

West Suffolk -
Best for the West



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

An excellent council

Annual report of the Cabinet 2007/2008

(covering the period 18 May 2007 – 17 May 2008)

and Cabinet commitments
for 2008/09

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Please note: The financial summary will be added once published following the closing of the accounts for 2007/08)

Introduction

On behalf of the Cabinet, I am delighted to be able to present this, my fifth, annual report that takes stock of the achievements of the last year and sets out our plans for the coming year. The report is designed to allow scrutiny of the performance and future plans of the Cabinet and, in short, cover:

- what did we say were our priorities for the past year?
- what progress have we made against them during 2007/08?
- what are our plans for the coming year and beyond?

This report can never reflect the huge breadth of the council's services or achievements, nor all of the day-to-day work on the statutory or regulatory functions (which do not feature directly in our specific commitments but which are so important to the wellbeing of the borough).



I will also try not to duplicate here the **Best Value Performance Plan or the Corporate Plan** which offer a more detailed account of the 'state of the borough', the corporate health of the council and our achievements over the last year against all of our Corporate Priorities. As these documents will show, the council has continued to make significant improvements. This is not just our perception. In many areas national and regional bodies have found St Edmundsbury to be meeting the standards for major awards. Most notably we have maintained our Use of Resources Assessment and, the ultimate accolade, have been being rated as 'excellent' by the Audit Commission in our Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

One of the main reasons why, year on year, we have been able to make these improvements is that, as a council, we have a clear sense of direction. While we may sometimes differ on the specifics, councillors from across the whole council have been united in identifying what matters to the people we serve and in setting a framework within which the Cabinet operates. For several years now St Edmundsbury has benefited from constructive and effective scrutiny committees. Of the two main committees one focuses on developing policy and the other on scrutinising it in operation. The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, established in May 2007, has met regularly. It takes a detailed look at the council's performance, budgets and risk management. These three committees have made a very real contribution both to the way we work and the quality and value of the services we deliver. I hope this will continue and I look forward to working with all councillors in a similarly constructive way so that, as a council, we can concentrate on achieving the very best possible outcomes for residents of the borough.

Finally, on behalf of the Cabinet and indeed all councillors, I would like to record publicly our recognition of the skill and dedication of the council's workforce. Similarly, I would like to thank the local community and our many partners for their support of the council's work in the last year.

John Griffiths
Leader of the Council

1. Improving efficiency and value for money

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Sustainable Council Tax
- Year 4 of DR-IVE / CSR 2007
- Improving Procurement
- Public Service Village
- Service Delivery Review and Customer access
- Council (and CPA) Improvement Plan
- Risk Management/Business Continuity Planning
- Improving the quality and cost effectiveness of all services



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 1.1 This administration has continued its over-riding commitment to improving efficiency. The pressure on local government finance has continued to grow and the need to identify new and innovative ways of working has continued; this has become particularly relevant given the structural review being carried out by the Boundary Committee and the implications it has for local governance across Suffolk. The past year has also seen an increased level of capital investment in a range of high profile projects including the Haverhill multiplex and restaurant development, Bury St Edmunds town centre development (including The Venue) and West Suffolk House, phase one of the Public Service Village. Whilst we are keen to invest in our local communities the loss of interest from these capital investments has meant that continuing the focus on efficiency has been an important part of our financial strategy.
- 1.2 For 2007/08 we introduced a new key activity - improving the quality and cost effectiveness of all services. This has been achieved by continuing the systems reviews of services and being aware of other opportunities to re-shape services to improve efficiency. It has also been helpful to make this an explicit key activity as it is one to which all staff across the council can contribute.

Progress in 2007/08

Sustainable Council Tax

- 1.3 The Cabinet has again delivered on its commitment to maintain low Council Tax. Over the last four years the rises in Council Tax have reduced from 9.9% to 2.9%. In February 2008 a Council Tax rise of 3.4% for 2008/2009 was agreed, which is half a percent below the cost of living. The Cabinet also set a target of keeping rises over the next two years to at least half a percent below the level of inflation as measured by the Retail Price Index (RPI) in the preceeding September (the figure used by government for the annual uplift in benefits).
- 1.4 Throughout the year the Cabinet has regularly received budget monitoring and treasury management reports, allowing us to ensure that spending is within budget, and that our return on investments is being maximised. Treasury management has generated income of £3,721,452 in the last year, a significant sum in proportion to the council's overall budget. It is therefore essential that we continue to monitor the market closely and respond to changing conditions, ensuring that our funds continue to deliver the best possible interest income.

- 1.5 As all councillors are aware the council achieved its ambition of gaining an overall rating of 'excellent', following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) which was undertaken by the Audit Commission in the autumn of 2007. Not only were we rated excellent, in achieving a score of 58 out of 60 we equalled the highest score ever achieved by a district council – a truly wonderful achievement which recognises the work of all the councillors, staff and partners of the council in recent years.

Year 4 of DR-IVE/CSR 2007

- 1.6 The Dynamic Review – Innovation, Value and Enterprise (DR-IVE) process, led by portfolio holders, staff and scrutiny committees achieved the target of identifying over £800,000 of savings.
- 1.7 The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR/07) set out the Government's priorities and spending plans for 2008/2009 to 2010/2011. CSR/07 presented a very challenging framework for local government. It was recognised that a revised approach to the identification and delivery of efficiency and other budget savings for the period 2009 to 2011 would be needed and two sub-groups have already started work to establish the level of savings to be achieved by the move to West Suffolk House.

Improving procurement

- 1.8 The council has adopted a Procurement Strategy which will remain in place for a minimum of three years. This has been developed to help promote a common understanding of the role, function and purpose of procurement; to embrace the regional and national move towards collaboration and shared services which will have an impact on the nature of the Council's procurement activity; and to encourage the use of technology which will help improve transactions with existing suppliers and attract potential new suppliers. The Procurement Strategy underlines the council's firm commitment to finding the most efficient way of dealing with our suppliers.
- 1.9 The Procurement Standards Board has been established which meets quarterly with the meetings being used as a method of reviewing officer procurement decision-making.
- 1.10 The Cabinet also agreed that the Procurement Strategy should contribute to the formation of service plans and be promoted through regular officer training. Both of these actions help ensure that the Procurement Strategy becomes embedded in the organisation.

Public Service Village

- 1.11 The council, together with Suffolk County Council (SCC) established a West Suffolk House Joint Committee as the building will be jointly owned by the council and SCC. The Joint Committee oversees the management of the building and enables specific functions to be delegated to, and discharged by, the Joint Committee on behalf of the authorities. The Joint Committee comprises councillors from this council and SCC and meets on a monthly basis.

Service Delivery Review and Customer access

- 1.12 The Policy Development Committee, through the Service Delivery Review Panel, has conducted a major review of customer payment options throughout the council. This was prompted by the falling demand for the council's cashiering function. As a result, the cashiering function at Haverhill was integrated with the reception service from 1 February 2008 and the integration of the cashiering service with the reception service in Bury St Edmunds will take place from summer 2008. This also forms part of the preparations for the move to West Suffolk House.

- 1.13 We have created an internal Customer Service Group including colleagues from across the authority to discuss opportunities to improve our service. The group has already identified a number of key areas where we can make small changes which will help to achieve this. Going forward the group will look at issues such as the collection of National Indicator 14, which focuses on reducing avoidable contact and minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer, and the creation of customer service standards for the authority.
- 1.14 Work with colleagues in SCC regarding customer access at West Suffolk House is progressing well. A joint approach has been agreed which will remove the need for customers to visit each authority to access services. In addition an Integration workstream has been established between the two authorities to identify opportunities to integrate service delivery to further improve our engagement with customers.

Council (and CPA) Improvement Plan

- 1.15 We continued to maintain a Level 3 score (good) in our Use of Resources assessment from the Audit Commission, an assessment which measures how well the council manages tax-payers' money in terms of control and planning of resources and providing value for money. Although the council achieved the same score as last year this did constitute an improvement in performance, as each year the Audit Commission introduces new and more challenging requirements. Actions arising from the assessment will be incorporated into the council's fourth Improvement Plan to ensure that a positive assessment is maintained.
- 1.16 The scrutiny committees continue to play an invaluable part in monitoring the various plans, policies and assessment returns which the council has to make. This greatly assists the work of the Cabinet in ensuring that the council maintains a positive direction of travel in the various external assessments which are undertaken by the Audit Commission and other inspectorates. This scrutiny work undoubtedly contributed to the 'excellent' CPA rating.

Risk Management/Business Continuity Planning

- 1.17 The Cabinet has pursued this key activity through its Emergency Panel. The purpose of a Business Continuity Plan is to ensure that the council can continue to carry out its core functions in the event of an emergency situation and SCC's Joint Emergency Planning Unit has assisted the council with this process. A number of workshops with senior staff have been held and the Mission Critical Services, Key Threats to Mission Critical Services and Action Plans to mitigate Key Threats have been agreed.
- 1.18 This has been incorporated into the council's Risk Management work.

Improving the quality and cost effectiveness of all services

- 1.19 In April 2008 we entered into a formal joint partnering arrangement with Forest Heath District Council to deliver Waste and Street Scene services in a more collaborative way. This builds on past examples of joint working that include the rolling-out of our 3 bin collection system that resulted in our high recycling rates and maintaining Forest Heath's fleet of vehicles at our workshops in Western Way. Through a Joint Committee of Members from both councils we plan to exploit opportunities to work more closely on future projects. A good example is a joint arrangement starting in June to clear litter from the A14 and A11 in West Suffolk. In the medium to long term this partnership will deliver efficiency savings and increase the robustness of the service.
- 1.20 The legal partnership of all Suffolk authorities known as Doing Business Better continues to receive national recognition for its innovative approach to shared services – in late 2007 it won

the Public Servant of the Year Award for Shared Services and the LegalEase award for technical innovation. All the participating legal sections are now linked by a web-based time-recording and case-management system which will enable the production of full and accurate management information. Options for more radical integration are currently being scoped with a view to creating a stand-alone organisation that can provide legal services across the public sector.

Looking forward

- 1.21 For the period 2009 to 2012 the council will continue with the need to identify significant savings. This will be extremely challenging. However, by continuing to develop the DR-IVE process, St Edmundsbury is in a good position to manage these pressures.
- 1.22 The Cabinet recognises that continuing improvements to efficiency must be achieved in order to deliver on the following eight commitments outlined in this review. The relocation of the council's operations to West Suffolk House will be both a major priority and the source of some significant improvements in efficiency. As already indicated work is underway to establish in more detail the savings to be achieved by being located in one building with a range of shared services with the county.
- 1.23 Work will continue on the joint partnership with Forest Heath to deliver Waste and Street Scene services. The aim being to increase the capacity for both organisations within existing resources avoiding the need for additional vehicles and staff to service the growth in housing.
- 1.24 During the coming year we will continue the implementation of our asset management strategy which involves the disposal of surplus assets. This is a subject on which the Cabinet receives regular updates, and an asset management strategy for the year, outlining how the income built into the current budget will be achieved, is received by the Cabinet early in each financial year.

2. Managing the future development of the borough

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Long term vision for the borough – St Edmundsbury 2025
- Core Strategies for the new Local Development Framework
- Developing active and healthy communities and dealing with health inequalities
- Affordable housing
- Bury St Edmunds Transport Strategy 2021
- Strategic Corridors - seeking investment to enhance infrastructure
- Economic Development Strategy Action Plan
- Promoting tourism in the borough
- University Campus Suffolk
- Review of the Cultural Strategy
- Opportunities from the 2012 Olympics



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 2.1 The council remains committed to the future development of the borough and new commitments around health and wellbeing were introduced last year to reflect changes in our local community. The key activities listed above all contribute to maintaining a balance in the way the borough develops. None of these issues can be tackled in isolation and many are inter-related. Ensuring that the borough continues to develop in an appropriate way is fundamental to maintaining the attraction of the area as a place to live, work and visit.

Progress in 2007/08

Long Term Vision for the borough – St Edmundsbury 2025

- 2.2 When Vision 2025 was developed the aim was to produce one high level strategic document which could be used to guide our service provision and strategies, as well as our work with partner organisations. During 2007/2008 Vision 2025 has been serving that purpose with links to the six themes being highlighted in Scrutiny and Cabinet reports. The document is also being kept fresh with the six themes subject to a rolling review programme. In October 2007 the Economic Success and Skills theme was reviewed and the Transport theme was reviewed in March 2008. The whole Vision 2025 document will be reviewed and updated in 2009/2010.

Core Activities for the new Local Development Framework

- 2.3 The work of the Sustainable Development Panel has continued to contribute towards the Local Development Framework (LDF). A Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which was sent out for public consultation in May 2007 has been agreed which sets out what local development documents and planning applications the council will seek community involvement on and how the community will be involved. The panel, working with the Cabinet and stakeholders, has also developed issues and options for future development to 2031 and these options are currently out to consultation.
- 2.4 In August 2007, the council was invited by the Government to submit a bid to fund infrastructure to enable land already identified for housing and jobs to be developed. We were delighted to be awarded just under £5 million in Government Growth Area Funding for improvements to the

borough's infrastructure. A list of priorities is being developed and governance arrangements for the funding have been put in place in the form of a programme board.

Developing active and healthy communities and dealing with health inadequacies

- 2.5 We have joined the Suffolk Sport Consortium Agreement. Suffolk Sport works throughout Suffolk with a range of partners towards its aim of making Suffolk a physically active and successful sporting county.
- 2.6 We are committing to a significant capital investment in excess of £5 million with the redevelopment of Haverhill Leisure Centre. The leisure centre is due to be reopened in summer 2009 and the improvement will ensure that customers have a centre that is fit for the 21st century.

Affordable housing

- 2.7 The council has secured a £3.5 million allocation from the Housing Corporation, which will be used to complete new housing schemes throughout St Edmundsbury. This means that 161 new affordable homes can be delivered over the next three years.
- 2.8 The housing waiting list currently stands at just over 4,700 households on the housing register. The past year has seen the introduction of Home-Link, the choice based lettings (CBL) system being operated by councils in the Cambridge sub-region. This scheme gives those in housing need more choice allowing them to bid for properties they are interested in. The council now manages the Housing Register, a function which was previously undertaken by the Havebury Housing Partnership. The advantage to our customers of both of these changes is that we can now provide a 'one-stop-shop' where customers can receive housing advice, consider their housing options and register for housing.
- 2.9 A comprehensive Housing Market Assessment is currently being undertaken in the sub-region. The assessment estimates the number and type of homes needed to meet current and future housing requirements across the area. The results will be used for strategic housing and planning purposes. The provision for affordable homes is linked to the LDF as approximately 7,500 homes will need to be provided in the period until 2031 and a sufficient allocation of affordable housing will need to be included in the LDF.
- 2.10 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken a detailed review of the work being carried out to deliver affordable housing in the borough. This has followed an assessment by that committee of the future provision of affordable housing in October 2005. Following this review the Cabinet has committed to the following actions to help increase the availability of affordable housing in the borough.
- (a) the Planning and Strategic Housing Teams proceed with the Affordable Housing Planning Guidance to support the implementation of the Local Plan and Regional Spatial Strategy;
 - (b) more rural exception sites be encouraged to come forward, involving more partnership working with parish councils, Suffolk ACRE and the Rural Housing Enabler;
 - (c) the council ensure that planning and housing staff are as skilled as possible, so that negotiations with developers and Registered Social Landlords deliver more;
 - (d) the level of affordable housing be increased to meet local needs through the Local Development Framework process;
 - (e) maximum affordable housing sites be secured in the pipeline;

- (f) the council take advantage of opportunistic purchase and development wherever appropriate and possible; and
- (g) the council work with other partners, particularly Suffolk County Council, to review land in their ownership that could possibly be developed for affordable housing.

Bury St Edmunds Transport Strategy 2021

- 2.11 This strategy will assist in identifying the range of methods needed to deal with transportation issues in Bury St Edmunds over the coming years, as well as priorities for investment in transport and travel infrastructure.
- 2.12 In 2007 a study of travel habits was undertaken in order to assess the feasibility of a park and ride scheme for Bury St Edmunds. The study looked at the reason for people's journeys, the time and frequency of travel and where people are travelling from. The feasibility study outcomes will be presented to stakeholders by the Strategic Highway authority, Suffolk County Council over the summer.

Economic Development Strategy Action Plan

- 2.13 Economic development achievements during 2007/08 included a development agreement being signed with Basepoint to build a managed workspace and incubation centre on Suffolk Business Park and a concept statement for Suffolk Business Park was drawn up and approved. A streetscape strategy for Bury St Edmunds was produced by consultants and wide-ranging consultation was undertaken. Furthermore, events were organized, including a rural IT training event, business ratepayers' consultation meeting and economic development training seminars and tours. A new Town Centre Manager has been appointed in Haverhill and Town Centre Management was relaunched in Bury St Edmunds. Suffolk Heartlands and Brecks Partnerships EU LEADER funding bids have been successful in the first stage.

Promoting tourism in the borough

- 2.14 We have continued to actively promote tourism in the borough in a number of ways. These initiatives include a series of French, German and Italian visitor guides, the West Suffolk Visitor Guide which is produced in partnership with Forest Heath District Council, 30,000 copies of which have been distributed nationwide, and a Suffolk DVD which has been developed in partnership with the Suffolk Tourism Partnership.
- 2.15 We also actively encourage visitors and residents to explore our rural communities by offering guided walks, outdoor activities, Heritage Open Weekends, assisting Clare to produce a new town leaflet, a cycle leaflet for St Edmundsbury and coach trips to support our local mills for National Mills Weekend.
- 2.16 The Christmas Fayre remains a popular event with over 20,000 visitors in 2007 who spent an estimated £400,000 over a three day period. This is a credit to all of the staff and officers involved and who continue to help this event develop. We have also continued to work in partnership with the Bury Tourism Group and the Bury St Edmunds Tour Guides to provide new tours within the borough and to attend shows and travel exhibitions to promote St Edmundsbury.
- 2.17 We are also pleased to have won a number of awards including 'Best Festival' for America 400 and 'Best Training' for the Green Badge Guide training course both at the Suffolk Tourism Awards. The Tourist Information Centre (TIC) was highly commended for the Eastern Region at the Enjoy England for Excellence awards.

University Campus Suffolk

- 2.18 We have continued to support the development of University Campus Suffolk (UCS) through a master plan for the West Suffolk College which provides for a UCS building on campus. The first UCS students began studying in September 2007.

Review of the Cultural Strategy

- 2.19 Work on the Cultural Strategy has been progressing steadily and it will be considered by the Policy Development Committee in September 2008. The strategy will then be subject to public consultation.

Opportunities from the 2012 Olympics

- 2.20 We are pleased to report that the West Suffolk Athletics Arena, which is managed by Abbeycroft Leisure, has been selected to appear in the 2012 Olympic Games training camp guide which could attract international sports stars to the facility. We will continue to look at ways in which the Borough can benefit from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Cabinet has also committed to work with partners to identify and support individuals in the borough with talent who could potentially compete in the British Team in 2012.

Looking forward

- 2.21 The focus on delivering the economic development strategy and tourism promotion continues with a key activity around the delivery of a business incubator centre in Bury St Edmunds by a private sector.
- 2.22 The coming year will see substantial work done on the development of the LDF, not least the results of the issues and options consultation will need to be considered and a decision taken on the allocation of future growth.
- 2.23 The St Edmundsbury Growth Area Partnership Board has been set up to oversee the investment programmes and use of the growth area funding and had its inaugural meeting on 20 May. Further bids for growth area and similar funding schemes will be pursued in 2008/09. The growth area funding is to support housing delivery identified in the current local plan process and subsequently through the LDF.

3. Future development of Haverhill

Key activities for 2007/08:

- 10 Year Masterplan Vision and Implementation Plan
- Multiplex cinema and restaurants development
- Town Centre Infrastructure and Urban Realm works
- Key leisure projects
- Station Yard supermarket development and town centre links
- Encourage the appropriate development of the Gurteens site
- Shopmobility scheme
- Promotion of Haverhill as a centre of business excellence



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 3.1 The council has maintained its commitment to the development of Haverhill through the master plan process and investments in major projects. Over the last year much of the activity has been centred around the development of the multiplex cinema and restaurants development and the launch of a shopmobility scheme in the town.

Progress in 2007/08

10 Year Masterplan Vision and Implementation Plan

- 3.2 Following the enhancement works, Jubilee Walk in Haverhill was officially re-opened in October 2007. The purpose of the enhancement scheme project was to improve the environment in this key gateway from the bus station and main car parks to the town centre. Jubilee Walk has been repaved, a new public space 'Jubilee Green' has been created and new bespoke Haverhill street furniture has been used. The Jubilee Walk scheme has now been entered for two national award schemes.

Multiplex cinema and restaurants development

- 3.3 The cinema pre-application and planning application were completed. Construction is now underway with quick progress being made and the shell of the cinema building has already taken shape, including the restaurant complex. Infrastructure improvements have also been made to roads surrounding the development to ensure easier access for customers.
- 3.4 The development will include 400 additional car parking spaces and environmental enhancements to the area to create a vibrant new entertainment quarter in Haverhill. Agreements have been reached with a number of companies that will occupy the retail and restaurant units. It is anticipated that this development will open later in 2008.

Town Centre Infrastructure and Urban Realm Works

- 3.5 The infrastructure and urban realm works are intrinsically linked to the vision set out in the master plan and work in this regard has continued.

Key leisure projects

- 3.6 In addition to the cinema development the council has also committed substantial funding to the refurbishment of the Haverhill Leisure Centre. In excess of £5 million is being committed to the project which is due to start in June 2008.

Station Yard supermarket development and town centre links

- 3.7 Following extensive work with planning officers to ensure that the building was of a suitable design for the town, outline planning permission for the Tesco store at Station Yard has been granted. The scheme has improved links to Queen Street, and so the High Street, to encourage those using the store to use other local shops and amenities
- 3.8 Through regular reports from the Haverhill Area Working Party, the Cabinet has been updated on progress of the scheme.

Encourage the appropriate development of the Gurteens site

- 3.9 Discussions continue with the owners about bringing forward the site for development in an appropriate mixed use scheme.

Shopmobility scheme

- 3.10 We are committed to ensuring that our towns have accessible shopping environments and this scheme in Haverhill first became available in summer 2007. The scheme is operated from the Lower Downs Slade council offices and is provided in partnership with a team of volunteers and Town Centre Management. The scheme has been very well used and benefited a number of local residents and visitors to the town. The service has 30 regular users and usage is rising each month.

Promotion of Haverhill as a centre of business excellence

- 3.11 In partnership with Haverhill Enterprise 2000, we have assisted with the redevelopment of Haverhill Enterprise 2000 website as a promotional tool for the town. A brochure associated with the website has also been produced to further support this initiative. The council sponsored the launch of the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, to be known as the CB9 Business Awards, culminating in an event for 400 business people.



Looking forward

- 3.12 Implementation of the master plan, particularly the multiplex cinema and restaurants, improvement to the town centre infrastructure, the Tesco development and encouraging appropriate development of the Gurteens site and promotion of the town as a centre of business excellence will remain important activities for the coming year.
- 3.13 In the coming year we will also be working to establish Town Centre Management as a strong function following the appointment of a new Town Centre Manager. A variety of events, such as the French market which took place in May, will be provided to contribute to the vibrancy and offer of the town as a retail and leisure destination. The other new areas of focus will be the leisure centre refurbishment and work on the north-west Haverhill urban extension.
- 3.14 Earlier this year we were very pleased to hear that Haverhill was chosen as a location for one of the new 'Darzi' Health Centres. The health centre will provide a range of services under one roof, with extended opening hours and will be of significant benefit to local people. The council is working closely with the PCT and local partners to develop proposals for the new centre, which is due to open next year.

4. Bury St Edmunds Town Centre

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Managing impact on town centre of Cattle Market construction
- Encouraging new investment
- Promotion of the town as a tourism, shopping and leisure destination
- Managing car parks efficiently to balance the needs of long and short term visits
- Promoting the viability and vitality of the provisions market



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 4.1 Over the last year focus of this commitment has broadened from the detail of the Cattle Market development to incorporate the whole of Bury St Edmunds Town Centre. Specifically, the historic core, the current shopping area and the wider cattle market site and also working to promote the viability and vitality of the provisions market.

Progress in 2007/08

Managing the impact on town centre of Cattle Market construction

- 4.2 We are committed to helping to ensure that the impact of the Cattle Market construction on the town centre is kept to an absolute minimum. In order to help us achieve this the Impact Management Group, which includes representatives from the council, the developer, the local community, the Chamber of Commerce, Town Centre Management, market traders and retailers, has continued to meet. The role of this group is to identify any potential problems and look for solutions to these.

Encouraging new investment

- 4.3 Business growth has been strong. 350 jobs have been created at the new Culina storage and logistics building in Haverhill, and 65 jobs at the new Dawson packaging company which has relocated into Bury St Edmunds. Bury St Edmunds was third and Haverhill sixth among Suffolk towns on SDA records of companies searching for property. A new industrial and business land study was completed, showing that the past three years have been a period of exceptionally high development activity. The council was awarded a total of £541,387 in LABGI funding for 2008/09, which is a direct reflection of the amount of economic growth in the borough.
- 4.4 Promotional work included a new economic development newsletter which was sent to every business in the borough. Funding was given to Haverhill Enterprise to produce a new brochure and website promoting Haverhill. Promotional material was developed, features for publications written and the business section of the website redesigned.
- 4.5 Strategic work was especially important in 2007/08 because of the Government's Review of Sub-national Economic Development which proposes a greater role for local authorities in promoting economic development. Responses were made to Government and East of England

Development Agency consultations. Officers contributed to research projects about the expansion of Felixstowe, developing sectors in Suffolk, including bio-technology and food, and the future of economic partnerships in Suffolk. The council helped produce the new Suffolk economic development strategy which was officially launched by the Chief Executive.

Promotion of the town as a tourism, shopping and leisure destination

- 4.6 The work relating to the Bury St Edmunds Lover campaign has continued in its role to keep local residents and visitors informed of the developments on site and to promote the town as a shopping and leisure destination. A Bury St Edmunds Lover event was held at the athenaeum to promote the town and this is linked with the work referred to at 4.2 above to help manage the impact of the Cattle Market construction on the town. Other initiatives to promote the town include the monthly Town Centre Newsletter, the www.moreheart.info website that has had around 44,000 visits in the last year and talking to people at events such as the Nowton Park Country Fair. A leaflet containing a map showing every shop in town has been widely circulated and nine information points around town are regularly updated.
- 4.7 The council continues to support Bury in Bloom and we are delighted that in 2007 Bury St Edmunds was named 'Best Large Town' in the United Kingdom.
- 4.8 The TIC is due to produce an Independent Shops Guide in partnership with the Tourism Service and the Town Centre Management Group which will be used to promote independent shops within the town centre. The TIC has also been working closely with coach operators to encourage groups to visit the town throughout the year, which is particularly important for the market on Wednesdays and other traders throughout the town.

Managing car parks efficiently to balance the needs of long and short term visits

- 4.9 The Sustainable Development Panel has been involved with assessing car parking need within the town.
- 4.10 The allocation of long and short term car parking has previously been reviewed to ensure that the spaces available are used efficiently and benefit local residents and visitors to the town. As a result, long stay spaces near the town centre were changed to short stay spaces, therefore, these spaces can now be utilised by several people throughout the day. The long stay car parks, which are slightly further out of town but still within a few minutes' walk of the town centre, are now located in the multi-storey and Ram Meadow car parks. Statistics have shown that these changes have benefited the town as the long stay car parks are mainly used during the week by people working within the town. This enables us to promote the town as somewhere people can 'drop in' to due to the short stay car parks that are now available for visitors and shoppers within the town centre.

Promoting the viability and vitality of the provisions market

- 4.11 A plan for the promotion and enhancement of the market is being developed. The market was placed top in the country, in the National Association of British Market Authorities' market of the year awards. In addition, a living history exhibition called, The market, has been staged at Moyses Hall Museum, including medieval and current day trades and goods.

Looking forward

- 4.12 Support for the independent Town Centre Management function will continue, as will a focus on ensuring that long and short-stay parking needs are balanced. Promotion of tourism and the provisions market will continue.
- 4.13 As the Cattle Market Development moves closer to completion we will be working to maximise the economic benefits of the development for the wider town centre. We will also begin work on a range of activities for delivery the following year when the new public venue opens.

5. Rural Services

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Identify rural affordable housing sites (within existing policy guidelines)
- Financial support for rural projects year 3
- Promote economic development
- Strengthen communication with parishes



This photograph shows an affordable housing scheme in Horringer.

Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 5.1 Rural services have been a long-term priority since we came into office in May 2003. The focus of our key activities have been around identifying sites for rural affordable housing, rural economic development and continuing to develop the Countryside Forum and its communication with parishes.
- 5.2 We also continue to support initiatives such as Village of the Year which focuses on rural areas. In 2007, Whepstead came second in the Suffolk Village of the Year Competition.

Progress in 2007/08

Identify rural affordable housing sites (within existing policy guidelines)

- 5.3 Work to bring forward affordable housing has two elements. The first is the planning element and, as mentioned in section 2 of this report, the Local Plan and LDF are bringing forward sites for housing. When applications come through planning staff work hard to maintain the level of affordable housing included in developments.
- 5.4 We have successfully completed an additional 20 new affordable homes in the rural areas in 2007/2008 in partnership with our Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and have other rural schemes that are currently being discussed for the future. We are continually working with Suffolk ACRE, the parish councils and the RSLs to identify new sites. We are also helping Suffolk ACRE and the parishes to undertake housing needs surveys to identify their needs for affordable housing.

Financial support for rural projects year 3

- 5.5 2007/2008 was the third year during which the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund has been in operation. There is an annual commitment of £50,000 to the fund which offers grants of between £500 and £5,000 towards the costs of community projects which support themes from the Rural Action Plan where there is match funding from other sources. The following schemes have been given funding:

Bardwell Playing Field	£2,537	Ketton Early Birds Playgroup	£5,000
Bradfield St Clare Parish Council	£500	Little Ouse Headwaters Project	£5,000
Clare Parish Council	£800	Ousden Village Hall and Playing Field Committee	£800
Culford, West Stow and Wordwell Parish Council	£3,000	Saxhams Parish Council	£3,000
Fakenham Magna Parish Council	£5,000	Stanton Parish Council	£3,490
Friends of Pakenham Windmill	£3,275	Stanton Woodland and Wildlife Action Group	£5,000
Hargrave Village Hall Management	£2,000	Thurlow Sports Club	£3,700

Committee			
Horringer Community Council	£850	Whepstead Parish Council	£1,000
Kedington Community Association	£2,887.50		

Promote economic development/Rural Action Plan 2008-2011

- 5.6 The Rural Action Plan was first published in 2004. Following extensive public consultation, an action plan for 2008–2011 has been developed, formally adopted and launched at the Parish Council Conference on 22 April. The new action plan includes specific actions in relation to economic development in rural areas. As a result of seven post offices being proposed for closure in St Edmundsbury, officers had face-to-face meetings with the affected post masters/mistresses to seek their views on the proposed closures and how it would affect their businesses and their local community if it were to go ahead. Affected parish councils and borough ward members were also consulted. This information was used to produce a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee members recommending the proposed closures that St Edmundsbury Borough Council should object to.

Strengthen communication with parishes

- 5.7 The introduction of Rural News, a newsletter that is published every two months, and is sent to rural parish clerks, councillors and magazine editors has become a key method of communicating up-to-date and topical information to the rural areas.
- 5.8 We have continued to arrange the Parish Council Conference twice every year and these now take place in different rural locations. The Parish Conference has become an excellent way of bringing together borough and parish councillors, parish clerks, officers and partners who have an interest in rural issues. These conferences are used as a method of exchanging information. For example, a detailed discussion of the Boundary Committee structural review was held at the conference on 22 April 2008 where parish councils gave their views, asked questions about the concept St Edmundsbury has submitted and shared strong support for a West Suffolk unitary.

Looking forward

- 5.9 Identification of affordable rural housing sites, economic development in the rural areas and supporting parish councils in tackling rural issues all continue as actions for the coming year. In addition we will be rolling out the implementation of the new Rural Action Plan 2008-2011. A series of seminars are planned to explore how people in the rural areas can contribute to the actions on the plan which are grouped under the three themes of people, places and prosperity. A final new key activity is to increase the visitor potential at West Stow.

6. Keeping our Borough clean and green

Key activities for 2007/08:

Street scene

- Improve the cleansing and maintenance of public spaces
- Make use of our new legislative powers for enforcement

Protecting the environment

- Climate change – mitigation and adaptation
- Enhance public awareness of the need to reduce waste, recycle more and stop littering
- Agree a Suffolk-wide approach to alternatives for sending 'black bin' waste to landfill
- Working with Forest Heath on waste management



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 6.1 We recognise that environmental challenges need to be tackled over the long-term and for this reason we have continued with our commitment in this area over a number of years. Last year there were two elements of focus to our activities - public space and the environment.
- 6.2 Public space focused on cleanliness. Broadening the powers of enforcement officers has helped to ensure people know that littering, fly-tipping and abandoning cars are not tolerated in St Edmundsbury. Cleanliness and maintenance of public space was included because it impacts on public perceptions of an area and its safety.
- 6.3 The issue of climate change is covered within our work on Commitment 2 but we also included it here to further emphasis the importance we attach to it.

Progress in 2007/08

Street Scene

Improve the cleansing and maintenance of public spaces

- 6.4 We have continued to build on the success of the additional cleansing teams that were introduced in 2005, especially as we understand that cleansing and maintenance are a priority for the public.
- 6.5 The impact of the additional resources has been reflected in the improvement in national indicator BV199 which focuses on local street and environmental cleanliness. In 2006/07 areas surveyed with unacceptable amounts of litter/detritus was reduced from 19% to 17% and graffiti was down from 5% to 4%. There were no areas where fly-posting was a problem.

Make use of our new legislative powers for enforcement

- 6.6 We have taken steps to further enhance this commitment by authorising staff who work in the streets and parks of the borough to issue fixed penalty notices in respect of environmental offences. The general enforcement team can issue fixed penalty notices for low level

environmental crimes such as littering, dog fouling and graffiti under the Clean Neighbours and Environment Act 2005 and the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

- 6.7 We have also authorised the Police Community Support Officers to carry out this enforcement action on our behalf thereby further strengthening our commitments. Training of all these enforcement officers on the new legislation and procedures has taken place.

Protecting the environment

Climate change – mitigation and adaption

- 6.8 We have continued to build on the actions contained within the council's Climate and Energy Action Plan and many of these are now included in the Suffolk Climate Action Plan. The plan is being developed by the CRed Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which works with borough and district councils and key partners on behalf of the Suffolk Strategic Partnership. The council has had significant involvement in the preparation of the Action Plan.
- 6.9 The council also demonstrated its commitment to tackling climate change by signing the Nottingham Declaration on tackling climate change in June 2007. Regarding sustainability, we secured recertification of the council's Environmental Management System to the international Environmental Management Standard IS14001 in July 2007. The Environmental Management System facilitates the implementation of the council's Environmental Policy and maintains our commitment to continuous improvement in environmental performance. This progress was emphasised in December 2007 when the council adopted a Sustainability Policy to replace the Environmental Policy therefore integrating our commitments to environmental, social and economic progress.
- 6.10 The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee receives an annual update on the council's targets, progress and performance against our internal action plan for the previous financial year. The report also identifies issues that are likely to affect the council's performance in the current year. The review takes place against the seven headline environmental targets which are energy, water, pollution prevention, biodiversity, procurement, waste and transport.

Enhance public awareness of the need to reduce waste, recycle more and stop littering

- 6.11 Together with partners, we have implemented a number of initiatives to raise awareness of this issue. During Zero Waste Week from 10 – 17 March 2008, residents were encouraged to reduce black bin rubbish to nothing; businesses were challenged to think about the amount of rubbish they send to landfill and to take steps to recycle and reuse more; and shops and businesses in Clare stopped using plastic bags during that period.
- 6.12 We are also delighted that the unique recycling trial to collect unwanted batteries from the kerbside was hugely successful and has now been given further funding from the Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) to extend it until September 2008. Nine tonnes of batteries have been collected from the kerbside for recycling since the trial begun.
- 6.13 All of this work has helped St Edmundsbury to confirm its place as one of the country's best recyclers. In 2006/07, DEFRA figures confirmed that 50.03% of all waste created in the borough was composted or recycled.

Agree a Suffolk-wide approach to alternatives for sending 'black bin' waste to landfill

- 6.14 Due to the targets under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme, Suffolk County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, is in the process of procuring a waste treatment facility for all residual waste in Suffolk. Representation from St Edmundsbury is present on the Procurement Board managing this project.

Working with Forest Heath on Waste Management

6.15 Through its Sustainable Development Panel, the Cabinet has agreed to joint working with Forest Heath District Council and the first meeting of the joint committee established to take this forward which took place on 6 June 2008.

6.16 **Looking forward**

Our focus on cleansing and maintenance of public spaces will continue in the coming year which reflects the high priority that the public places on this activity. We will also further develop our work on promoting awareness and the need to reduce waste and mitigate the impact of climate change.

6.17 We are including two new activities for the coming year, Encourage Sustainable and Carbon Neutral Development and Greater Use of Green Spaces. Both of which reflect our continued commitment to the environment.

7. Reducing crime and disorder

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Tackle anti-social behaviour
- Community liaison and support work
- Section 17, Crime and Disorder Reduction Act 1998, Action Plan
- Increase awareness of the community effects of drug and alcohol abuse.



Why was this is a priority for 2007/08?

- 7.1 We recognised that residents in St Edmundsbury see the level of crime as an issue that is important to their quality of life. For this reason we have continued to place a priority on this work and remain focused on the key activities to ensure we keep up the drive to address all the forms of unacceptable behaviour which can have such a negative impact on our communities.

Progress in 2007/08

Tackle anti-social behaviour

- 7.2 During the year Suffolk Police approached the council and Haverhill Town Council to help identify an area of Haverhill Town Centre within which the public consumption of alcohol would result in an offence being committed. There was public consultation on the area which local people wanted to be covered and an alcohol free zone in Haverhill has now been approved. This will complement the plans for the town centre in the Haverhill master plan. In addition, the council and the police have worked together to establish a Dispersal Order in and around the Howe Road stake park. The order will be in place between May and November this year. It gives the police powers to disperse groups where their presence or behaviour has resulted, or is likely to result, in a member of the public being harassed, intimidated, alarmed or distressed. The individuals can then be excluded from the area for up to 24 hours.
- 7.3 A number of projects have taken place to address anti-social behaviour. Undercover Art which focused on young people in Bury St Edmunds who had some involvement with graffiti. The project provided opportunities for young people to learn new skills by working with a professional artist, they also worked with local agencies to address the issues and understand the implications of criminal damage within the community. A project was established in association with the Anselm Avenue Community Association where evening sessions are run for young people who use the community centre. Crime Concern ran a Community Crews project where young people became involved with improving their local environment together and other initiatives include the Positive Futures Football project and the Boy Racers project, both based in Haverhill.
- 7.4 A number of highly successful diversionary activities including BurySOUND, SkateJAM and Mix&Blend have also been implemented in order to provide entertainment and a place for young people to go.

Community liaison and support work

- 7.5 Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) have been established across St Edmundsbury and at present there are a total of eight split into three groups: two teams in Haverhill, three in St Edmundsbury Rural and three in Bury St Edmunds. The SNTs hold monthly meetings to help prioritise and look for solutions to problems that have been raised by the local communities. The council's Community Safety Officer attends all of these meetings and is the key link to other council services, the WSLSP and the Community Safety Partnership. Members of the council are also part of these teams and they act effectively as a point of contact for the community. The SNTs will provide ongoing support for local residents and community groups.

Section 17, Crime and Disorder Reduction Act 1998, Action Plan

- 7.6 A county-wide initiative called Playing Your Part is currently being implemented which asks Members and staff to be aware of any community safety problems and to report them to the Playing Your Part team. We have fully endorsed this approach and the Community Safety Officer is highlighting this initiative at team meetings. The initiative will soon be offered to Members and parish councillors. A small card is being prepared as a reference which contains key telephone numbers for St Edmundsbury and the Playing Your Part team for reporting purposes.

Increase awareness of the community effects of drug and alcohol abuse

- 7.7 In January 2008 an art exhibition was staged at the Athenaeum featuring work by people who have experienced drug or alcohol dependency. The exhibition served the dual purpose of raising awareness of substance misuse whilst also being a very positive showcase for the talents of people who have overcome dependency. In addition an evening event featuring live music and dance performances was held in April at the Haverhill Town Hall Arts Centre. The event was well attended by local young people and raised the issues of drugs and alcohol in a positive and innovative way.
- 7.8 The West Suffolk Substance Misuse Officer has co-ordinated a programme of talks at local schools by local people who have had real and direct experience of drugs and alcohol. This approach has proven to be very effective as it shows the real life implications of addiction. The Put a Cork In It campaign which was funded by the WSLSP involved a challenging and innovative drama production to highlight issues around alcohol for Year 9 students. The Substance Misuse Officer has also delivered awareness sessions for Street Pastors and community groups.
- 7.9 The Substance Misuse Work Placement scheme continues to prove very successful. Placements have been hosted by the Parks and Landscapes section, Waste Management, and Community Development. All of these have been very valuable for the individuals and the services involved. The placements provide valuable work experience for the individuals, provide extra capacity for services and help people understand the issues around addiction and recovery.

Looking forward

- 7.10 We will continue to work with our core key activities in this area over the coming year to play our part in keeping down anti-social behaviour and countering the impact such behaviour has on the community. We have recognised that abandoned cars and fly-tipping, as well as being an eyesore, create a variety of safety issues if not tackled quickly. For this reason we will be focusing on having such eyesores removed promptly.

8. Developing staff and members

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Implement the Workforce Development Plan
- Establish new Member Development Charter Action Plan
- Cabinet programme of development activity
- Promote the importance of diversity and community cohesion



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 8.1 We have placed a high priority on maintaining the skills and knowledge base of staff and councillors in the in recent years. As a result implementing the workforce development plan and Cabinet development remained key activities last year. We also widened the key activity relating to diversity to include the promotion of community cohesion in recognition of the importance being placed on this issue at a national level and the changing nature of our own local community.

Progress in 2007/08

Implement the Workforce Development Plan

- 8.2 Good progress has been made in the third full year of the plan which is now embedded in the service planning process. The Performance Development Review process, which was introduced in 2005/06, has been further refined to suit the needs of all staff. The embedding of a set of competencies against which all staff are reviewed, the identification of how each member of staff contributes to the aims and objectives of their team, service and directorate and the opportunity for each member of staff to review their skills and development needs has moved the authority forward greatly while the moderation process has ensured a much more consistent review process across the organisation.

- 8.3 We have continued to run a wide range of staff development activities. At a corporate level we have continued to invest in mentoring and coaching to develop individual leadership skills. The corporate development programme has included topics such as Disability Awareness, Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Workshops, alongside the usual ICT and management courses. Over 400 staff have attended individual corporate development activities in the year 2007/08.

Establish new Member Development Charter Action Plan

- 8.4 Following the achievement of the EERA Member Development Charter last year a new action plan for the three years up to accreditation was developed by the Democratic Renewal Panel. The Panel also brought together in one document a summary of the strategic approach which St Edmundsbury takes to Member Development and the way in which the programme for events for each year is pulled together.

Cabinet programme of development activity

- 8.5 The Cabinet has set aside time for a number of development sessions through the year and has used these opportunities to focus on the key challenges facing the authority. Through the Building Capacity East funding there has been a resource for new members of the Cabinet to receive mentoring and review their own learning needs and style.

Promote the importance of diversity and community cohesion

- 8.6 We are committed to ensuring that our actions do not discriminate and that we actively promote equality of opportunity for all. In order to help us achieve this aim, this year we have prepared a draft Equality Scheme which will replace our existing separate schemes for race, gender and disability. The Equality Scheme will bring together all of our plans and policies relating to equalities which will also include a three year action plan.
- 8.7 We have been distributing a new guide to services to partner organisations. The guide is of benefit to all residents in West Suffolk and this was produced in partnership with the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP). The guide has been translated into Polish, Portuguese and Russian and contains lots of useful information about our services, such as council tax and refuse collection, as well as services delivered by other organisations. Since the guide was first published in November 2007, 96 English; 223 Portuguese; 82 Russian; and 242 Polish guides have been distributed in St Edmundsbury.
- 8.8 During the last year Ipsos MORI conducted a staff survey on behalf of the council. The survey focused on current concerns of the workforce, the relationships between staff and managers and how St Edmundsbury tackles staff concerns. Overall the results showed 'a largely positive picture of an authority that is regarded by staff as an effective, engaged employer that is concerned about the welfare and job satisfaction of those who work for it'. The findings of the survey will help inform the direction of the council's people strategy, HR policies and plans and internal communications.
- 8.9 It is fair to say that the work done on key activities in this commitment played a significant part in supporting the authority's achievement of 'excellent' CPA rating. The biggest resource any organisation has is the people in it and we will continue to invest in the development of our staff and members.

Looking forward

- 8.10 In addition to maintaining our focus on workforce, member development and community cohesion we will be developing an action plan to address issues raised in the staff survey. Preparing staff for occupation of West Suffolk House will also be a major area of activity in the coming year. Finally we will be progressing a leadership development programme to help us maintain the leadership capacity within the authority during what will be a very busy year for staff and councillors.

9. A strong voice for West Suffolk

Key activities for 2007/08:

- Support for the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement
- Maintain a strong voice for the interests of St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk in the debate on local government reorganisation
- Implement the action plan for the Local Government White Paper and subsequent legislation
- Develop the external scrutiny role of the council and community engagement
- Develop citizenship and community cohesion, including:
 - participation in the borough elections and other representative activities
 - support for the Youth Forum
 - Engaging under-represented groups
- Ensure effective consultation, particularly with traditionally hard to reach groups.
- Responding positively with partners to our new roles and responsibilities including:
 - the children act
 - older people
 - equalities



Why was this a priority for 2007/08?

- 9.1 The focus of this commitment has changed over the past year following the unsuccessful Ipswich unitary bid and our need to respond to the Boundary Committee structural review. A West Suffolk unitary authority concept statement has been submitted to the Boundary Committee and this outlines St Edmundsbury's vision for a West Suffolk unitary. Although the task has changed the focus on maintaining a strong voice for West Suffolk the debate on local government arrangements has remained important.

Progress in 2007/08

Support for the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement

- 9.2 The council continues to make a significant commitment to local partnership working, both in terms of direct resources and time. For the WSLSP this last year has been one of hard but rewarding work and the benefits of this style of partnership working are now being realised. In the last year the £400,000 grant received by WSLSP to reward the partners for achieving previous targets has been used to fund a variety of projects. These projects all relate to at least one of the cross-cutting initiatives which the partnership has identified as areas in which it can make a difference and add value to what is already provided. The four initiatives are alcohol harm reduction, bridging the skills gap, responding to a changing community, and Getting West Suffolk Active. These themes also reflect several of the key activities in our own commitments. All the work being undertaken is subject to performance monitoring to help ensure the aims identified at the bidding stage are met. The council is directly involved in several of the projects, including schemes to improve the take-up of sport and exercise, working with older people to prevent falls and creating warmer homes. St Edmundsbury has been a significant participant in these projects and a number of staff have contributed to the delivery of them.

- 9.3 In addition approximately £25,000 was set aside in a 'community chest' for smaller more local schemes and £10,658 of this has been allocated to organisations in St Edmundsbury. The allocation of this funding has been overseen by members of the partnership's forum.

Maintain a strong voice for the interests of St Edmundsbury and West Suffolk in the debate on local government reorganisation

- 9.4 During the 6 weeks from the announcement of the details of the review process to the submission of the St Edmundsbury concept for unitary government in Suffolk both members and officers have worked extremely hard. As well as developing a compelling case for a West Suffolk authority we have also kept in touch with colleagues in the east to ensure that viable options were developed for that part of the county as we recognise that West Suffolk cannot work in isolation – but as part of a structure which provides strong leadership and viable local government for all of the county. Since the concept was submitted work has continued to engage partner organisations with the concept. Using the Councillor Reference Group set up as a sounding board for the review process we have responded to a series of questions which the Boundary Committee posed to us following consideration of the concept.

Implement the action plan for the Local Government White Paper and subsequent legislation

- 9.5 Councillors may remember that council received a paper on the progress against the action plan arising from what became the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 in December, on the very day that the Secretary of State announced that the Ipswich unitary bid was not proceeding and that unitary options for Suffolk would be considered. A number of the initial actions arising from the plan have been completed, such as the adoption of the new Code of Conduct. Whilst we will continue to report progress against the plan to council we have also taken full account of the various provisions of the act in the vision for West Suffolk outlined in the concept submitted to the Boundary Committee. In particular the strong emphasis on empowering local communities, supporting frontline councillors in their community leadership roles and devolving decision making and budgeting all reflect the spirit of the Act.

Develop the external scrutiny role of the council and community engagement

- 9.6 Although our scrutiny committees do not yet have formal powers to scrutinise externally, our Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been able to fulfil its community leadership role this year beyond the monitoring of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, due in part to the enthusiastic participation of our partners in our scrutiny processes, as evidenced in the three examples set out below:

- (a) Officers from the West Suffolk Hospital NHS Trust attended the July 2007 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update on the financial situation, discussing a wide range of subjects with the committee, from car parking to waiting times, and agreed to engage with the council on patient pathways to community care.
- (b) In September 2007 a county council representative was invited to the committee to discuss consultation on changes to bus routes, reassuring members that they would carefully examine consultation with parish and ward councillors on the future use of Section 106 monies allocated for transport in St Edmundsbury.
- (c) There was a valuable discussion at the January 2008 meeting with the Highways Agency, Police and Fire Service regarding management of incidents on the A14 and how we can work together on this important issue.

The above examples show how our excellent relationship with our partners is enabling a smooth

transition for the council into its imminent external scrutiny responsibilities.

Develop citizenship and community cohesion, including:

Participation in the borough elections and other representative activities

- 9.7 We responded to an investigation by the Councillors Commission which sought our views on incentives and barriers to encouraging suitably qualified and representative people to be candidates and considering ways of retaining and developing councillors once elected. The Democratic Renewal Panel responded to the Commission's call for evidence. The panel has previously considered this topic when agreeing the 'Be the Voice of Your Community' campaign.

Support for the Youth Forum

- 9.8 The Youth and Community Development Officer has continued to provide direct support to the Youth Forum throughout the last year. This has included supporting the changes in membership as new young people replace those who have left for university, college or work. Throughout the year the forum has given young people the opportunity to present their views to councillors and others on a range of topics, including the Mobile Skate Park and facilities available for young people in Haverhill. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also received an update on youth and community development which followed a full review in the previous year. The committee enjoyed a report from a representative from the Youth Forum who outlined the various projects that the forum had been involved with since it was first set up two years ago. The Youth Forum continues to meet regularly throughout the year at a range of locations including the Borough Offices.
- 9.9 The forum delivered an event on 15 February at the Corn Exchange, called Mix&Blend which built on the success of the same event that took place in the previous year. They have also taken part in a number of themed meetings around topics such as alcohol and rural issues and arranged a visit to the EcoTech Centre in Swaffham during August 2007.

Engaging under-represented groups

- 9.10 The second West Suffolk Festival of Culture took place on 29 May at the Corn Exchange. This is a partnership project which is now supported by the WSLSP. Over 400 members of the public attended, and enjoyed the music, dancing and food of different cultures. Various organisations attended to showcase their services and raise awareness of their traditions. Another event is being planned for June 2008.
- 9.11 The council has been working with members of the Portuguese and Polish communities, and local service providers, to host an event on 24 May. The purpose of the event is to provide a way for new residents to find out about the town and the services which are available and for services to understand the needs of these communities. The event aims to welcome new people to the town, increase awareness of services available to them and improve understanding of the different backgrounds and cultures in Haverhill.

Ensure effective consultation, particularly with traditionally hard to reach groups

- 9.12 The council is a member of the Suffolk Speaks Partnership which provides the council with statistically reliable consultation data for St Edmundsbury and carries out projects with specific sections of the community.
- 9.13 In 2007/08, the partnership held workshops on gender equality in each district across Suffolk, to ask people's opinions on their experiences of using council services, barriers to accessing them and barriers to working for any of the Suffolk Speaks partners. The workshops covered a range of themes including health and wellbeing (including culture and leisure), safety, housing, transport, employment and communications and customer service, identifying any barriers for particular groups in accessing services. The results of this consultation work have recently been received and are being analysed by the Strategy and Performance Unit, who will work with Heads of

Service to identify issues and find solutions.

- 9.14 The partnership also undertook budget consultation in 2007/08 through focus groups with residents across the county. The findings were used to inform the budget setting process for 2008/09.

Responding positively with partners to our new roles and responsibilities, including: The Children Act

- 9.15 We have continued to respond positively to the requirements of the Children Act 2004 and over the last year we have worked closely with all local authorities in Suffolk to develop the Suffolk Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09. The plan will be revised each year to ensure that it remains relevant and up-to-date.

- 9.16 The council has provided training for all staff in the form of Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Workshops.

The challenges of an ageing population

- 9.17 These are included in Commitment 2 which is to promote healthy living. Most of our direct work with people over 60 years of age is carried out by the WSLSP and during the year a Sloppy Slippers initiative was promoted. This was aimed at reducing the number of falls in the home by giving people over 60 years of age a new pair of slippers in exchange for an old pair. During the year 418 pairs of slippers have been distributed across the area of the LSP.

Equalities

- 9.18 As detailed in Commitment 8 we have drafted an Equality Scheme which will replace our existing schemes for race, gender and disability. The scheme will be introduced in 2008.
- 9.19 In developing the scheme, we consulted with partners, stakeholders and our local communities, and will continue to work closely with them to ensure that we build upon the work already undertaken, as well as ensuring that we meet our statutory requirements.
- 9.20 The Diversity Group continues to monitor progress against the Equality Action Plan, and to date 84% of the action plan has been completed, with 6% due to be completed in the next three months.

Looking forward

- 9.21 During the coming year we will keep our focus on providing a strong voice for the people of West Suffolk, whether that be in relation to our changing responsibilities to different groups in the community, working to engage hard to reach groups for promoting participation in representative activities and consultations. Continued leadership of the WSLSP will make an important contribution to activity in this area.
- 9.22 It is likely that by the time the Cabinet formally adopts this report we will have a sense of what the future structure of local government in Suffolk will be. Whatever proposal the Boundary Committee puts out for consultation in July we will carry on promoting the interests of our residents and lobby to ensure a unitary government solution what is 'Best for the West'.

B. Cabinet Commitments 2008/2009

1. Overview

- 1.1. The second function of this annual report is to set out our plans for the next year and beyond, based on the annual review for 2007/2008. Being clear on what is a priority is essential if you are to continue providing high quality services in key areas.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is, of course, committed to delivering **all** of the council's Corporate Priorities and to excellent performance in **every** service. However, it is important, and probably implicit, that the Cabinet's own list of commitments does not cover every single area of activity. The Cabinet's list has to be realistic in terms of raising expectations and living within our means; at a corporate level we can only focus **new** energy and resources in a limited number of places.
- 1.3. As in the last year, we are also keen that all Members, on the scrutiny committees and in our own Cabinet panels and working parties, work with us to define what these commitments look like in reality, and how we can deliver them for the people of St Edmundsbury.

2. Cabinet commitments

- 2.1. As has been the case over the last five years, the Cabinet's plans for 2008/2009 will inform budget setting for next year and beyond. This is part of the planning and delivery cycle envisaged in the Corporate Plan and reflected in the council's Five Year Financial Model.
- 2.2. We have therefore retained the format of:
 - (a) a short list of **Administration Commitments for 2008/2009**; and
 - (b) within these commitments, **Key Activities or projects for the year**.
- 2.3. By doing this, we are able to provide both the certainty and the focus which are needed for short and long-term budget planning, and for the development of the service plans and team plans which will identify the detail of the projects and service improvements required.
- 2.4. It is important to emphasise that the list will still be subject to annual review and that the commitments as well as the key activities may need to change as they have over the last four years. Having said that, whilst being ambitious for the borough, we also have to be realistic about our capacity and not overstretch the organisation or its budgets. Therefore the coming year is largely one of consolidation, as we continue our work to develop the wide range of major projects and initiatives already underway, and maintain our focus on achieving excellence in everything we do.
- 2.5. Our commitments as at June 2008 will be:

Cabinet Commitments 2008/09

Commitment	Key activities for 2008/09
<p>1. Improving efficiency and value for money</p>	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainable Council Tax at least 0.5% below Retail Price Index (RPI); • West Suffolk House occupancy and appropriate service integration with Suffolk County Council (SCC); • waste management partnership with Forest Heath. <p>Improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality and cost-effectiveness of all services; • procurement; • efficiency savings. <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • council improvement plan; • business continuity arrangements; • surplus asset disposal programme; • service delivery reviews
<p>2. Managing the future development of the borough</p>	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actions from Vision 2025; • local plan and growth areas programme developments; • affordable housing and housing needs management. <p>Develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core Local Development Framework strategies; • LDF distribution strategy for growth; • University Campus Suffolk (UCS) pursue delivery in Bury St Edmunds, in partnership with West Suffolk College; • active and healthy communities. <p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic development strategy action plan; • tourism promotion within the borough; • lobbying of SCC to deliver local transport plan and investment in St Edmundsbury; • assistance to private sector for BSE incubation centre.
<p>3. Future development of Haverhill</p>	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • masterplan vision and implementation plan; • multiplex cinema and restaurants development; • town centre infrastructure and urban realm works; • town centre management; • new St Edmundsbury depot. <p>Encourage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate development of Gurteens site; • town centre retail investment; • promotion of Haverhill as a centre of business excellence; • new GP-led health centre.

	<p>Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Yard supermarket and town centre links; • north west Haverhill urban extension; • Haverhill community football project; • leisure centre refurbishment.
4. Bury St Edmunds Town Centre	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kings Road and St Andrews Street South enhancements; • support for independent town centre management; • efficiently-run new and existing car parks which balance needs of long and short-term users; • maximum economic benefits of town centre development. <p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSE as tourism, shopping and leisure destination; • viability and vitality of provisions market; • a range of events for new public venue.
5. Rural services	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of appropriate rural affordable housing sites; • implementation of rural action plan; • increased visitor potential at West Stow; • support for parish councils to tackle rural issues. <p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic development in rural areas; • retention and viability of rural services.
6. Keeping our borough clean and green	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued public space cleansing/maintenance improvement; • enhanced enforcement; • actions to mitigate for and adapt to climate change. <p>Encourage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainable and carbon neutral development. <p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater public awareness of waste reduction, recycling and anti-littering messages; • Suffolk-wide approach to alternatives for landfill waste; • greater use of green space.
7. Reducing crime and disorder	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community liaison and support work; • implementation of Section 17, Crime and Disorder Reduction Act 1998, action plan; • increased awareness of drug and alcohol misuse effects on the community. <p>Continue tackling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-social behaviour; • abandoned cars and fly tips promptly.

<p>8. Developing staff and members</p>	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workforce development plan actions; • leadership development programme; • staff survey action plan; • Member Development Charter action plan; • Cabinet development activity programme. <p>Prepare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff and councillors for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - West Suffolk House occupation; - the outcomes of the Boundary Committee review. <p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of diversity and community cohesion.
<p>9. A Strong Voice for West Suffolk</p>	<p>Deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership for West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership; • Local Area Agreement requirements; • positive responses when dealing with new responsibilities such as The Children Act, an ageing population and Equalities; • effective consultation, particularly with hard to reach groups; • Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act action plan; • community engagement strategies. <p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unitary government solution that is 'Best for the West'; • citizenship and community cohesion, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ participation in the borough elections and other representative activities; ○ support for the Youth Forum; ○ engaging under-represented groups.

Part C: 2008/09 Portfolios

<p>John Griffiths Leader/Rural Affairs</p>	<p>External Relationships Rural Affairs</p>
<p>Nigel Aitkens Economy and Asset Management (and Deputy Leader)</p>	<p>Cabinet Commitment for Haverhill (and Haverhill Master Plan) Public Service Village Economic development Tourism and Tourist Information Centres Town Centre Management Rural economy Markets Property services Facilities management (including printing) Estate management Asset management Economic partnerships</p>
<p>Sara Mildmay-White Community (and Deputy Leader)</p>	<p>Cabinet Commitment for Bury St Edmunds Strategic housing Homelessness Licensing Environmental Health Crime and disorder reduction CCTV Rangers and wardens Emergency planning Youth Action Plan Community development Health improvement Grants</p>
<p>Lynsey Alexander Culture and Sport</p>	<p>Sports Public halls Arts development Festivals and events Heritage Parks and green spaces Cemeteries</p>
<p>Terry Clements Transport and Planning</p>	<p>Highways Agency Engineering Conservation of the built environment Car parking Transportation policy Bus station and public transport Planning policy Development control Building control Land and Property Gazetteer Land Charges</p>
<p>Paul Farmer Resources and Efficiency</p>	<p>Accountancy Internal Audit Use of resources and best value</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits Budget setting and management Revenues and investments Payments Payroll Procurement ICT infrastructure and support
<p>David Ray Performance and Organisational Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic services Health and safety Human Resources (including workforce development plan) Legal services Organisational development Work style' programme Staff learning and development Member development and training Performance management CPA and Council Improvement Plan Risk management Communications Diversity Customer services and access Transformational Government/electronic Government Systems review and business change Partnership working/service integration Democratic renewal
<p>Peter Stevens Environment and Street Scene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance of the urban realm Street naming and numbering Grounds maintenance Waste management and recycling Abandoned vehicles Cleansing Environmental sustainability Environmental management systems Nature conservation Climate change and energy action plan Public toilets

Part D: 2007/2008 Financial Summary

As the timescale for producing this annual report is slightly in advance of that for the closing of the accounts for 2007/2008 the summary is not yet available. When it has been produced as part of the annual accounts process it will be appended to this report for reference.