

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 14th December 2009

Agenda item 10(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Lady Patricia Newton**CABINET PORTFOLIO: Housing & Well-Being**

Portfolio covers:-

- Housing and Homelessness Strategy
- Health and Well-Being
- Leisure
- Affordable Housing
- Older People

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 27th October 2009 AND ENDING 13th December 2009**Housing**

1. During November I attended the official openings of the affordable housing schemes at Gestingthorpe and Pebmarsh. The scheme of four dwellings at Gestingthorpe is well designed and has wonderful views. The Pebmarsh scheme of ten properties stands on quite a large site and has a mix of dwellings including flats; bungalows; two, three and four bedroom houses. I was particularly impressed by the level of support of the local parish councils and communities, and the commitment of partner agencies and council officers to the delivery of these schemes.
2. I was also very pleased to attend the “unveiling” of the sculpture of the Phoenix at the Bailey Bridge Road redevelopment scheme. The scheme was an ambitious project and could not have happened without the support and involvement of residents. The idea for the Phoenix came from residents themselves working with the community artist.
3. The Foyer Supported Housing Scheme in Braintree provides accommodation for 32 young people between the ages of 16 and 25. Most referrals to the scheme are via the council’s Homelessness Service. A condition of residency is that the residents sign up to a personal development plan to develop the necessary life skills to move on to independent living. On 26th November I attended an awards evening and presented certificates to those residents who had satisfactorily completed courses in subjects such as money management, drug and alcohol awareness, food safety and sexual health.
4. Briefings on the Choice Based Lettings system have taken place. These were attended by district councilors, parish councilors and village agents. Everyone gained a much clearer understanding of how the system works, and how affordable housing schemes such as Gestingthorpe and Pebmarsh are allocated.
5. The Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) has now approved funding for the Riverside affordable housing scheme which will provide 30% affordable housing.

Health & Wellbeing

1. Two Outdoor Gym projects have been approved by the Braintree and Witham Local Committees. The first at Meadowside, Coldnailhurst Avenue, and the second at Spa Road Road, Witham. The projects, totaling £40,000, are funded by NHS Mid Essex. The aim is promote healthy lifestyles and the equipment has to be placed in areas of health inequality. An additional £5,000 has been awarded by the Mid Essex Forum to fund a post for six months to promote the use of the equipment. It is hoped that the equipment might be in place during December, although I suspect this may slip into the New Year.
2. The Health, Housing & Wellbeing Partnership Board met on 12th November. The board received updates on projects included in the Action Plan, confirmed the Terms of Reference, and were briefed by Greenfields on their Community Options Study.

Leisure

1. A formal consultation is in progress on the proposed swimming and leisure facilities in Witham. About 2000 questionnaires have been distributed. Analysis of the responses will be presented to Cabinet for consideration in February. The Academies Enterprise Trust has again expressed interest in managing the new facility.

Other activities

Since the last Council meeting I have attended the following:

Greenfields new office opening

Faiths' Forum

CHIP Board

Gt Notley all weather pitch

Supporting People briefing with ECC Lead Member

Farleigh Light up a Life

Coggeshall Old People's Christmas lunch

MS Society Christmas lunch

South Anglia HA Board

Various briefings with officers

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

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