

REPORT TO CABINET
Braintree District - Green Heart of Essex

Agenda Item 8i

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Financial Implications:- This programme will require additional funding so a provision of £250,000 is being set aside. Other sources of funding may be available for the future and these are currently being investigated.

Equalities Implications:- None arising from this report.

Legal Implications:- None arising from this report.

Options:-

- (1) To agree the principles contained within the programme and that a provision of £250,000 is set aside.
- (2) To prioritise certain projects within the programme

Risks:- Setting ambitions in the Green Heart of Essex programme which are not achievable. Diluting the programme with the risk that the benefits are not apparent to residents around the district.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Green Heart of Essex programme has been developed to deliver the ambition set out by the Leader of the Council in his District of the Future speech to Full Council on 15th February 2010.

That ambition is to improve the appearance of the district and focus our efforts on the issues that recent consultation with the public highlighted as important.

Listening to what residents said

Clean streets ranks third in making our district a good place to live (Place survey) and budget consultation has shown us that litter clearance, enforcement and parks and open spaces were things people felt strongly should be protected or enhanced.

Building on our good work

We know that 97% of the respondents to the People's Panel survey rated our Clean and Green priority as important. However residents satisfaction with the cleanliness of the district has declined over a 2 year period from 68% to 64% (Place survey – Oct 08)

It is important to recognise that there has been a tremendous amount of good work in this area already, for instance in increasing our recycling rate recently to 50%, planting thousands of trees every year, cutting the council's carbon footprint, winning Green Flag awards for Halstead Public gardens and Silver End memorial gardens and clearing litter from hundreds of miles of roads and public spaces in one of the UK's largest districts.

Vision for the Green Heart of Essex programme

The Green Heart of Essex programme builds on our successful work and reflects the things residents value about their district.

The aim is to noticeably make improvements to the appearance of the district so that residents can see we are providing an excellent service and that we are committed to improving the district for everyone's benefit.

We want to create a district that has cleaner streets, towns and open spaces. Where residents and businesses take responsibility for their impact on their neighbourhood. Where children and adults know it is wrong to drop litter. A district with more trees for future generationsa district we can all be proud of.

The Green Heart of Essex programme involves

The programme is made up of a number of projects. It requires high visibility and large scale public and partner involvement to really fly and so must be underpinned by a strong and consistent marketing, communication and engagement plan. The main themes within the programme are :

A **Cleaner** district

A **Greener** district

Protecting our environment

Stronger **Enforcement**

Involving more people and partners

DECISION

To recommend to Council the proposed programme and principles as outlined in the Green Heart of Essex programme. To agree that a £250,000 fund is established to address the priorities for the next 12 months. A further report will come to Cabinet in June as the plan develops.

Corporate Implications			
Financial:	This programme will require additional funding. See the Funding statement at the end of the report		
Legal:	None arising from this report		
Equalities & Diversity:	None arising from this report		
Customer Impact:	Customers will see an improvement in the cleanliness of the district		
Environment & Climate Change:	The programme will have a positive impact on the local environment and climate change		
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Place survey		Partners
	Peoples Panel		
	Public		Staff
Key Decision:	No		
Public/Private Report:	Public		
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Education and encouragement can break the habit of littering



Inspiration for our Olympic Oaks - an ancient oak tree at Great Yeldham



Trees and public art in our town centres can promote local history, improve the townscape and lift the spirits of shoppers and traders alike



Big Tidy volunteers in Great Notley



Happy and healthy – local people getting involved in their neighbourhood



Giving it some welly... John Ray Junior School pupils take a break from creating a school wildlife garden

CLEANER

Our aim

We will make a noticeable improvement to the cleanliness of the district with a number of initiatives over the next 12 months.

Residents will see:

- More visible cleaning and litter picking taking place around the district, on main strategic routes and high visibility areas.
- A reduction in the amount of litter lying around
- An increase in the number of people who get involved in keeping their neighbourhood clear of litter

This will be delivered in the following ways:

New, improved service with the introduction of:

- Extended cleaning times in summer months
- Enhanced cleaning programme on Saturdays and Sundays
- Published cleaning schedules and response times to reports of litter, graffiti, fly tips
Regular reports on progress.
- See-it-Report it Service for residents, members, staff and partners. This service will handle reports of litter, fly tips, graffiti and other environmental nuisance and give a response time by which the litter will be cleared.
- An annual programme of street washing in our 3 towns
- Improved cleaning and litter-picking on the Braintree bypass central reservation and verges.
- The addition of litter bins to lay-bys on strategic routes
- Weekly visits to known litter hot spots and action to prevent them being a continual problem
- Trial of recycling bins in town centres to promote recycling of litter

Supported by :

- A larger team of litter pickers. A street warden team with enforcement powers who also clear litter and clean graffiti.

Strong partnerships working together

Working with businesses

- A Green Heart of Essex Business Programme targeted at businesses in the fast food industry, supermarkets, publicans and industrial estates. Businesses will be encouraged to sign up to a voluntary code of practice and be given support from the council to keep their premises and the surrounding area clean and clear of litter.

Working with schools and school children

- A programme for schools in the district to educate and encourage young people not to drop litter

Working with partners

- Work with the Highways Agency and Essex County Council. This will include co-ordinated activity to litter pick before cutting grass on verges along strategic routes
- Colchester A12 partnership to clear the A12 of litter (a partnership with Colchester Borough Council)
- Explore the opportunity of an Uttlesford A120 partnership to clear the A120 of litter, working with Uttlesford District Council.
- Working with Greenfields on a joined up approach to improving the appearance of Housing estates in the district

Working with parishes councils

- A programme to encourage and support parishes to increase their participation in tackling litter in their neighbourhoods and villages. This will include support for more voluntary litter picks and option to buy more bins

Working with volunteers and voluntary groups

- A recruitment drive to increase our number of community street champions to 100
- A programme to encourage more neighbourhood clean-up activity and volunteer activity.

GREENER

Our aim

To make the district's main parks, town centres, villages and estates even more attractive with the planting of trees and other improvements.

Residents will see

- Improved appearance and landscaping of our gateways to Halstead, Braintree and Witham
- New play equipment in 6 more play areas
- More individuals involved in local initiatives to plant trees and bulbs
- Improved facilities in Witham Park
- Trees and attractive green spaces as part of the redevelopment plans for Braintree, Halstead and Witham

Other options we may consider for the future

It is also the intention to attract and find funding from partners and outside organisations for other projects to improve our green spaces. As additional sources of funding become available other initiatives will be developed, these may include:

- Improvements to the town centre parks of John Ray in Braintree and Witham Park
- An Olympic oak tree scheme for every village

- More attractive green spaces in some of the district's main housing estates including Templars in Witham and Glebe Road in Braintree
- A community woodland with good public access and community orchards in the district.
- A celebration tree scheme for residents and businesses

PROTECTING

Our aim

To protect our environment by further increasing our district wide recycling rate to 53% and by cutting the district's carbon emissions . The target is to cut the council's carbon emissions by 25% by 2013 and every households by 10% by 2011.

Residents will see:

- An increase in our recycling rate to 53%
- The further promotion of energy saving initiatives for households and business such as the highly praised scheme between British Gas and Braintree District Council.

ENFORCING

Our aim

To take proactive enforcement action to discourage all kinds of environmental nuisance.

Residents will see:

- There will be a significant increase in the number of enforcement actions
- A combined team will take more enforcement action against people who create an environmental nuisance. The team will have a new and easier method of issuing notices and will be working with the Police, Greenfields and Essex County Council. wherever possible

INVOLVING

Our aim

To encourage people to get involved in the Green Heart of Essex programme in some way, shape or form either directly or via a group or partner

Residents will see:

Campaigns to encourage residents to get directly involved in the Green Heart of Essex programme

Campaigns to encourage residents to show their support for the Green Heart of Essex programme

Signage and reporting to show residents what is happening locally and the progress being made locally and district-wide

Local Committees and Local Councillors

Local committees and local councillors will play an essential role in the Green Heart of Essex programme.

Local Committees will be able to contribute to the programme in a number of ways including, allocating part of their budget to the programme and also engaging with local people in identifying and participating in initiatives and projects that will improve the appearance of their local area.

The role of the ward member will also be vital in ensuring that the work of the Local Committees reflects the aspirations and needs of local people.

FUNDING

It is proposed that the overall programme is funded from the capital and revenue sources. It is recommended that £100,000 is allocated from the capital programme to fund small improvement schemes and any equipment investment and £150,000 is funded from earmarked reserves. This funding is one-off and does not impact upon the revenue base. It is anticipated that this will be a 2 year programme and further one-off funding will be sought as part of the 2011/12 budget.