

**LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009**

Agenda Item 9(i)

**LEADER: Cllr Graham Butland**

**LEADER PORTFOLIO: Overall Vision and Strategic Direction**

Portfolio covers:-

- Strategic Partnerships – National, Regional, County and District
- External Relationships (including PR and reputation)
- Local Strategic Partnership
- Corporate Governance

**REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 7<sup>th</sup> April 2009 AND ENDING 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2009**

**1. Braintree Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)**

The LSP is a non-statutory body that brings together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, working at a local level.

The aim is to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of the people and communities of the Braintree District, now and for generations to come.

The LSP is structured into:

- **LSP Executive Group** – responsible for the overall strategic direction and co-ordination of the LSP.
- **LSP Steering Group** – responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and its priorities and actions.
- **LSP Thematic Partnership Boards** – operational arm of the LSP delivering joined up actions.

The **Braintree District Sustainable Community Strategy** has been prepared jointly by the LSP and Council, setting out the issues which are most important to people and which need to be addressed in the coming years. The Strategy was produced jointly with the Local Development Framework Core Strategy as the framework document 'One District – One Vision. A draft Strategy for People and Places in the Braintree District to 2025'.

The Strategy was consulted upon during late 2008 and is now being presented to the LSP and Council for approval.

The LSP is leading on key projects to deliver the **Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA)** and the Braintree District Sustainable Community Strategy. The Essex LAA is a joint agreement between partners across Essex to focus activities on the needs of identified

groups of service users and residents

(<http://www.essexpartnership.org/vip8/com/Community/content/binaries/documents/Local Area Agreement August 2008.pdf>).

The **Braintree District Local Area Agreement** is being developed that will capture the LSP's actions to deliver the priorities of both of these documents.

Some of the LSP's key projects are:

### **Creative Communities**

- The project uses arts and cultural activities to develop community cohesion in areas where there is growing tension between residents. The aim is to create more integrated communities and to reduce perceived anti-social behaviour.
- Partnership responsible – Braintree District Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

### **Funded Business Advice and Mentoring**

- The project works with stakeholders and funding agencies to identify opportunities to support new, emerging, existing and vulnerable businesses. One-to-one business advice and mentoring is provided to young and small existing businesses.
- Partnership responsible – Economic Development and Transport Partnership

### **Learning and Skills Council Project**

- The project creates a process for the investment of resources into addressing the comparatively low levels of community and workplace qualifications and vocational skills. The project also supports the Learning and Skills Council's apprenticeships project.
- Partnership responsible – Economic Development and Transport Partnership

### **Village Agents (Braintree Pilot)**

- The project is being piloted in the rural areas of the District to ensure that support and information is provided to older and vulnerable people in the more isolated rural areas. Village Agents living in the community are recruited and trained to provide information and promote access to a wide range of local services (such as health, social care, personal safety, fuel poverty, benefits and pensions etc).
- The funding resources an additional Braintree Community Transport driver for the fully accessible minibus, which can be used in areas highlighted by the Village Agents.
- Partnership responsible – Health, Housing and Well-Being Partnership

### **Preventing Homelessness in the District**

- The project establishes a Braintree District Homelessness Strategy Steering Group to implement the Strategy and actions over the next 5 years. A Housing Advisory Officer (Partner Agency Co-ordinator) is appointed to work with vulnerable people and families to prevent homelessness.
- Partnership responsible – Health, Housing and Well-Being Partnership

### **Teenage Pregnancy – under 18 conception rate**

- The project aims to improve the outcomes for teenage parents and their children, through a local service mapping exercise and developing services and activities that are dedicated to young people and raising awareness of teenage parents and conception.
- Partnership responsible – Braintree District Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

A briefing note on the progress of these projects will be available to members shortly.

The annual **LSP Assembly** was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May with an invitation to all District and County Councillors. 56 people attended and heard presentations on the new inspection programme of 'Comprehensive Area Assessment'. Workshops focused on how the LSP can effectively communicate and engage with local people. 83% of respondents who completed the Assembly evaluation form gave their overall opinion of the event as 'very good/excellent'.

A new dedicated **website** for the LSP will be launched shortly providing a central information point on the LSP. Key LSP documents, meeting minutes, project updates and performance information will be available to partners, stakeholders and the public. When live, the website can be accessed via [www.braintreedistrictlsp.org.uk](http://www.braintreedistrictlsp.org.uk).

## **2. Braintree and the Recession**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> May I attended a seminar hosted by the New Local Government Network (NLGW) for local authorities in the Eastern Region. Also present at the meeting was the Chief Executive of the East of England Regional development Agency (EEDA).

The purpose of the seminar was to discuss the recession and the role that local authorities could play.

EEDA made an interesting presentation on the impact of the recession. It was clear that Braintree District is a district that has seen some of the steepest increases in unemployment. The number of people in the district claiming job seekers allowance has risen from 1250 in April 2008 to 3089 – an increase of 147%. The increases have affected all age limits. The number of 18-24 year olds has risen from 345 to 875, and the number of 50+ year olds has risen from 255 to 625.

Local authorities outlined actions that they were taking to support their communities through the difficult economic circumstances. I am pleased to report to members that this Council is at the forefront of the actions being taken.

## **3. Tackling the Recession – Business Summit**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> June the Council held a Business Summit for local businesses at the Essex Golf & Country Club, Earls Colne. Some eighty representatives of local businesses from across the district attended. Also present were Cllrs Nigel Harley, Nigel McCrea, Tim Wilkinson, Roger Walters and Chris Siddall.

The meeting was addressed by Alan Cherry CBE DL, Chairman of Countryside Properties plc., Phil Eckersley, Bank of England agent for the South East & East Anglia.

The event provided an opportunity for local businesses to hear the views of two excellent keynote speakers and to share experiences as to how they were coping in the recession.

I am delighted to report that participants were full of praise for the pro-active role that the District Council is playing in supporting business. I would like to thank officers for the organisation of this highly successful event.

## **4. East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)**

I shall be attending the Executive Committee Meeting of EERA on 12<sup>th</sup> June. The main item on the agenda will be consideration of a report on the planned implementation of the Sub National Review in the East of England. I will report the outcome of this meeting to members at full Council.

## **5. East of England Regional Select Committee**

Members will be aware that the Government recently established Regional Select Committees. The opposition parties opposed their establishment and have refused to nominate members to these committees. The Government decided to press ahead and it was intended that the first meeting of the East of England RSC would take place before the summer.

I have now received the following email from the Government Office.

*Following recent events, the Regional Select Committee are reviewing their forward work plan ahead of the Summer recess.*

*The Committee have struggled to find a quorum for the oral evidence sessions they had planned in June and July and, as a result, these sessions will now be cancelled.*

*Discussions with the Committee Clerk have implied that this situation is unlikely to resolve itself ahead of the Summer recess. As a result, the current inquiry is likely to run into the next parliamentary session and is unlikely to require a great deal of input from the region ahead of the House returning in October.*

*There have also been no developments on the introduction of Grand Committees and given the current political climate I do not expect any further activity in this area ahead of recess.*

*I will, of course, keep you advised of any developments.*

Clearly this ill thought through proposal is in some difficulty.

## **6. Openness & Transparency**

Following the recent publicity surrounding the expenses of MPs I have discussed with the Chief Executive how the Council should respond to the need for greater openness and transparency.

As a result I am proposing that in respect of the last financial year the salaries paid to the Chief Executive and Executive Directors will be published. This has been common practice in the NHS for many years.

In respect of the allowances and expenses paid to members the Council has always published the allowances claimed by each member but not the expenses. In future all expenses claimed by members will also be published.

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

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