

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL - 26 OCTOBER 2009**Agenda Item 9 (i)..****CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Roger Walters****CABINET PORTFOLIO: Environment & Sustainability****Portfolio covers:**

- Clean & Green Strategy
- Waste Strategy
- Environmental Strategy
- Climate Change/Energy Strategy
- Street Management (parking, signs, etc.)
- Regulatory Functions (licensing, building control, environmental protection)
- Emergency Planning

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 10 SEPTEMBER AND ENDING 9 OCTOBER 2009.**CLEAN & GREEN STRATEGY****New Artificial Grass Pitch (AWP) & Multi-use Games Area (MUGA)**

The new facility is due for completion by 6 November 2009 and work is on track to meet this deadline. Plans are in hand to organise a formal partnership launch and a public launch of the facility during November.

Halstead in Bloom

I am delighted to report that Halstead received a GOLD award at the recent Anglia in Bloom Awards Ceremony. This not only reflects the hard work of the volunteers, Town Council and ECC, but also that of the Council's cleansing and horticultural staff who worked tirelessly to ensure that the Town was clean, tidy and well maintained for this annual event and also in support of our corporate objectives.

Allotments

A planning application has been submitted for a new site at Achilles Way, Braintree and, as part of the consultation process, a high number of objections have been raised against the proposal. Work is continuing to procure the additional burial land at Bocking Cemetery, part of which could be used as a temporary allotment. This will be subject to a separate planning application and consultation process once the land is acquired.

STREET MANAGEMENT**Parking Enforcement**

Members will be aware of the temporary suspension of enforcement within the residents-only parking zones in Braintree, pending a decision from the Department of Transport regarding signage. In the meantime, ECC have instructed that residents should receive 6-months' free parking to compensate them for the lack of enforcement. This will be achieved by the issue of an 18-month permit (rather than the normal 12 months) when they come up for renewal.

Car Parking Charges

A report was presented to Cabinet on 12 October 2009 recommending a new tariff for car parking charges and proposals in respect of the free car parks, Sunday parking, disabled parking and concessions. The recommendations are now subject to a full consultation process, the results of which will be reported back to Cabinet.

Highways

Two Highway Rangers now recruited as part of the Localism Agenda and will commence work in early November. It is proposed that parish/town councils will determine locally the work that the Highway Rangers undertake. In the meantime, the Rangers will focus on work allocated to them by Essex County Council.

WASTE STRATEGY

Re-routing of Waste Collections

On Monday, 28 September 2009, staff commenced operation of new collection routes. This is a major change to the service - the biggest for 20 years - and involves 27 new routes, as a result of which most households will have seen a change in their scheduled collection day. This was a key element of the Business Efficiency Review (Option 4) to deliver cashable savings within the Waste Management Service. With such a major change in service, given that in excess of 100,000 individual collections are being made each week, it is inevitable that there will be an increased number of complaints during the transitional period, as crews become familiar with their new routes and residents become accustomed to the new collection days.

Wheeled bins

At the same time as the re-routing, the last phase in the roll-out of wheeled bins commenced involving a further 9,500 properties in the rural areas and properties previously excluded from the scheme due to lack of rear access. This has brought consistency of service provision throughout the District, with 54,000 properties now on wheeled bins and only 1,200 properties remaining on sack collections due to access or other problems. 5,500 flats will continue to receive a weekly collection of refuse from either black sacks or communal bins.

Food Waste Collections

We have now made provision for all residents with wheeled bins to dispose of their food waste (both raw and cooked) in the green bin and have provided a kitchen caddy for this purpose. This is an enhancement to the existing service and is expected to increase our overall recycling performance to 48% this year.

Key Issues

- Despite placing our order 6 months in advance, our bin supplier experienced a severe technical problem which led to a delay in fulfilling our order. This has had a knock-on effect in getting bins out to customers, as deliveries have commenced later than planned. We have issued a press release apologizing for any inconvenience this may cause. By 16 October, all properties will have received their bins.
- Few residents responded to our survey about storage requirements (where properties remain on black sack collections) and it has been assumed that those who fail to respond already have adequate storage (i.e. a dustbin). However, we are responding to individual requests as and when received.
- We have received a number of enquiries from some Parish Councils who would like to maintain the communal green waste collections, despite the introduction of wheeled bins. This service was withdrawn as part of the Business Efficiency Review, but can be provided on a chargeable basis if required.

CUBEC (Colchester, Chelmsford, Uttlesford, Braintree & ECC)

The project has commenced and the consultants engaged in the review have visited each Authority initially focusing on the vehicle maintenance element of the project. The next stage will be to consider in depth the refuse & recycling collection arrangements. A Project Review Meeting is scheduled for 9 November 2009 when officers will receive the first draft of the consultant's report outlining initial findings and options for delivering the shared service agenda.

Licensing – Customer service

Introduction of new taxi livery which now requires licensed vehicles to display an additional front and side plates. This new initiative drastically improves public safety by making all licensed vehicles more clearly identifiable, and lessens the chance of a member of the public getting in to unlicensed vehicle.

Environmental Protection

Introduction of a new “zero tolerance” stance with residents with regard to littering.

Environmental Protection Officers have recently taken three separate prosecutions for depositing waste with total fines/cost etc of over £3,000

Dog Wardens

The Council’s dog wardens pursued a case in court with an individual whose dog savagely attacked another dog. A Control Order was issued against the owner instructing them to keep the dog on a lead when in a public place. The owner was also fined £300 plus £431 towards the Council’s legal costs.

Food Team

Food inspectors pursued the voluntary closure of two local food premises for a period of 1 week each. Each premises was found to be heavily infested with German cockroaches. These premises have since been checked and found to be free from infestation and they have re-opened.

Communications and engagement

Dog Wardens

The Council’s Dog Wardens are working with the PDSA to have travelling information/dog advice trailer at high visibility sites in three towns. The aim of this partnership working is to promote responsible pet ownership across the District.

Emergency Planning

Officers organised a Parish Flood Awareness Evening, which was hailed as a great success both by exhibitors and parishes alike. The evening was designed to be both informative and practical with participants being better prepared to advise and react if flooding occurs.

Climate Change

As part of the Council’s statutory duty, it has to annually assess its buildings’ performance in terms of energy efficiency. We have recently received this year’s assessments and, without exception, all our buildings have improved since last year. The Town Hall Centre is worth a mention, moving from a ‘Very Poor’ to a ‘Very Good’ rating, which is due in part to the Climate Change Team pursuing the repair of a central heating problem and insulating the loft space.

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

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