

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010.**

**Agenda Item 10i**

**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 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010 AND ENDING 31<sup>ST</sup> March 2010.**

**Communication and Corporate Consultation.**

**The Community Achievement Awards.**

The Braintree District Community Achievement Awards Reception was held at The Town Hall in Braintree on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Our Chairman Councillor Margaret Galione hosted the event. I would like to personally thank Margaret for her support on the evening and for assisting with the judging.

The awards are to celebrate those in the community who have made an outstanding contribution to the community and to improving the quality of life for others by giving their time, support and care.

This year the Braintree and Witham Times and also the Halstead Gazette promoted the event. The team of judges shortlisted all of the nominations and the finalists were all promoted in the local papers and residents were asked to vote for their favourite person or group. 750 votes were received and the winners were announced at the reception.

BBC Essex gave a live interview to support the event and Dave Monk of BBC Essex came along to the reception as Guest of Honour and Master of Ceremonies.

My grateful thanks go to all of the Officers who made this event such a great success.

The event allows Braintree District Council to acknowledge those in our District who make an outstanding contribution to their community or to the environment.

## **Preparation for the 2011 National Census.**

Councillor Bebb attended a recent Essex briefing by the Office for National Statistics for the representatives from District and Borough Councils and Essex County Council. Subsequently, a briefing was circulated to all Members together with an electronic version of the recently published Office of National Statistics booklet for Councillors.

Census Day is set for 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011. Data collected will be 'digested' over a further 18 month period, including some follow up sampling. The count will source data including for:

Population - Housing - Employment - Education.

Census data is required, amongst wider elements to:

Underpin policy making and funding allocations for council/health services from Central Government.

To help plan and prioritise service delivery.

Benchmark for population between census.

## **The People's Panel**

Preparations are in hand for recruitment to top up membership of the People's Panel.

## **Community Engagement and support**

Councillor Bebb recently assisted with practice interviews, organised by the Enterprise in Education for the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> formers at Rickstones New Academy – Witham.

## **Local Service Provision**

At the Cabinet meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010 a recommendation was agreed to take forward an option to progress further with providing a new type of Customer Service Provision.

The option agreed will allow for a new Face to Face service at the Halstead Library consistent with the Face to Face service at the Witham Library. The Halstead Library project would be subject to further consultation and consideration of internal alterations at the library.

The option would also allow for Customer Information Points at the smaller libraries in the District.

The project will progressed forward in partnership with Essex County Council. The existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Greenfields Community Housing, currently offered at the Halstead Area Office, will be terminated.

The Face to Face service in Braintree will be assessed as part of the office accommodation project.

## **Locality and Place shaping.**

## **Parish Liaison Service.**

Discussions have now begun on the future of supporting and working with our Town and Parish Councils. Shortly, a date will be set for the Town and Parish Conference. The conference aims to cover a multitude of issues including policy issues, support network and time for questions and answers.

## **Total Place**

Meeting of the Local Government Information Unit (LGUI) – London 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Total Place was launched in last year's budget with full cross-party support. This central policy is already gathering pace. 13 official pilots have been supported and other authorities such as Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk are all adopting the principles.

Total Place is clearly being driven by the pressing need to deliver efficiencies whilst maintaining service quality to users and communities. The findings are certainly interesting particularly around how service users come into different contact with many agencies with little coordination between them. The concept is right – a whole area approach to public services, which seeks to identify and avoid overlap and duplication between organisations. Radical changes which are focused on delivering collaboration and frontline innovation to reduce cost whilst maintaining quality services. One to watch! ...

## **RURAL ISSUES**

The Essex Rural Partnership met on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010 for its Full Membership Meeting. After the formal agenda items were taken the key issue was discussed.

**Transition Towns and Villages** – relocalisation – engagement – connections. Case studies were received from other Essex authorities that were committed to thinking locally and supporting locally. Support was shown for the importance of community led planning. Community plans were embraced as documents of substance that should be shown consideration by our local authorities as part of the consultation process.

The Shop Locally paper was supported. A campaign to raise awareness of and promote local services, encouraging residents in rural Essex to support their local shops and services. Shopping locally supports jobs, reduces the carbon footprint, increases the local economy and promotes prosperous communities.

### **The Local Government Association Rural Commission Meeting**

The meeting took place in Smiths Square, London on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Councillor Dame Margaret Eaton DL, Chairman of the LGA, addressed the meeting.

The agenda focused on some key items:

Equalities - access to services in the rural areas. Appreciating that quite often rural and urban areas have the same issues, but the solutions can be quite different.

Rural regeneration and thriving economies.

Rural poverty and deprivation.

Access to local health - putting local cottage hospitals and health clinics closer to local people.

Transport - improving the links between the rural areas and urban settlements.

Housing - affordable sustainable housing that meets the needs of those working and growing up in rural communities.

A new prospectus was launched in partnership with others - The Rural Coalition.

### **THE FUTURE IS RURAL TOO.**

The prospectus sets out, in brief, a shared vision of what needs to change. A more sustainable future for all rural communities is both essential and achievable. It demands both a fundamental change of approach both nationally and locally. The Rural Coalition is committed to making this happen.

## **MEMBERS ISSUES**

Members development and training.

In association with the East of England Regional Assembly some Members joined me in meeting with Mr Malcolm Cutts for a Public Speaking course. All Members enjoyed the training and found the course helpful.

Ward Walks will commence in May, post the General Election, to identify Ward issues and possible ways of tackling those issues. Those Members participating have been contacted.

Items have been identified for the next Members Training Evening arranged for 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

The "Modern Councillor" e-learning Member Development Programme is now available on-line. The link is provided from the Members Portal.

The Member Development Charter, a statement of your local authority's commitment to developing and supporting elected Members, will be considered and assessed during the Summer months.

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

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***Our further contact details are now available on the Councillors Portal.***