

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 14TH DECEMBER 2009

Agenda Item 10(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Mrs Wendy Schmitt**CABINET PORTFOLIO: Communities**

Portfolio covers:-

- Community Development
- External Funding
- Voluntary Sector
- Equality and Diversity
- Community Safety
- Children and Young People
- Community Transport
- Concessionary Fares
- Community Facilities (halls, toilets, etc)

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 12TH OCTOBER AND ENDING 1ST DECEMBER 2009**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

On 19th November a Faiths Engagement Event was held, jointly organised by the LSP and BDC, this was the first event of its kind in the District. It was attended by over 40 representatives of many different churches and faiths, including the Humanist Group and Essex Police. It was based on the fact that faith groups play an important part in society but did they know how to make their voice heard and influence what happens in the district. The topics discussed were Making Your Voice Heard - Engagement with our Communities, Working in the Community and The Way Forward - A Faiths' Forum? As there is a Faiths representative on the LSP it was agreed that at present it is a representative of the Braintree Churches but the representatives will hold a further meeting to get to know each other and then to have an election for a representative for all of the Faiths. Also information was collated on the type of functions that they hold within their communities and the type of facilities they have. This was an extraordinary event that was so well received that it was difficult to get them to leave; a great deal of good will come from it.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

a) On 4th November the annual Police Consultative Meeting was held at the Institute Braintree. In attendance was the new Chief Constable Mr J Barker-McCardle, the Chairman of the Police Authority and all Senior Officers. During his speech he commented that young people of Secondary School age have the same fears etc. as adults and problems are often laid at their door when they shouldn't be, most nasty, disruptive and anti social behaviour is done by the over 40's. He said that his top 3 priorities are, Local Policing, Protecting the Public from Serious Harm and Giving Value for Money. There has been significant progress in policing in Essex but there is still a way to go. Public confidence is the best indicator and the percentage of people who think that Essex Police are doing a good job has gone up from 43%

to 53%. Chief Superintendant Michelle Dunn said that Braintree is heralded as an excellent example of partnership working. The District Commander, Chief Inspector Allan Gooden said that 2008/9 had been a busy and successful year with an overall reduction of 3.1% in crime, with a reduction of 5% the year before and one in three crimes is detected. There has also been less alcohol on the streets this year. There is no place for complacency and all of the operations held this year will be continued. In the family of 14 similar authorities Braintree is in second place i.e. a safe place to live, with Kettering in Northamptonshire as top, a less safe place. Various questions were asked by members of the public including ones on speeding. In response to those the Chief Constable spoke in favour of Community Speed Watch and was looking at ways of expanding it.

(for information a recent Speed Watch was held in Coldnailhurst Avenue by children of John Bunyan school who were given the opportunity to talk to drivers who were breaking the speed limit, this had a very profound effect on some of the drivers)

b) 2nd November saw the start of the Police and Partners Not In My Neighbourhood Week when publicity was given on the many operations that take place.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

a) Two Grand Schools Councils have been held, one for Witham Area and one for Halstead Area. Members of the Primary Schools Council attended and were asked, through a series exercise to come up with ideas that would give the X factor to their community. Their enthusiasm and the calibre of their ideas was wonderful, after the Braintree one is held we will work on their wish lists. I gave a talk on what the council does for Children and Young People and the officers gave them a talk on democracy at local and national level.

b) The new Children's Trust arrangements continue with events/meetings being held to establish membership and confirm responsibilities.

c) The Braintree Youth Council is doing well with delivering an action plan, although due to lack of staffing at ECC there is a chance that this group will become a Mid Essex Youth Council

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

a) Work continues in finding Community Groups to run their local Community Halls.

b) The toilets in the bus park continue to be the subject of abuse and vandalism which has increased with the longer opening hours.

c) Work is continuing with the Community Transport Christmas Day Trip programme.

Other meetings participated in were Police Joint Action Groups and the CHIP Board

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

Cllr Wendy Schmitt 01376 345363

Cllr Liz Edey 01376 563463