

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL – 28TH JUNE 2010

Agenda Item 9i

CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Nigel Harley

CABINET PORTFOLIO: Enterprise & Culture

Portfolio covers:-

- Infrastructure
- Economic Development Strategy
- Business Support
- District Growth
- Built Environment (planning policy)
- Promotion of the District
- Cultural Strategy

REPORT COVERS ACTIVITY DURING PERIOD COMMENCING 1ST APRIL 2010 AND ENDING 31ST MAY 2010

Economic Development Activities

Since the last Council meeting there have been a number of activities including:

- Retail customer service workshops in Halstead to encourage the sharing of best practice among local retailers. There were two workshops in May attended by 10 local businesses and funded by LAGBI.
- Continental market in Halstead in May initiated by the Chamber of Commerce and funded by LAGBI money. The event, part of the “wish you were here theme”, was managed by a private market agent thus ensuring a higher degree of efficiency.
- From the 3rd - 5th June there was a Continental market held in Braintree also LAGBI funded. This event was promoted by Braintree District Council and the Chamber of Commerce and was considered to have been a successful event.
- There was a Business Breakfast network meeting of all four Chambers of Commerce, supported by Braintree District Council which drew over 50 attendees.
- The Witham Industrial Watch (WIW) reports a 39% reduction in crime over five months in the area since the scheme began. The 1% levy collection rate stands at 85% of the total collectable and this represents £99,000 transferred to WIW.

Planning Issues

Braintree Loop

Braintree District Council has now been given a definite price by Network Rail to undertake a study on the construction of a loop on the Braintree to Witham line, and we intend to commission this study.

Government Statements on Planning Policy

On 27th May the Secretary of State wrote to Chief Planning Officers confirming the coalition Government’s intention to rapidly abolish Regional Strategies. Consequently, decisions on housing supply (including provision of travellers’ sites) will rest with local planning authorities

without the framework of regional numbers and plans. A formal announcement on this is expected soon. In the meantime, local planning authorities are expected to have regard to the Secretary of State's letter as a material planning consideration in any decisions that they are currently taking.

In the light of the Secretary of State's letter we have agreed that the current consultation on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy should be extended by two weeks until 8th July. This will enable respondents to comment on the implications of the Secretary of State's letter for the Core Strategy. These comments will be considered by the Local Development Framework Panel and will enable the Council to make a local decision as to whether any changes to the Core Strategy are required in the light of the letter.

The Government has also issued a revised version of Planning Policy Statement 3 on housing. The main changes in policy are to change the classification of residential gardens from brown field to green field land and to remove the minimum density requirement for housing developments. We do not expect these changes of policy to have a significant effect on the Core Strategy housing supply. This is because the assessed housing supply does not include sites of less than 10 dwellings and therefore individual gardens will have to be excluded from the assessment and we have not used a standard density figure for the sites. The housing potential for each site has been based on the characteristics of the site rather than a minimum standard figure.

Housing and Planning Delivery Grant

We have heard that there will be no allocation of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2010/11. In previous years Housing and Planning Delivery Grant has been used to support the preparation of the Local Development Framework, to support development control performance and to provide additional enforcement capacity. We estimate that sufficient grant remains from previous years' allocations to support these activities for the remainder of 2010/11, but the implications of the withdrawal of the grant for 2011/12 will need to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

Stansted Airport

As this Council had previously declared its opposition to the building of a second runway at Stansted Airport, the news that the Government will not authorise its construction at least during the lifetime of this Parliament, is to be welcomed. The consistent and vociferous local opposition to this development undoubtedly influenced the Government's decision.

Witham Rail Bridge

We have received confirmation that Essex County Council intends to start building this important piece of infrastructure in early 2011.

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| <p>FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING: Cabinet Member Cllr Nigel Harley Tel: 01787 277309 Deputy Cabinet Members Cllr Tim Wilkinson Tel: 01376 529133 Cllr Nigel McCrea Tel: 01440 785001</p> |
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