



## Cabinet 3 December 2008

### Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Review of the Bury St Edmunds Festival (Dec 08/09)

1. On 26 November 2008, the Committee considered a report which outlined the background to the setting up of the Bury St Edmunds Festival in the early 1980s, and its development into a major regional celebration. Key achievements were outlined, together with future plans for further development of the Festival. The report examined the composition and success of the Festival, with a particular focus on the 2008 Festival, and explored the issues arising. The purpose of the report was to make recommendations to further develop and improve the Festival for future years.
2. The Committee's discussions centred around the budget for the Festival, and the range of activities provided during the Festival. The Festival's trading account was considered, and it was noted that, together with the annual budgeted deficit of around £38,000, the variance between expenditure and income meant there was an additional deficit each year, which in 2008/2009 amounted to £16,000. This, of course, did not take into account the value of the Festival to the town, and the Festival Manager provided some comments from local businesses to illustrate this.
3. Discussions also took place around whether the range of activities for the Festival could be extended, perhaps also at different times throughout the year rather than in one two-week slot.
4. The Committee **RECOMMENDS that:-**
  - (1) **the Action Plan for development of the Bury St Edmunds Festival, as outlined in Report Z373, be approved;**
  - (2) **given the importance of the Bury St Edmunds Festival to the town, and its major positive impact on the local economy, consideration be given to increasing the budget for the Festival, in order to potentially increase the range of activities offered;**
  - (3) **when looking into the Business Plan for the public building (Venue), the Venue Steering Group be requested to consider that the public building (Venue) potentially becomes a key part of the Festival from 2010 onwards;**

- (4) when the Business Plan for the public building (Venue) is finalised, the Council takes the opportunity to review its budget for other arts related activity;**
- (5) the Council explores the potential to extend the range of cultural inputs to the Festival to include, for example but not exclusively, drama, literary events, choirs, poetry etc, perhaps scheduled at alternative times across the year; and**
- (6) approaches be made to Bury St Edmunds' Art Gallery and Theatre Royal, and other appropriate venues regarding their involvement in the Festival, with the intention to potentially develop their input into the Festival, including holding special events at these venues for the duration of the Festival.**

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