



Council 29 June 2010

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Written report by Cllr Sara Mildmay-White, Economy & Asset Management Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- West Suffolk House;
- Economic Development;
- Tourism and Tourist Information Centres;
- Town Centre Management (Bury St Edmunds);
- Rural Economy;
- Markets;
- Property Services;
- Facilities Management (including printing);
- Estate Management;
- Asset Management; and
- Economic Partnerships.

Highlights

- ◆ St Edmundsbury has a new Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management.
- ◆ West Suffolk House has won awards for building excellence.
- ◆ The new MENTA Business and Training Centre in Haverhill is opening soon.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is my first report as the new Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management. I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Councillor Nigel Aitkens, and thank him for all he has done as St Edmundsbury's first Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management.

2. West Suffolk House: Awards

- 2.1 West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds won the '*Best Sustainable Building*' category in the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) East Anglia Building Excellence Awards held in Suffolk on 30 April 2010. The judges commended it as a very flexible building that meets the highest standards of energy efficiency, including achieving the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) excellent rating. Pick Everard and the Borough Council's Building Control Team also won the '*Best Partnership*' category for their collaboration on many projects commissioned by Suffolk County Council across Suffolk, including West Suffolk House.

- 2.2 Additionally, West Suffolk House was shortlisted for the regional finals of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors awards in both access for the community and sustainability and for the British Council of Offices awards.

3. Economic Development and Partnerships

3.1 New MENTA Business and Training Centre

- (a) The new MENTA Business and Training Centre at 2 Hollands Road, Haverhill, is almost completed and will be opening in July 2010. It opens training and meeting rooms as well as units for small businesses to rent. It is in what was the Miller Graphics building and it is very close to the Hollands Business Centre, which is owned by the Borough Council but run by MENTA. The refurbishment and equipping of the building was supported by the Borough Council, the East of England Development Agency's Economic Participation Funding and Suffolk County Council. It is a very welcome addition to the facilities in Haverhill. Details about using the space are available from MENTA.

3.2 Local Economic Assessments

- (a) Both Suffolk and Cambridgeshire County Councils are now working on their *'Local Economic Assessments'*, the assessments of the local economy that upper tier authorities are required to produce by the Government. St Edmundsbury has already produced an assessment of its own and is working with both County Councils to help them produce theirs. In the case of Cambridgeshire, the Borough Council is especially pleased to be included, because it is not within the County, but the County Council took the view that West Suffolk is part of the Greater Cambridge functional economic area and so has included both the Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council.

3.3 Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk Resilience Study

- (a) The Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council have also joined with Cambridgeshire County Council in a pilot study examining how economically resilient the area is and how the local authorities can improve its resilience and ability to withstand economic shocks, a particularly relevant study at this time when we are coming out of recession. Fieldwork is underway now and the final report is expected in the summer. The other authorities taking part in the study are Cherwell, Ashfield and Mansfield, Southern Staffordshire, Manchester and Northumberland, and we will be able to compare the findings for our area with those for the other areas. The study is being undertaken by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), a highly-regarded research, training and consultancy organisation with charitable status. Because this is a pilot study, CLES is paying half the costs itself, and because so many other authorities are taking part, our share of the costs is a small amount for what could potentially be a very significant piece of research.

4. Tourism and Tourist Information Centre (TIC)

4.1 Events

- (a) On 13 April 2010, Bury St Edmunds hosted a visit from the Mayor of the French town of Chatillon. The party stayed in Clare as part of an exchange group and had guided tours of the Cathedral, Bury St Edmunds and Clare.
- (b) Nowton Park Country Fair took place on 20 June 2010 and was very successful with over a hundred attractions and stalls taking part.

- (c) Armed Forces Day will be held on 26 June 2010 and includes a vintage market and a stage with local entertainment.

4.2 **Activities**

- (a) The guided tour season has started with new tours of Clare and the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds. The festival tours were sold out and new summer evening tours have been introduced.
- (b) The TIC will shortly be selling tickets for horse and carriage rides around Bury St Edmunds, which will depart from the Abbey Gardens and take groups of people around the Great Churchyard, Honey Hill and Crown Street. These tours will start towards the end of June 2010.

5. **Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Management (TCM)**

5.1 **Business Improvement District (BID)**

- (a) The new board has now been elected and appointed by BID levy payers: 80% are town businesses. All board members have been required to become Directors of TCM under the new constitution.
- (b) Bid4Bury has held a day of marketing opportunities where marketing companies have pitched their ideas to the full board.
- (c) The Bid4Bury board has also met with other BID towns to look at what has succeeded and what has not with more developed BID operators.
- (d) Plans are well advanced for the instigation of a street rangers scheme paid for by Bid4Bury and recruitment is likely to start soon.

5.2 **Other TCM Activities**

- (a) TCM has helped to organise several very successful town centre events in the past few weeks. The Flower and Continental Market was held on the May Bank Holiday weekend. TCM and St Johns Street traders jointly organised the annual St Johns Street Fair on Saturday 19 June, complete with stalls, funfair, bands, choirs, dancers, bucking broncos and display teams. TCM and West Suffolk Motorsport jointly organised the Motorsport Display Day on Angel Hill on Sunday 20 June. TCM worked with the Borough Council to organise Armed Forces Day on 26 June.

5.3 **New Shops in the Town Centre**

- (a) New shops include Nicola Sexton Shoes at 33 Abbeygate Street; Romark Jewellery at 45 Abbeygate Street; the West Cornish Pasty Shop at 12 Abbeygate Street; a Polish grocery store at 66a St John's Street; Farthings dry cleaning at 17 Churchgate Street; the Bury and District Funeral Service in King's Road and Handbags and Gladrags dress agency at 67b St John's Street.
- (b) Shops opening soon include Linens Direct at 43 Buttermarket; a new hair salon at 56 St John's Street and Carluccio's on Auction Street.
- (c) Other changes include the Hollywood Film Theatre on Hatter Street, which has reopened as Abbeygate Picturehouse and is fitting out the vacant shop next door for a café.

6. Markets

6.1 Bury St Edmunds

- (a) Income in Bury St Edmunds during this quarter has dropped slightly against the same period last year (around 2%), which we believe reflects the generally poor weather conditions. There are signs that enquiries by casual traders are picking up as the weather improves.
- (b) A temporary fixed term appointment of Markets Officer has been made to support the operation due to recent and imminent retirements in both Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill.

6.2 Haverhill

- (a) Income in Haverhill during this quarter has been consistent with last year, resulting in achieving budgeted income.
- (b) Suffolk County Council has begun the necessary local consultation process to introduce the traffic closure order paving the way for the Friday market move.

6.3 Market Review

- (a) Work has begun with the National Association of British Markets Authorities (NABMA) the consultants engaged to assist in the markets review, with stakeholder meetings being held separately in both Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds. These consultations were carried out as workshops where market traders and other stakeholders put forward their ideas of what the review should examine.
- (b) The general public were also interviewed in both towns on each market day and were asked to participate in a questionnaire. These results were analysed by NABMA.

7. Property Services

7.1 The Guildhall, Bury St Edmunds

- (a) The Council is the managing trustee on behalf of the Guildhall Feoffment Trust and is responsible for maintaining the Grade 1 listed Guildhall. The banqueting room and court room have recently been completely redecorated and the banqueting room floor sanded. The external window frames have also been repaired and the surface water drainage improved in the last few years.

7.2 Hollands Road, Haverhill

- (a) The Cabinet decided that the proceeds from selling the Vision Centre in Bury St Edmunds to MENTA could be used to improve the industrial units in Haverhill. The programme of works has now been completed. All the original soft wood joinery in the units has been replaced, which has enabled heating costs to be reduced and CO2 emissions to be cut. Property Services also undertook the refurbishment of the MENTA Business and Training Centre in Hollands Road.

7.3 Planter, St Mary's Square, Bury St Edmunds

- (a) Restoration works to the planter have been completed and the finished works are an excellent example of restoration works to a Grade 2 listed monument.

7.4 **Haverhill Community Football Project**

- (a) The works to the new building at Chalkstone Way, Haverhill are completed and the building has been handed over to the Haverhill Community Sports Association.

8. **Asset Management**

- 8.1 Two papers on asset management will be presented to Cabinet on 23 June 2010. Firstly, the annual report on performance and implementation programmes. This report compares performance against targets for capital sales, acquisitions, estates management and planned maintenance programmes and sets targets for these implementation programmes for 2010/2011. In general terms, the Council's performance and expectations are influenced by national economic and property conditions.
- 8.2 The annual report also benchmarks the Council's performance against other district councils nationally, through the national property performance indicators. The Borough Council shows high performance in most of these indicators. The report also identifies in the Action Plan the next asset management plan reviews to be undertaken.
- 8.3 The second report considers a request from Bury St Edmunds Rugby Club for the freehold or for a significantly longer lease of their facility at Haberden, Bury St Edmunds. Through the options appraisal, the sale of the grounds using the community management and ownership of assets policy will enable the Club to develop and meet the Council's aspirations under Vision 2025, to make a wide range of accessible leisure and culture facilities available for the community. The sale of the grounds will have a 'guarantee' that these grounds will continue to be used for community and recreational purposes only.

9. **Facilities Management: Management Contract**

- 9.1 The new facilities management contract for West Suffolk House and all the Council's operational buildings started on 1 June 2010. The new contractor is Ocean Contract Cleaning Limited (Ocean) and most of the staff that used to work in facilities management in these buildings have transferred to Ocean under the Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations. The contract lasts for three years, with an option to extend for another two years.