

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 14TH DECEMBER 2009

Agenda item 10(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Nigel Harley

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Enterprise & Culture

Portfolio covers:-

- District growth and infrastructure (inc. Transport Strategy)
- Economic Development Strategy
- Cultural Strategy
- Built Environment (planning policy)
- Business Support
- Tourism

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 27TH OCTOBER AND ENDING 1ST DECEMBER 2009

EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN TO 2031

EERA has recently carried out consultation on scenarios for housing and economic growth in the East of England for the period to 2031. The consultation period closed on 24th November.

This was discussed at a members' seminar on 27th October attended by EERA's Head of Planning. The response to the consultation was agreed at the LDF Panel on 18th November. The LDF Panel has supported the overall levels of growth for the region as set out in Scenario 1, Roll Forward of the Existing East of England Plan, but has suggested that there may be scope to vary the distribution between Districts where a higher level of growth would secure and deliver the provision of key infrastructure improvements.

The Council has also supported a joint policy response from all Essex local authorities.

HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT

We have heard that Braintree District Council has provisionally been awarded £298,746 Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2009/10. This will be reported to Cabinet on 1st February 2010.

WITHAM ACADEMIES

The Planning Committee approved the planning applications for the Maltings and New Rickstones Academies in Witham at its meeting on 3rd November. This represents a substantial investment in Witham with the new buildings costing about £50m to build in total and with at least a third of this being spent on local goods and services.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL MINERALS DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT

The Witham Local Committee and the LDF Panel have considered the ECC Minerals Issues and Options Paper. The Council has objected to sites at Olivers Farm, Witham; Parkgate Road, Silver End/Kelvedon; large extensions to Bradwell Quarry, Rivenhall Airfield; Broadfield Farm, Rayne; Covenbrook Hall Farm, Stisted; and Tile Kiln, Valley Farm, Sible Hedingham. The Council has not objected to two small extensions to Bradwell Quarry, Rivenhall Airfield or to Bulmer Brickfields.

WARNER TEXTILE ARCHIVE

Work is continuing with the Braintree District Museum Trust to secure a long term future for the Warner Textile Archive. This includes considering the option of purchasing the freehold of the Warner Visitor Centre from the Museum Trust and renting back at a peppercorn rent. We are also currently identifying a number of ways of reducing the costs of the Museum Service to a minimum or nil cost within the next 3 years. Discussions on the potential for working in partnership with Colchester and Ipswich Museums are continuing.

SKYLINE 120, BRAINTREE

Coopers of Stortford has confirmed that it plans to occupy a 3.49 acres site at Skyline 120 by the end of 2010. Coopers is one of the largest privately owned mail order companies in the UK. It is a long established family business which also operates a traditional department store in the centre of Bishop's Stortford. This new site will be used for a distribution hub for the company.

Developers have also confirmed with us that contracts for the forward sale of a further 67,000 sq ft warehouse at the Skyline 120 site will be exchanged in December this year.

BUSINESS START UPS

Business Development Services are reporting an increase in take up of their business start up service at the Corner House, Braintree. Braintree Enterprise Acorn Units has also reported increased interest in their units, from people looking to set up new businesses. We understand that some organisations are also looking to downsize and reduce their property commitments. Occupancy levels for start up business at the Springwood Drive enterprise centre remain high.

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Braintree retail event held at the end of October attracted an estimated additional 7,000 to 10,000 people to the town. Retailers welcomed the Council's support for the event. An additional street market is being held in Braintree on the 24th December. Council also supported the very successful Wish You Were Here late night opening in Halstead held on the 4th December.

The **Meet the Buyer** event in Witham, organised by the Witham Industrial Watch Group and sponsored by the District Council, attracted over 100 local business people. A similar event for Braintree businesses, held at the Skyline 120 site on the 4th December 2009, attracted local 60 exhibitors.

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