the Council and other judges to consider the nominations for this year's Community Achievement Awards. Again, the quality and quantity of the nominations overwhelmed me.

Over the next few weeks we will be working along side partners to highlight and promote the event as we work towards the presentation evening in March.

Local Service Provision.

The business case for Local Service Provision is now in draft. As the year unfolds we will work on a number of options to consider how to offer our face to face service in possible partnership across the district.

Locality and Place shaping.

Parish Liaison Service.

Further to my letter to all parish and town councils regarding the proposed changes to administration support. I am pleased to report that only a few letters have been received regarding this issue. The issues raised from the letters received covered limited concerns regarding the new contact details for day to day issues. The town and parish councils will have a new point of contact via the Member Services Team.

A conference for Town and Parish Chairmen will be hosted by the Council in March.

To avoid confusion, Parish Clusters are not being withdrawn by the Council. For now we are saying it is up to individual clusters to meet if they wish. The Council will continue to provide information as required by the clusters or offer support at the meetings, if requested. Later in the year we will seek to develop another model which will transform the way in which all three tiers of local government work closer together to benefit the community.

The new proposals seek to create a stronger link with our town and parish councils.

Shortly I will be writing to our town and parish councils to set out the new ideas for the future.

RURAL ISSUES.

A rural study is being undertaken by Essex County Council to understand how rural businesses may diversify their offering and to try and help them to survive and grow. Braintree District Council will have the opportunity to feed into this study. I welcome this study and I have asked the Economic Development and Transportation Board to report back this issue at future meetings and this was agreed.

Latest reports state that by 2020 it is predicted that 1 in 4 people living in rural areas will be over 60. It is stated that all local authorities should have regard for these findings. For Braintree, with our own ageing population, this could raise concerns. Access to services for our ageing and isolated population along with regard for affordable housing for our young to help support these fragile communities will be vital.

Rural proofing is the tool through which the aim of rural mainstreaming is met. Again, I will be addressing this issue to ensure our services meet the needs of our rural communities.

I will be considering all these issues as we work towards updating our Rural Strategy as the year proceeds.

MEMBERS ISSUES.

I hope that all Members enjoyed the Members Conference in January. On the evening we all received some of the additional sheets for our Members Handbook. I hope that you will agree that the Members Handbook now provides us all with a useful and compact guide of Councillor and Officer contacts along with the Council's constitution and 2010 diary pages.

I am looking forward to meeting with members of the Member Development Group early this year to discuss any issues arising. Please do let me know if you require any issues to be raised.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING:

Cllr Mrs Joanne Beavis. Mobile number: 07771984365

Cllr Mr David Bebb. Mobile number: 07803507581

Our further contact details are also available on the Council website and the Councillors Portal (Members only).