Braintree District Council

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 15th February 2010

Agenda Item 11(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 2nd DECEMBER 2009 AND ENDING 2nd FEBRUARY 2010

COMMUNITY DEVELOPEMENT

On the evening of 11th December the development team in conjunction with the Nottage Crescent Residents Association held a highly successful Community Christmas Event. This brought together residents of all ages on the green space which had been the focus of much tension between them. This gave the 60 plus residents the opportunity to form more positive relationships with each other. Many of those partners who had been involved with the project attended including the Community Warden as Father Christmas and the Neighbourhood Policing Team. We all went home hoarse from the excellent carol singing.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Third Sector Partnership Board met in January to receive feedback from other Partnership Boards and the Place Survey and reviewed and updated the Action Plan relevant to third sector issues.

A meeting was held with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to discuss the potential impact of the changes to BDC's welfare rights service. This was well received by CAB as a way of working in partnership to consider future options.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Met in January and determined the role of group members in assisting officers with the implementation of the new corporate Equality Impact Assessment process. The new Equality Bill is now proceeding through the House of Lords and there will be implications relating to the Council's statutory duties

A successful bid was made to the LSP for £30,680 to continue with the Diversity Development Officer post for a further 12 months

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Two Responsible Authority Group meetings have been held and the very welcome news was received that in its family of similar authorities Braintree had moved from second place to first as the District with

least anti-social behaviour and crime. This is a great achievement and shows the success of partnership working. We are ranked 305 out of 376 districts on the national crime score, in the lowest 20% nationally. For the District the number of offences per thousand residents is 32.06, Essex as a whole has 41.85 crimes per thousand, the East of England 51.02 and Nationally 53.7. Also in the same week it was announced that Essex Police Central Division, of which Braintree is a part, had the highest detection rates. This is very good news and we must all do our bit in trying to help change the public perception that crime and anti-social behaviour are high in the district. Strategic Assessment Priorities and allocation of funding were also discussed. Since the meetings a letter has been received from the Home Office stating that capital allocation to the CDRP has been cut by 50% £16,364 for 2010/11, in addition ECC has also made a cut of £2,500 and the NHS will no longer give the £6,000 that it has in the past and Essex Police are not giving £6,829, this gives an overall cut of 20.7%. Planned projects will now have to be revisited

A successful bid was made to the Office of Criminal Justice Reform as part of the Community Cashback funding scheme, resulting in a grant of £34,860 which will be used to purchase a vehicle containing a refreshment space and a lavatory that will be used for Community Reparation; this will mean that schemes for the public will now be able to be undertaken in areas that have no facilities. This will be run by the Probation Services but will be available for use by the Council when they are not using it. Further funding of £10,000 was obtained from Safer Essex and will be used for maintenance of the vehicle. Some of the reparation schemes are planting trees along roadsides in Bulmer and work on Sible Heddingham Village Hall. If members are aware of schemes within their Ward that could be carried out please contact the Community Development Dept for further information.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Meetings continue to be held regarding the new Children's Trust arrangements. It was agreed by the LSP that it will be incorporated in the Health, Housing and Wellbeing Board.

In December I once again had the pleasure of presenting certificates, along with a Major from Merville Barracks in Colchester, to young people who had successfully gone through one of the Army Days. These youngsters were selected by their secondary schools as pupils who would benefit from this tough day of team building and discipline, this was organised by the Community Wardens.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

A Christmas day trip programme was very successful, it has been a very busy period but limited provision was given during the bad weather.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A constant stream of meetings is taking place with various organisations regarding transfer of halls to community groups. A successful public meeting was held at the Glebe Hall and a group of a dozen or so residents are having a further meeting to give them detailed information to enable them to see if they wish to run the hall. The only hall in which no interest has been shown is Forest Road

A pilot scheme in keeping the public lavatories in the Braintree Bus Park open until 9.30pm has been a costly and unpleasant experience, with much damage taking place. At a meeting of the Braintree Local Committee on hearing that this had so far cost an additional £7,000 a vote was taken and the decision made to close the facility. Talks are on-going with Witham Town Council and Earls Colne Parish Council regarding the transfer of their lavatories.

On 2nd February I did a radio interview with BBC Essex regarding the Community Facilities Website that is being set up. Any organisations, business, schools, parish etc who have halls, rooms, parks, gardens or equipment (e.g. projectors etc) can ,for free, put this information on the BDC website, this will enable groups to compare sizes and costs etc of facilities that are available. This will be up and running in March. If any members are aware of any such facilities please contact the Communities Department.

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

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