

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

BURY ST EDMUNDS AREA WORKING PARTY

**Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday 8 July 2014 at 5.00 pm
in the Conference Chamber West, F1R09, West Suffolk House,
Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs S A Stamp (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)
Councillors Chung, Cockle, Farmer, Nettleton, Oliver,
Mrs Rayner and Mrs P A Warby

BY INVITATION: Councillors P Hopfensperger and Mrs Mildmay-White,
Mark Cordell, Our Bury St Edmunds, Business
Improvement District

1. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

2. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor R D Everitt be elected Chairman of this
Working Party.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs S A Stamp be elected Vice-Chairman
of this Working Party.

4. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Everitt and
Springett.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2014 were confirmed as a
correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment in
Minute 39, St Andrew's Street South - Update, by the inclusion of a
reference to the Budget Figure for the Public Artwork as being £20,000.

6. Our Bury St Edmunds - Update and 'Towns Alive' Benchmarking

(Councillors Chung, Cockle, Oliver and Mrs P A Warby declared local non-pecuniary interests as members of Bury St Edmunds Town Council and remained within the meeting during the discussion of this item.)

The Chairman welcomed Mr Mark Cordell, Chief Executive, Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District (BID), to the meeting. Mr Cordell spoke first on the Towns Alive Benchmarking exercise which had collected data relating to Bury St Edmunds Town Centre relating to: footfall, retail offer, business confidence, town centre user/visitor opinions and visitor/shopper origins. Participants had been asked to indicate two positive and two negative factors about the town. A range of positive responses had been collected including those relating to the market, convenience of the town, ease of walking, cultural events, cafés and restaurants and physical appearance and cleanliness. A negative response had been car parking but Mr Cordell suggested that this was based on a misconception, i.e. the adverse comments related to on-street parking facilities rather than off-street car parks. The latter-mentioned facilities were provided by the Borough Council and he believed that the Council's car park policy was equitable to users in comparison with other comparable towns. He suggested that further work would be necessary to pinpoint specific complaints about car parking in the town.

In relation to the work of Our Bury St Edmunds BID, Mr Cordell advised that the currency retail vacancy rate was 7.3% which was below the national average. He accepted that high rents was a factor for shops falling vacant. Rent levels were, however, determined by market forces and there was very little which could be done to influence this. The footfall figure for the town centre was 7.8% up on last year. Mr Cordell suggested the town was doing well because of several factors including:

- (a) 'walkability' – shopping and historical/cultural attractions were all within 10 – 15 minutes walk;
- (b) Positive Proactive Partnership – people had been brought together to achieve shared benefits/objectives;
- (c) Events – these helped to raise the profile of the town;
- (d) Positive Proactive People – there were a number of these actively involved in promoting the town; and
- (e) Innovative and Proactive Marketing – this was being actively pursued and extended e.g. it now included social media and advertising on taxis.

The Business Improvement District had been set up for a period of 5 years and its future would be determined by a poll amongst its membership in November of this year. Mr Cordell advised that work was being done to continue the existence of the organisation to promote the town still further. He suggested that the biggest danger was complacency. Further improvements he envisaged were:

- (i) Volunteer Ambassadors;
- (ii) Full Wi-Fi coverage for the town centre;
- (iii) Further benefits for BID members;
- (iv) Improved Waste Disposal Methods;

- (v) Loyalty Schemes;
- (vi) Utilisation of digital technology; and
- (vii) a Wolf Trail of sculptures around the town (a historical link with St Edmund)

Mr Cordell answered members' questions and was thanked for his presentation and for the work he undertakes in promoting Bury St Edmunds.

(At this point Councillor Chung left the meeting.)

7. Maintenance of River Linnet – Update

(Councillor Mrs Stamp declared a local non-pecuniary interest as a member of Suffolk County Council and remained within the meeting during the discussion of this item)

The Chairman welcomed Jeff Horner, Suffolk County Council, to the meeting who explained that his authority took the lead and worked in partnership with the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Internal Drainage Boards and other local authorities to co-ordinate work in relation to flooding issues. He further explained in relation to the River Linnet that in part it was categorised as a main river and was therefore the responsibility of the Environment Agency. The Borough Council had a Memorandum of Understanding with the Environment Agency whereby the Borough Council would undertake riparian responsibilities for this main river section. The remainder of the River Linnet was deemed to be a watercourse and the several adjoining landowners had responsibility for its upkeep. Plans showing the extent of the River Linnet within the town and the section the Borough Council was responsible for were tabled. Borough Council Officers outlined programmes of inspection and maintenance that were carried out in respect of the section of river the Council was responsible for. Work carried out on keeping grilles clear was reported and photographs on work undertaken to watercourse at Holywater Meadows were tabled.

In relation to the specific flooding problem which had occurred at Gardiner Close earlier this year. Mr Horner reported that the problem had occurred because of three factors:

- (i) a balancing pond being unable to cope with unusually high levels of surface water from the estate;
- (ii) overflows from the fields adjoining the river; and
- (iii) the River Lark itself not having the capacity to cope with the large volume of water from upstream.

Subsequent investigation had revealed the balancing pond was the issue and since it was in the ownership of Anglian Water they had been requested to put work in hand in respect of this pond and others in the town. In response to a member's suggestion that the River Lark should be dredged, Mr Horner advised that this was currently not an option since such a course of action might as a consequence cause flooding further downstream in the town, whereas the problems experienced at Gardiner Close could be prevented by other means. The County Council intended to approach the problem by carrying out a topographical survey of the area in the first instance, then to meet with Anglian Water to discuss possible solutions, along with costings, and for a report back to them to be made in September 2014. There would be consultation with local residents and liaison with Councillors as appropriate and as matters progressed.

The Working Party noted the updates provided.

8. Markets and Christmas Fayre - Update

Officers gave an oral report on initiatives being taken in respect of the Market and proposals for the Christmas Fayre. These were welcomed and members' questions were responded to. A copy of the latest issue of 'Market Pitch' intended for Market Traders as a means of improving communication was tabled. The Working Party noted that arrangements were well in hand for this year's Christmas Fayre and for this event it was proposed to maximise the potential of Abbey Gardens. It was also noted that a licence for the sale of alcohol was being sought in respect of the market place which would permit wines and beers to be sold along with tasting sessions. This would allow such sales to take place on a permanent basis rather than by use of the Temporary Event Notice procedure. The decline in the Wednesday market was discussed and it was felt this had been inevitable with the loss of the livestock market. Officers responded by advising that work was being done to promote this market day by encouraging coach trips and local people working on the town to use the market.

Members thanked Sharon Fairweather, the Market Development Officer, for the work she was doing.

(At this point Councillors Farmer, Oliver, Mrs P A Warby left the meeting. Councillor Cackle left the meeting during the discussion of the following item)

9. Future Work Programme

The Working Party noted a narrative which advised as follows:

In addition to items earlier on the agenda, the Working Party had identified at its last meeting the following issues that it would like to consider during 2014/2015:

- (i) Article 4 Directions
- (ii) Street Vending/'A' Boards
- (iii) Litter Bins Review – Howard Estate

A work plan was currently being developed for the introduction of the blanket Article 4 Directions in the two Bury St Edmunds Conservation Areas which was a significant project governed by Planning Regulations. An update would be presented to a future meeting of the Working Party when this was finalised.

Discussions were being held with the County Council regarding the enforcement of Street Vending/'A' Boards in order to progress this matter. An update report will be submitted to a future meeting, if required i.e. if the policy is not implemented at an earlier date.

Officers would discuss the provision of litter bins on the Howard Estate with the relevant Councillors, and establish whether this matter would merit reference to the Working Party, or could be resolved on a locality basis. In relation to this topic the Working Party felt that the emptying of litter bins outside the town centre needed to be undertaken more regularly. It was agreed that this could be discussed at a future meeting but, in the meantime, officers advised that if Members contacted them then matters

could be attended to on an expedited basis. Members were also informed that fixed penalty notices could be issued in respect of offences of littering from cars. Incidents should be reported to them along with the relevant vehicle registration number.

Councillor Nettleton requested that the regulation of Stamford Bridge Car Park be included in the Work Programme, as he understood a scheme for this had been agreed previously. He also requested that a report be made to a future meeting on grass verge edge trimming/weed control (including coordination with Havebury's grounds maintenance contract).

The Working Party also agreed that a further report be submitted on the arrangements for the Christmas Fayre and its economic impact.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party had previously approved the following dates:

7 October 2014;
9 December 2014; and
10 March 2015.

All meetings are on Tuesdays. Meetings to commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 7.17 pm.

**R D EVERITT
CHAIRMAN**