

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL - 14 DECEMBER 2009****Agenda Item 10(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 9 OCTOBER AND ENDING 30 NOVEMBER 2009.****CLEAN & GREEN STRATEGY****Planting**

Horticultural staff have been busy working with voluntary groups to plant up 24,000 daffodil bulbs in our parks and open spaces. In addition, crocus bulbs have been planted on our high profile roundabouts. These will bring a swathe of colour in the Spring to improve the appearance of the local environment for residents of and visitors to the District alike.

**Partnership with Halstead in Bloom**

Following on from our success this year with the Gold Award, Halstead has now been selected from the East Anglian region to compete for the prestigious Britain in Bloom award in the 'small town' category. This recognises the significant effort made by all partners involved and, in particular, the work of our horticultural and street cleaning staff in supporting HIB, as well as our commitment to environmental sustainability.

**New Sports Facility at Great Notley**

The new facility was recently completed and is now in use at Great Notley Country Park. This project has been 2½ years in the making and has been possible due to the significant contribution from Essex County Council together with a grant from the Football Foundation, and support from Gt. Notley Football Club and Great Notley Parish Council. The facility offers an artificial grass pitch for football and multi-use games area (netball, basket ball, tennis, etc.) and is available for use 7 days a week including evenings with the aid of floodlights.

**Play Areas**

I am delighted to report that our Chairman, Cllr. Mrs. M. Galione, recently attended the Essex Playing Fields Association Award Ceremony where she received from Lord Petre (Lord Lieutenant of Essex) a total of 20 awards including two class winners and one class runner up. Every year we submit our play areas for these awards and, this year, we gained a further 8 awards, which is testament to the Council's investment in improving our play areas.

**Rickstones Pavilion**

In the recent period of bad weather (gales), damage was sustained to the Rickstones Pavilion at Witham, when the roof was blown off. Unfortunately, the Council will have to meet the full replacement cost as this is marginally less than the £5k insurance excess.

## **STREET MANAGEMENT**

### **Highways**

The new Highway Ranger Service was formally launched on 17 November 2009 and the two operatives are now working across the District carrying out minor works to improve the highway infrastructure. All Parish/Town Councils have been made aware of this service and invited to report issues to the County Council that can be incorporated within the Rangers' work programmes. To maximise efficiency of the service, it is intended that the work will be 'packaged' and completed within the Parish Cluster groupings. In the unparished areas of Braintree Town, Ward Members will be encouraged to report issues

### **Roundabout Sponsorship**

I am pleased to report that the Council has secured new sponsors for three roundabouts within the District. This has generated £15k, half of which will be used to purchase the signage and fund ongoing maintenance. Securing sponsorship is proving challenging given the current economic climate and work is continuing to seek new sponsors on the remaining roundabouts.

### **Cleaner Essex Group**

This Group has been set up to share best practice on education, operations and enforcement with the aim of achieving consistent standards across the County. Officers attended the inaugural meeting with Essex County Council and other Essex Districts/Boroughs and representatives of the Keep Britain Tidy Group. There was a high level of commitment to work together to achieve a common aim, as well as to identify opportunities that exist for sharing resources across borders.

### **Car Parking Operations and Charges**

The report considered by Cabinet on 12 October 2009 is currently out to consultation, the results of which will be reported to the Local Committees in January and to Cabinet in February.

### **Continental Market**

The Continental Market held in Braintree on 30<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup> October was a great success, drawing large numbers of visitors to the Town Centre on both days.

## **WASTE STRATEGY**

### **Depot Accommodation**

The Review of Depot Accommodation has taken a new twist in that the Chief Executives at Braintree and Uttlesford met recently and agreed, in principle, to sharing depot facilities at Braintree. This is consistent with the initial findings from Whyte Young Green, but is subject to the outcome of the feasibility study and business case that has been commissioned as an extension to the CUBEC (Colchester, Chelmsford, Uttlesford, Braintree & ECC) partnership. This is seen as a first step towards potential integration of our respective authorities' waste management services.

### **Wheeled Bin Roll-out & New Routes**

The new routes and final roll-out of wheeled bins has been operating for just over two months and the initial teething problems have now been largely resolved. Officers have attended some Parish Council meetings, where requested, to discuss specific concerns raised by their parishioners.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE/ENERGY STRATEGY**

### **Liquid Pool Cover Trial at Halstead Swimming pool**

The long awaited trial of the "liquid pool cover" at Halstead Sports Centre has started. Instead of using the physical pool cover, Halstead pool are using a liquid additive to the pool water, which it is claimed is effective in reducing heat loss and it significantly reduces humidity in the pool area which has benefit to the long term structural integrity of the pool. If successful this will cut heating costs and significantly increase the life of the structure of the pool.

### **Low Energy Lighting Survey in Braintree Museum**

Officers undertook an energy audit at Braintree Museum. The main findings were that the majority of lighting used was halogen spots; replacing these with LED spots will significantly reduce energy bills. The audit also discovered that the heating management system was not operational and by correctly operating the system would again significantly reduce the energy bills.

### **Green Driver Training for Council Staff**

Green driver simulator for staff was arranged for all staff. 50 staff took part in a driving simulator, being taught new techniques on how to reduce fuel consumption when driving.

### **8 Display Energy Certificates Completed**

As part of new legislation introduced last year, the Council has to publish the energy efficiency of all its large buildings – across the board all buildings have shown improvements in their energy consumption.

### **The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan**

Extensive consultation has taken place on the Council's new Climate Change Strategy. The Strategy and Action Plan is to go before Cabinet next month for approval.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING**

**BDC Pandemic Flu Plan** has been reviewed by officers in light of new advice from the Government.

All Parish Councils have received a letter encouraging them to consider purchasing **Floodsax** as a replacement for traditional sand bags. This product is more effective than a sand bag, is extremely lightweight and is totally bio-degradable. Letters are now going out to all those households who contacted us during the floods in February this year, encouraging them to buy their own stock of flood sacks.

### **Health & Safety**

An extensive Fire Risk Assessment was undertaken at Warners Textile Mill. And officers have been dealing with a number of serious issues which were found following a visit by Essex Fire & Rescue Officer to Silver End Village Hall.

Hand Arm Vibration testing has been carried out on various item of equipment used by our horticultural operatives.

## **REGULATORY FUNCTIONS**

**Environmental Health:** Officers took part in the **Reality Road Show**, an event organised by BDC which visits secondary schools throughout the District. Officers in the Environmental Health Department took sessions on raising awareness of anti-social behaviour.

### **Successful prosecutions**

The Environmental Health Department took the following prosecutions against persons under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

- A resident of Braintree for breaching an abatement notice served on them in March 2009 for playing loud music which was **causing a nuisance** to neighbours.
- Another resident of Braintree for breaching an abatement notice served on them in May 2009 for playing loud music which was **causing a nuisance** to neighbours.
- A Halstead resident for **depositing black sacks of waste** at the rear of The Centre in Halstead.
- A Stambourne resident for **carrying trade waste** without being a registered carrier, and passing their waste to an unregistered waste carrier which was then found deposited in a by-way in Stambourne Road, Birdbrook.

- A local business for failure to comply with **duty of care** in respect of trade waste from the business. The waste was deposited in black bags at a domestic waste collection point.
- Three Braintree residents for **operating an unregistered waste business**. They collected waste from an address in Takely which was deposited in Toppesfield Road, Finchingfield and from an address in Braintree which was found deposited in Graves Hall Road, Sible Hedingham. The waste in Sible Hedingham contained unknown chemicals, which turned out to be commercial fertilizer and the Braintree District Council operatives who were clearing the waste were taken to hospital after feeling unwell. As a result Essex Police and Essex Fire & Rescue attended the scene and closed the road.
- And finally obtained **dog control order** from magistrates to be placed against a resident in Borley following incident where their two dogs got in to the neighbouring garden and attacked a cat - previous history of identical offence.

**PDSA canine advice caravan** and dog wardens targeted 5 different locations throughout the District, with the intention to raise the profile of responsible pet ownership. The events were so successful that the PDAS wish to repeat the exercise next year.

### **Building Control**

The number of applications submitted in October was 18.2% more than the same month last year and, in addition, the income received last month was significantly higher than last month. This could be an early sign that there may be an upturn in the local construction industry.

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

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