

**CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009**

Agenda Item 8(i)

**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 21<sup>ST</sup> July 2009 AND ENDING 21<sup>ST</sup> September 2009.**

**CUSTOMER SERVICES.**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE (CSC).**

Performance in the CSC continues to deliver against targets with 90% of calls received being answered within 15 seconds. Regular checks are undertaken to monitor any random caller waiting experiences to understand how these come about. Thankfully caller waiting experiences are rare and usually occur due to a local or National disaster.

Approximately 8,000 calls per month are answered in the CSC. Of these 3,800 calls are Braintree District Council related and 4,200 calls are Greenfields Community Housing related. From this October Greenfields Community Housing will be handling their own calls and I will monitor the impact of this decision upon the CSC.

**FACE TO FACE TRANSACTIONS.**

Our three Customer Service Desks continue to attract a large footfall of customers. Causeway House has the largest number of Face to Face customers (approximately 6,000 Face to Face customers per month. Witham attracts approximately 500 Face to Face customers per month and Halstead attracts approximately 800 Face to Face customers per month).

I believe that a Face to Face service of some type is essential, however, we will continue to encourage our customers to access our services via the CSC or the council's website to help reduce the constant footfall at our three Customer Service Desks.

## **LOCAL SERVICE PROVISION.**

A review of how we provide Face to Face services across the entire district has been commissioned. Some consultation has been undertaken with partners. The aim of this is to look at the possible synergies of delivering services in partnership in line with our corporate strategy priority to provide one stop shops to our customers where they can access a range of services from different public bodies.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARD.**

Over the past few years we have concentrated, very much, on customer performance making sure that we respond to our customers requirements in a timely and efficient manner. As part of our aim to improve customer service across the organisation, the intention of this project is to achieve the Customer Service Excellence Standard (CSES).

CSES fosters continuous improvements, and can help us to transform customer services across the organisation. The award also acts as an external validation. The project follows a traditional Charter Mark in part of the organisation, but would represent a holistic approach to driving forward improvements in customer services.

The requirements of this project have been scoped to access resources and timescales. I will keep you updated as the process unfolds.

## **CORPORATE CONSULTATION.**

### **THE PEOPLES PANEL.**

The recruitment target has been amended to a total of 500 residents. The recruitment drive will end at the end of September. The Panel Consultation model will go fully live from October 1<sup>st</sup>.

- A final push on recruitment is currently taking place.
- Currently the 3 towns are well represented on the Panel, particularly Witham and Braintree.
- All BDC parishes are now represented on the Panel, with at least one or more panel members recruited. An analysis of numbers recruited in comparison to parish population has been conducted (by Cllr Bebb) to ascertain which parishes are particularly under represented. Where appropriate specific local ward members are being contacted to ask if they can be instrumental in recruiting a few more parishioners on to the Panel.

Please do contact Cllr. Bebb if you would like to support this project.

### **LOCAL CONSULTATION EVENT.**

Three events are scheduled for September.

- \* Witham - September 15<sup>th</sup>.
- \* Halstead - September 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- \* Braintree - September 29<sup>th</sup>.

In consultation with each Local Committee a wide spread of local organisations have been invited to each event, as well as adverts placed in the local press.

At the time of compiling this report nearly 70 members of the public, including partners have confirmed attendance spread over the three local committees, with particular high attendance (37) for Halstead.

Each consultation event will follow a workshop based proven schedule. The programme includes a DVD presentation of examples of local community projects. The events will also feature warm up sessions (sounds fun!) a group of consultation exercises and ranking on key issues stemming from the recent Place Survey.

Many thanks go to Cllr Bebb, Local Committee Chairmen and Officers for putting together this programme. Please do ask about your local event. There may still be time to invite that forgotten person.

## **THE PLACE SURVEY.**

Members will now be aware that the results of The Place Survey have now been published. You will have all received the links to enable you to read or download this publication. The publication has been split down into the three local areas, Braintree, Witham and Halstead, showing an urban and rural split.

Since the publication of these documents I know that many of you are paying particular attention to the outcomes in your own local areas. Please remember that the results will also be used to help us form some priorities at the Local Committee Events.

The Survey results are also being discussed within the Council's services with the issues for development or improvement identified and actions will be proposed for a future presentation to the Cabinet.

## **LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK. Week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

Having just welcomed some 60 young students from Honeywood Community Science School into our Council Chamber, I am convinced, as ever, that we must continue to enjoy the vibrancy that a huge number of our young bring to our district.

At such a young age, they too, have adopted roles and responsibilities within their School Council. I was pleased to see on their agenda for the day: fundraising, making a difference and communication.

This year, and in line with Local Democracy Week, we have asked all the five secondary schools in our district to produce a birthday card.

The competition will end at the end of October. The winning card will then be produced by the Council and sent out to our young people as they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The card will highlight some of the benefits of being 18 including being able to vote and joining The Peoples Panel!

## **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT.**

### **INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT).**

Thank you to all the Members who have so far attended the three ICT workshops. I look forward to meeting more Members in the next two rounds. The next rounds are on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> at 2.30pm and again at 7pm.

The workshops are covering three areas:  
The Councillors website.  
ICT Securities.  
Outlook Web Access (OWA)

Take up has been good and I am pleased to report the following figures:

Members who have or will be attending the ICT workshops (32 out of 60).  
Members now using OWA (27 out of 60)  
Members using their own email systems (30 out of 60)  
Members with no access to ICT or email ( 3 out of 60)

The workshops aim to assist Members move to using OWA which enables Members to access their Council email account from home. As Democratic Services are moving towards the withdrawal of forwarding emails to Members' personal email accounts, Members are encouraged to ensure that they are in a position to manage their Council email accounts when this happens.

The issue of Security is huge for the Council and even for those who feel confident in the use of OWA, I would encourage all Members to attend the workshops. A final workshop date is still to be set. I and Members of the Members Development Working Group have agreed to chat to all Members that have so far not responded to any workshop invitations.

#### **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP.**

The Group has now met for the first time. We talked through the following issues:

- \* Members Development Strategy.
- \* Improvement East Offer for Member Development.
- \* Subscription to Modern Councillor (E-learning Pool to improve/develop your skills).
- \* Members Website.
- \* Uptake of OWA.

#### **MEMBERS EVENING 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009 – 7pm Causeway House.**

As part of the continuing programme on the role of Frontline Councillor, we are organising a Members Evening. The aim of the event is to provide Members with support in three areas where there have been recent changes and/or new legislation. We are running three workshops on the evening with an officer providing an overview of a particular topic. The three topics are the Councillor Call for Action, a quick guide to the Constitution and Local Committee Project Management.

On the night we will be issuing a new Members Handbook containing a full version of the Constitution. Please do sign up.

#### **ESSEX RURAL STRATEGY.**

I am now in early receipt of the Essex Rural Strategy for 2009 headed up "2020 Vision for Rural Essex".

The debate continues as to whether rural issues require special attention. Whilst some of the issues experienced by rural areas may be the same as their urban counterparts, the solutions are often very different.

The report is vast and touches on a multitude of issues including: isolation, deprivation, access to local services, rural economy, affordable rural housing and transport links.

I have met with the appropriate Officer and we will form our early response. A final draft will follow for wider consultation before the actual report is published.

***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 Website.***