

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 December 2006

Subject: Leader's Portfolio

Item: 7(a)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs D Collins

I have four matters, which I wish to draw to the Council's attention.

1. Local Government White Paper

We have now received the Government's plans for new legislation for local government. Some aspects of the White Paper will undoubtedly affect the way in which the Council operates. Once the new Act has been passed, the Council will have to decide on a number of key issues, not least the preferred form for the Executive.

It is very important that all members are aware of the contents of the White Paper. With this in mind, we are arranging a briefing session on 12 January 2007 from 10.00am to 4.00pm at these offices. The briefing will be facilitated by the Local Government Information Unit.

I urge members to come to the session.

2. Unitary Authorities and Joint Working

Alongside the White Paper, the Government has invited Councils to submit business cases for unitary status or 'pathfinder' schemes for joint working between the tiers of local government.

Because of the very tight timetable set by the Government, I have asked members to take the opportunity to express a view under item 9 tonight.

3. Meeting with the Leader of Essex County Council, Lord Hanningfield

I recently met with Lord Hanningfield and had a wide-ranging and lively discussion about our concerns in the District.

Among the matters I raised were:

- Christmas lights in Loughton and Waltham Abbey where the County Council had intervened.
- Debden Town Centre Enhancement Scheme, where I raised the additional costs we are now facing due to structural problems with the car parks and where I hope I extract a commitment to financial help from the County Council.
- The Harlow North Area housing proposals where I hope I made Lord Hanningfield aware of our views.

- Highway Maintenance - where I stated in the strongest terms that the level of maintenance in the District was way behind what is enjoyed in some other parts of the County.

4. Top Management Structure

I recently held a meeting with Group Leaders in order to brief them about the motion under item 10(c) of this meeting. At the moment, we have merely discussed the process of bringing proposals forward.

It should be borne in mind that the Council does now need to progress this issue and I am giving this important issue a high priority.