

Cabinet 14 September 2011

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 7 September 2011

1. **Update on the Impact of the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership and Sustainable Community Strategy**
 - 1.1 The Committee is responsible for monitoring the Sustainable Community Strategy and the development of the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP), and receives an annual report on the work of the Partnership and the Sustainable Community Strategy at its September meeting each year.
 - 1.2 Laurna Compton, the LSP Manager, updated the Committee on developments since the last report considered by Members. A verbal update was also given following the LSP Board meeting which had taken place that morning and where the future of the LSP had been discussed.
 - 1.3 Two of the Borough Council's partners on the LSP attended the meeting to make presentations to Members on two projects which had been running, and funded through the Partnership. Linda Dennison, from West Suffolk College, spoke about the '*Upskilling the West Suffolk Workforce*' project, which since its commencement early this year had delivered 22 training days in local businesses. The Council's Environmental Management Officer, Peter Gudde, spoke about the '*Greener Business Grant*', which aimed to help small businesses to cut energy and carbon, and to save money by providing support funding to invest in simple energy and resource cutting measures. To date four grants had been approved, and it was envisaged that wider marketing would attract further applications.
 - 1.4 Laurna concluded the presentation by reporting back on that morning's Board meeting, at which it had been agreed that the WSLSP should continue to meet, but that its membership should be refreshed, it should potentially look at becoming smaller and it should change its name to the West Suffolk Strategic Partnership. Its role would be to continue to provide a strong voice for West Suffolk, to lever in funding, to work with other partners, including other LSPs, and to carry out high level lobbying. For the next Board meeting, Laurna had been asked to identify each partner's priorities, which would be used to advise the Board of the areas on which it should be focused.

2. Cabinet Forward Plan

2.1 The Committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period September to December 2011.

2.2 Community Centres

2.2.1 The Committee discussed the above item on the Forward Plan and expressed concern that, in the rural areas, village halls appeared to be successfully run by the communities themselves, whereas community centres in the towns were operated on subsidies from the Borough Council. The Committee asked how the process of transferring the running of other community centres in Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds to community groups could be speeded up. Members acknowledged that this would not be easy, as no groups appeared to be coming forward to take up the running of these centres. However, it was unfair that the taxpayers of the whole Borough were paying towards them. They also pointed out that there were examples of other 'centres' in the towns which were self run and funded, such as youth clubs and church halls, and quoted Stanton Village Hall as an example of what it was possible to achieve when the community worked together. Members also suggested that perhaps its two Town Councils could be asked whether they could give any support.

2.2.2 The Committee requested that a brief report be brought to its next meeting scheduled for 12 October setting out the cost to the Borough Council of subsidising each of these community centres, and maintaining them, and what measures had been taken so far to have them run on the same principles as rural community centres. Members also asked whether the Borough Council made checks that community centres were run with the required number of Trustees.

2.3 Licensing, Planning and County Council Enforcement of Pavement Signage

2.3.1 Under the 'amendments to the current policy for street vending' item on the Forward Plan, Members expressed concern with regard to licensing and advertisement consent for 'A' boards and similar pavement signs in the towns, and the enforcement of decisions on these. They felt there was a disparity between the granting of advertisement consent for these signs, and the granting of licences, plus the enforcement of any refusals by the County Council, which was currently carrying out its own review.

2.3.2 Members were concerned that the Licensing and Planning Teams worked with different legislation with regard to granting consents for these signs, and asked that a review be carried out, involving the County Council where necessary, to see whether a consistent policy on granting consents and enforcement could be achieved, and to clarify who had the final decision on these applications, and who had responsibility for enforcement. Members requested that a paper be brought to their October or November meeting setting out terms of reference for such a review, and setting up a Task and Finish Group to look into the issue and report back its findings to the main Committee.

2.4 Finally under the Forward Plan, Councillor Mrs Levack advised that she would be completing a 'suggestion for scrutiny' form regarding the quality of paving in Bury St Edmunds.

3. 2011/2012 Work Programme: Update

- 3.1 The Committee reviewed the current position of its work programme for 2011/2012 and noted the items which were expected at the next meeting of the Committee on 12 October 2011.
- 3.2 The Committee also reviewed the Task and Finish/Working Groups currently constituted, and agreed that the Cultural Strategy Working Group should be disbanded, as the work of this group had been superseded by Vision 2031.

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