



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

A649

Cabinet **28 April 2010**

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 21 April 2010

- 1. Support for Drug Users in St Edmundsbury**
- 1.1 When planning its work programme for 2009/2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee chose to include a session looking at the support for drug users available in the Borough.
- 1.2 Although the expected representative from the Suffolk Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) was unable to attend, the Committee was pleased to welcome representatives from Focus 12 and Suffolk Misuse Service (SMS) West to the meeting. The Council's Substance Misuse Co-ordinator was also present and outlined the support that was on offer from the Artheads project. Prior to the meeting members of the Committee had been invited to join a tour of the project. Finally, a user of the services being discussed attended the meeting to give an insight into the experience of using the services on offer.
- 1.3 The Committee firstly discussed the information on the report which had been provided by Suffolk DAAT, including the purpose of this service and some performance data for Suffolk. Next, Simon Anness, West Team Leader for Substance Misuse Services West (SMS West), explained the work of the local NHS provision of services for drug users.
- 1.4 Nancy Merfeld, Residential Services Co-ordinator for Focus 12, outlined the aims of this charity and the services provided. The Borough Council's responsibilities as part of the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership were also outlined, as were projects being run by the Partnership to address substance misuse. Members questioned all attendees, and were particularly interested to learn how all these discrete services worked together.
- 1.5 After hearing from the service providers, the Committee heard from someone who had come into contact with several of the organisations or projects as a service user, and who gave a personal perspective on his experiences. His presentation gave the Committee a real insight into what life was like for a user of these services, which he felt had literally saved his life.
- 1.6 The Committee concluded that the Borough was fortunate to have so many services available to support drug users, and noted the value of the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership's involvement, particularly in funding many of the projects run by the services. Arising from the discussion, the Committee felt that the services could benefit from more publicity, in particular by provision of

information in doctors' surgeries, and requested that NHS Suffolk be requested to prioritise the circulation of this information.

2. Monitoring the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership

- 2.1 The Committee received its annual update on the progress of the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership from 1 April 2009 to date. It is the duty of the Committee, as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee designated under the Police and Justice Act 2006, to scrutinise the work of the Partnership.
- 2.2 The Council's Community Safety Officer, Helen Lindfield, introduced the report, outlining the focus of the Partnership over the past year and detailing several of the projects which had been run. The report looked at a number of areas, including changes to statutory partners, the responsibilities of the Partnership, and key findings from the Strategic Assessment which formed the themes and priorities for 2009/2010. The Committee also received information on the Public Confidence and Anti-Social Behaviour Review.
- 2.3 The report also looked at performance to date based on police supplied data, and this was presented to the Committee by Chief Inspector Martin Barnes-Smith. The Committee discussed crime statistics for the Borough with Chief Inspector Barnes-Smith, and asked that further information be provided to Members on how offences were dealt with, in particular the number of fixed penalty notices issued for anti-social behaviour offences in the Borough, compared to the numbers arrested. The Committee was also pleased to welcome Stuart Hudson, the County Council's Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme Co-ordinator, to the meeting, who gave a presentation on the Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme.
- 2.4 This annual report was for the information of the Committee, however, under the Police and Justice Act 2006 the Committee could choose to play a wider role in the scrutiny of crime and disorder issues across the County, bearing in mind the need to avoid duplication of effort. On this occasion the Committee only chose to request the additional information from the police as outlined above.

3. Presentation from Portfolio Holder for Culture and Sport, Councillor Lynsey Alexander

- 3.1 Under its Scrutiny Improvement Plan the Committee requested updates from Portfolio Holders on forthcoming plans and priorities. Four such presentations were received in 2008/2009, and the remaining Portfolio Holders were requested to present to the Committee under the current 2009/2010 work programme. At this meeting, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Sport made her presentation to the Committee.
- 3.2 Councillor Alexander's presentation was based around the theme of "cultural and leisure services – an investment or a cost?" She first outlined the services provided under the areas of open spaces, heritage, arts, entertainment and tourism, and the facilities available in the Borough. Other areas covered included grants given to partner organisations, community encouragement and outreach work, and the strategic direction of several of the services run under the banner of cultural and leisure services, including the management of parks and cemeteries, and strategies such as those for Tourism and Trees and Woodlands.

- 3.3 The resources available to the Service and its management and staff structure were outlined, as well as performance. Finally, important future issues were covered, together with how these issues would be addressed, including such areas as the Olympics and The Apex.
- 3.4 After concluding the presentation, Councillor Alexander brought the Committee back to her original theme, which Members were asked to discuss, regarding whether cultural and leisure services were an investment or a cost. The Committee was aware that £6.85m of the Council's budget went into the Service, and that over 10% of the total workforce worked in it, however, the benefit to the local economy of the services provided, such as the parks and heritage sites, meant that the Borough was a magnet for tourism.
- 3.5 The Bury Festival and Christmas Fayre attracted thousands of visitors from across the country, and had an economic impact of £750k and £1m respectively. The Committee, therefore, concluded that the service was a major investment into the economy and wellbeing of the Borough.

4. Cabinet Forward Plan/Work Programme

- 4.1 The Committee examined the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period April to July 2010, but did not request any further involvement on this occasion.
- 4.2 Turning to its own Work Programme, the Committee noted that the 2009/2010 programme was now complete, except for items deferred during the year. The process for setting the 2010/2011 work programme was underway, and all Members of the Council had been circulated with draft programmes, which would be adopted at the June meetings of the two main scrutiny committees.
- 4.3 The Committee was also advised that Councillor Levack, the Council's representative on the Suffolk Joint Local Area Agreement Scrutiny Panel, wished to resign from her appointment, which was for a four year term due to end in April 2011. Representation on this body was required to be politically balanced on a County-wide basis, and the representative from St Edmundsbury was required to be from the Conservative Group. Conservative Members of the Committee were therefore asked to put themselves forward to the Leader of the Council for consideration, should they be interested in taking over from Councillor Levack for the fourth year of her term.

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