

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 21ST SEPTEMBER 2009

Agenda Item 8(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Lady Patricia Newton

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Housing & Well-Being

Portfolio covers:-

- Housing and Homelessness Strategy
- Health and Well-Being
- Leisure
- Affordable Housing
- Older People

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 21ST JULY AND ENDING 9TH SEPTEMBER 2009

Housing

I am pleased to report that two rural exception housing schemes have been completed. Four properties at **Gestingthorpe** have been allocated to local residents or people who previously lived in the village. The **Pebmarsh** scheme of ten properties is currently going through the allocations process.

The Housing Strategy consultation is on track and at the time of writing a further event around Older People's services is to take place on 8th September.

The transfer of College House to Family Mosaic (under delegated authority) was reported to Cabinet on 1st September 2009.

Finally I know members will want to join me in congratulating the Housing Team on being nominated in the Best Housing and Regeneration Initiative category of the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) awards. This was for the Baileybridge Road scheme.

Health and Wellbeing

The Village Agents project is progressing well with five Village Agents already appointed and the final one to be recruited in the next few weeks. The first Braintree stakeholder event was well attended. A second round of events is to take place week commencing 14th September, and will allow for stakeholders to comment on the suggested parishes for initial operation. The project will be officially launched on 15th October.

To coincide with this year's international Older People's Day on 1st October the Community Development Team and partner agencies are arranging a series of information days to promote the range of support services available to retired residents, and their families and carers, to help them to stay safe, be healthy, and live independently. The events, to be held in Braintree, Halstead and Witham, will be open to members of the public of all ages wanting to find out more about the range of services locally to support them.

I am often approached by members inquiring how best to deal with health related complaints and inquiries which they have received from their constituents. I have arranged for members to receive the contact information for the NHS Mid Essex PALs service. I would urge members to promote the service. The PALs officers can quickly resolve problems, help with complaints, and provide information.

Leisure

This year's children's summer holiday activity days have been attended by our highest number of children ever. 974 children attended over the 29 days (an increase of 32.5% on last year's attendance), each day taking place in a different parish. Costing only £5.00 per child per day the Activity Days offer Sport, Art & Crafts from 10.30 – 3.30pm at village halls, pavilions and community rooms across the District. All parishes were invited to host the activity days in partnership with the Council by providing a venue and places were allocated to parishes on a first come first served basis. I wish to record my thanks to the Parish Councils for their help and cooperation in arranging the events. In addition to the activity days six sports day camps were held including netball, baseball and athletics. Other than one netball session, all were over subscribed.

Participation statistics of the Free Swim for over 60s and 16 and under age groups continue to show that the programme is popular with the public. In July 784 in the over 60 age group took part (a 131% increase on 2008), and 1,784 in the 16 and under age group enjoyed sessions (an increase of 170% on 2008).

Members may be aware that it has not been possible to establish a Task and Finish Group to look into the future provision of Leisure Services across the district. This is a very important piece of work for the council. A report will need to go to the Local Committees in January 2010, followed by Cabinet consideration in March. In order to meet this timescale I have, therefore, asked officers to engage a leisure consultant to prepare a draft strategy for members' consideration.

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

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