

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL - 21 SEPTEMBER 2009

Agenda Item 8(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Roger Walters

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Environment & Sustainability

Portfolio covers:

- Clean & Green Strategy
- Waste Strategy
- Environmental Strategy
- Climate Change/Energy Strategy
- Street Management (parking, signs, etc.)
- Regulatory Functions (licensing, building control, environmental protection)
- Emergency Planning

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 21 JULY AND ENDING 10 SEPTEMBER

CLEAN & GREEN STRATEGY

Green Flag Awards

Silver End Memorial Gardens has been awarded a prestigious Green Flag, along with Halstead Public Gardens that retained the award for the second year running.

The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales and recognises and promotes the best green spaces in the country. Both gardens met strict criteria, which among other things require the them to be safe, clean and welcoming places. These awards reflect the effort and hard work by officers and grounds staff in improving and maintaining the Gardens.

In addition the partnership between the Council and Essex County Council was also recognised with the award of a Green Flag at Great Notley Country Park. These achievements further demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving the quality of its parks and open spaces.

New Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area

On 24th August, work started on building the new Artificial Grass Pitch and Multi-Use Games Area at Great Notley Country Park. The works are expected to last for 10 weeks and will provide a modern, state of the art facility catering for football and a range of other sports and recreational uses.

Other Highlights

- The refurbished play area at Braintree and Bocking Public Gardens opened at the end of July.
- Footpath and road repairs were completed at Braintree and Halstead Cemeteries.
- The Levens Way Play Area at White Courts, Braintree re-opened after resurfacing works necessitated by a large water burst.
- A customer satisfaction rate of 83% has been achieved for provision of our Grounds Maintenance Service to ECC / Direct schools in the Braintree District.
- We have 40 Community Champions as at the end of August 2009.

Key Issues

- The Company appointed to negotiate sponsorship of roundabouts to fund improved maintenance has found this more challenging than expected. This is seen as being due to the impact of the current recession.
- Planning permission has been sought for the change of use of the land for the extension to Cut Throat Lane Allotments Witham. This will delay completion of the works until November 2009.
- The Council has recently heard that its tender submission for the Greenfields Community Housing Grounds Maintenance Contract was unsuccessful. This is very disappointing, but it is business as usual, as the Council will continue to carry out the work for Greenfields until 31st December 2009. A new Contractor has been appointed from 1st January 2010.

STREET MANAGEMENT

Highway Rangers

Braintree is recruiting two Highway Rangers (funded by Essex County Council) as part of the Localism Agenda. This is a pilot for a period of twelve months that will enable highways issues raised by Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils to be responded to locally. The role will involve undertaking highway maintenance and minor construction work, as well as a range of other highways work from clearing paths of overgrowth and weeds, removing graffiti from bus shelters, hedge cutting, sign cleaning and many other minor construction repairs.

George Yard car park

Refurbishment of the third lift at George Yard is nearing completion and arrangements are in hand to publicize and promote these facilities which have been upgraded to comply with DDA and fire safety regulations.

Continental Market

A Continental Market is to be held for two days - Friday 30th / Saturday 31st October 2009. It is being run by a company that operates Continental Markets in the UK and in various countries around Europe. It is envisaged approximately 25 stalls will be operating, offering for sale such goods as: continental breads, cheeses, cold meats, olives, wooden craft work etc.

Key issues

A problem has arisen with 4 of the 'residents-only' parking schemes in Braintree, where enforcement has been suspended due to incorrect signage. This is matter for Essex County Council and they are currently liaising with the Department for Transport to agree new signage. They are also considering whether residents affected by this situation should be offered a 'free' period of parking when renewing their permits to compensate them for the loss of service.

WASTE STRATEGY

CUBEC (Colchester, Uttlesford, Braintree, Essex & Chelmsford)

The Partnership has formerly entered into a contract with Whyte Young Green to carry out a high level review of their waste and vehicle maintenance functions. Work will continue over the next 3 months and their report will be available in early January 2010. This is an important piece of work in assessing overall cost and efficiency of the respective services.

Wheeled bins

The Recycling Team has been busy throughout the past two months dealing with queries and concerns raised by residents who have been notified that they will be changing over to wheeled bin collections from the end of September. At the same time, we are introducing the new food waste collection service which allows for all food waste (cooked and raw including meat, fish and bones) to be included

in the green bins.

Key Issues

- In the past few weeks an educational campaign has started to encourage residents not to put out side waste with their grey bins. This is a 3-stage process, culminating in the issue of a fixed penalty notice to householders who refuse to comply with our wheeled bin collection scheme.
- During the first quarter of the year, the recycling tonnage was lower than anticipated due primarily to the impact on households of the recession. With both recycling tonnages and residual waste tonnages down, this clearly shows that residents are buying less (only buying what's needed/buying products with less packaging, having fewer take-aways/ready meals) and throwing away less (using things more sparingly and using up leftovers). In contrast, more waste is being composted and the combined recycling and composting results show that we are well on track to meeting our annual target.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

Since April 2009, the Council has received over 600 reports of enviro-crime by residents and businesses, as a result of which the following enforcement action was taken:-

3 Formal Cautions issued
8 Fixed Penalty Notices served
39 Notices served
12 successful prosecutions

In addition:

190 stray dogs were detained
460 food premises were inspected and 80 food handlers trained in Basic Food Hygiene
100 Health and Safety inspections were carried out and 28 accidents in local workplaces investigated
2000 pest control treatments/visits were carried out

CLIMATE CHANGE/ENERGY STRATEGY

Key issues

- Installation of additional variable speed drives and valve wrap at sports centres and swimming pool.
- Replacement eco-friendly vending machines at Causeway House
- Installed timers on scanners and scanner pc's
- New employees car share database
- Climate Change Strategy produced, which is currently out for public consultation.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Team has recently run a very successful training event for Parish Councils on the issue of combatting the risk of flooding. The event was very well attended with some extremely positive feedback from those parishes that attended.