

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 28th JUNE 2010

Agenda Item 9(i)

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Lady Patricia Newton

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Housing & Well-Being

Portfolio covers:-

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

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 1st APRIL 2010 AND ENDING 13th JUNE 2010

Housing

1. There are now over 4000 applicants on the Housing Register for the District. Whilst this demonstrates how successful the new Choice Based Lettings scheme is, it has meant a considerable increase in workload for the Housing Assessment Team.

The 2009/10 Annual Report for Choice Based Lettings is currently being prepared by the Sub Regional Coordinator.

Funding of £15k has been secured from Improvement East via the Choice Based Lettings Sub Regional Group to support a review of the options for sharing services. Colchester Borough Council is leading on the project.

2. The Draft Empty Homes Strategy has been prepared and is out to consultation. It will be considered by the Local Committees during June and July and reported to Cabinet in September.
3. The Task and Finish Group looking at Public Services Provision for Older People met on 20th April 2010 with NHS Mid Essex. Some of the issues highlighted included support for carers, healthy lifestyle choices, the need for seamless services and joint commissioning with social care.

A further meeting was held on 18th May 2010 with representatives of Age Concern Essex and Braintree, Halstead and Witham Citizens Advice Bureau.

At the Group's next meeting planned for 29th June 2010, Pat Strachan, Housing Action Support Officer for Care and Repair England will be giving a presentation on the following areas:

- National policies relating to older people;
- Housing issues for older people; and
- Engagement with older people

All members are invited to attend.

4. It is becoming clear that the delivery of affordable housing targets will be particularly challenging in the next few years. The Council will need to be more pro-active and responsive to market conditions. I shall be working closely with officers to ensure that the Council meets its obligations in delivering affordable housing.
5. I shall be visiting Helen Court in Witham on Friday 2nd July and any member is welcome to join me. This scheme will provide 55 quality homes for older residents in Braintree and Maldon districts who have extra care needs.

Health and Well-Being

1. The Heart and Sole Health Walks Scheme continues to be well supported. Performance is well ahead of that of neighbouring authorities. The scheme has recently been awarded Accreditation Scheme Status from Natural England. This is very helpful in building relationships with partners, funders and healthcare professionals. I shall be presenting the award to the walk leaders on 16th June. I wish to record my thanks to all those volunteers who lead the walks and make the scheme so successful.
2. A lot of work is currently being done around reducing teenage pregnancies in Braintree District. We have been working closely with The Foyer, which provides supported housing for young people. Work undertaken includes a counselling programme (funded by Health, Housing and Well-Being Board) and a Young Parents project.
3. Halstead Leisure Centre: Water softening equipment has been installed at a cost of £11k to prolong the life of the plant and boilers. All boilers are working. The problems with floodlighting of the all weather pitch are yet to be resolved following a report on possible options. Repairs to the squash courts are also programmed (cost £8k).
4. We continue to work closely with DC Leisure Management on promoting the improving health agenda and DC Leisure Management will be reporting to Cabinet on 14th June on 2009/10 performance. DC Leisure Management came top in the industry wide Quest assessment for Quality and Customer Care.
5. The new Braintree Community Hospital opened on 10th April 2010. The hospital is one of the first community hospitals to combine a wide range of day case surgery, outpatients and diagnostic tests, alongside the services traditionally available in a community hospital such as rehabilitation, community beds and community nursing.

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