

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 28th JUNE 2010

Agenda Item 9(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Mrs Joanne Beavis**CABINET PORTFOLIO: Customers & Community Support.**

Portfolio covers:-

- Member development.
- Rural and locality (place shaping) development.
- Voluntary sector.
- Public consultation.
- Customer standards and access.
- External funding.
- Equality and diversity.
- Community transport.
- Concessionary fares.

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 12th APRIL 2010 AND ENDING 15th JUNE 2010

Members may note the new name for my Cabinet Portfolio – Customers and Community Support. The new portfolio takes in the extra responsibility for the voluntary sector, external funding, equality and diversity issues, community transport and concessionary fares.

The additions to my portfolio both compliment and broaden the portfolio. The new portfolio strengthens the Council's commitment to supporting communities. Our Sustainable Community Strategy sets out our vision for the Braintree District. *"To improve the well being of people and communities in the Braintree district now and for the future generations – ensuring that local needs are met"*.

Savings across the portfolio.

The new Coalition Government has already begun to identify serious reductions to individual grants to local authorities in 2010/11. With this in mind, the Leader has asked all Cabinet Members to look for savings in their own area of responsibilities. The savings will be identified in consultation with our local communities and community groups and businesses in the usual way. At a recent meeting of the Braintree Association of Local Councils the Leader addressed the meeting stating that all Parish and Town Councils should have regard to the current financial situation and prepare for very prudent budgeting with the possibility of future cuts.

Public Consultation.**THE PEOPLE'S PANEL.**

All members of The People's Panel have received their first newsletter. The members were thanked for their participation in our first People's Panel survey. Already the opinions of our members are shaping how the Council operates. The next People's Panel survey will be sent out during the summer when the theme will be "improving the appearance of the district".

2011 National Census.

Along with other local authorities Braintree District Council is supporting the Office of

National Statistics in the development of an accurate and inclusive national ONS Census database. Following the recent national campaign launch a 2011 Census Local Authority Toolkit has been issued.

Details on the progress of both the above issues can be obtained from Cllr David Bebb.

Rural and Locality (place shaping) Development.

Cluster Meetings.

During the past few months I have attended the latest round (and possibly the last round under the current structure) of Cluster Meetings. Support is broadly growing to seeing the Clusters superseded by another structure that would allow us, possibly in partnership with the County Council, to work more closely with our communities. A discussion paper will shortly be worked up and shared at a later date. Members of the Braintree Association of Local Councils supported these steps and mostly agreed that changes were required to enhance new ways of working in partnership locally.

The Rural Community Council of Essex has invited me to join their new Community Led Planning Network. I have accepted their invitation. The Essex group will share information and ideas to support the agenda for empowering local communities.

Community Transport.

The patience and willingness of our volunteer drivers is instrumental in securing the success of this service. The shopper bus service is the latest addition to the service and already 32 rural communities are benefiting with 383 passenger journeys so far.

I have no doubt that the Council's Community Transport service brings a lifeline to the most isolated and disadvantaged in our district. Meetings will take place shortly with the County Council to consider the service with a view to signing a new five-year SLA next spring.

Equality and Diversity.

MultiCulti, organised by Braintree District Council, took place during early June. The events, which took place in our three main towns, formed part of Essex's Explore Culture – a celebration of art, craft, food, music and dance from around the world. The events celebrated our district approach to celebrating diversity

B.D.V.S.A. Braintree District Voluntary Support Association.

I have accepted an invite to attend the AGM of the BDVSA in late June.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The Member Development Working Group met on the 3rd June 2010.

The Member led group, chaired by myself, noted the progress in preparation for seeking the Member Charter and agreed that a framework was in place for Member Development which would be useful for the intake of new Members to the Council in May 2011.

Ward Walks.

Good progress is being made to carry out the Ward Walk in many areas of our district. The dates are currently being set with Peer Members from other authorities.

ACTIONS.

Members thought a session with an opportunity to question the Group Leaders on any issues would be useful at the next Members' Evening. A suggested time for the Members' Evening was September 2010.

Members would like an informal workshop to be arranged to support them with general ICT trouble shooting issues.

Members asked the Member Services Manager to work with the Communications Team to ensure that all Members were invited to events taking place in their wards.

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

Cllr Mrs Joanne Beavis. Mobile number: 07771984365.

Cllr Mr David Bebb. Mobile number: 07803507581.

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