

LEADER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL – 12TH APRIL 2010

Agenda Item 10 (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 16TH FEBRUARY 2010 AND ENDING 9TH MARCH 2010

1. Halstead Town Centre

On Tuesday 23rd February I attended a public meeting in Halstead to discuss the challenges facing the town's High Street. Also present were County Councillors Jowers and Pike. Topics raised by the public included parking, a by-pass for the town and the state of the market.

It was agreed that there would be a follow up meeting to consider what might be able to be done to make the market more attractive.

2. Meeting with Colchester Borough Council

On Wednesday 24th February Cllrs Lager, Siddall and myself met with leading members from Colchester Borough Council. This was one our half yearly meetings with Colchester to exchange ideas, views and good practice.

3. Local Strategic Partnership

The LSP Executive Group met on 1st March.

Members considered reports from the Recession Working Group and the Steering Group for NI35 "Building resilience to violent extremism".

The partnership endorsed the key actions from the Climate Change Strategy that could be addressed by partnership working. In addition members considered the Essex C&YP Plan, LAA Priority 10 "A well managed environment", and the LSP Communications Strategy.

Braintree District Council and the Mid Essex PCT gave an update on health inequalities in the district and the progress being made on the recommendations from the Health Inequalities in Essex Review.

This year's LSP Assembly will be held in late June 2010 and will focus on the outcomes from the LSP's activities and projects.

4. CHIP Board Meeting

The CHIP Board met on 23rd March.

Members considered and agreed, in principle, two affordable housing development schemes at Capel Close, Rayne and Prospect Close, Hatfield Peverel.

The Board also agreed a report which clarifies the Board's priorities for the future funding of non-social housing projects.

The Board received a presentation from an organisation, Groundwork East of England, who are to work with local communities in two specific areas, Templars Estate in Witham, and the Glebe, Coldnailhurst and Tabor estates in Braintree. The Board approved recommendations for Groundwork to develop a master plan for environmental works and to report back to the CHIP Board meeting in July. I emphasised the need for Groundwork to ensure that local communities are in at the beginning and fully involved in decision making.

5. Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board

The Board met on 30th March at the Discovery Centre. This joint venture with Essex County Council has been an undoubted success. Visitor numbers to the park during 2009 are estimated to have been around 180,000. During the year 43,846 vehicles used the car park.

The issue of car parking charges was discussed and it was agreed that a seasonal charging structure should be introduced with a reduced parking fee for late afternoon visitors.

The new artificial grass pitch and multi-use games area has made a promising start. All evening and weekend slots are being filled on a regular basis. Staff will be looking to maximise every opportunity to increase usage during off-peak periods.

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

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