



Council 29 June 2010

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Written report by Cllr Anne Gower, Haverhill and Housing Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Commitment for Haverhill including:-
 - Haverhill Masterplan;
 - Town Centre Management;
 - Youth Action Plan; and
 - Community Development.
- Strategic Housing;
- Homelessness.

Highlights

- ◆ The new Queen Street gates in Haverhill are being launched on 16 July 2010.
- ◆ The new MENTA Business and Training Centre is opening soon.
- ◆ Launch of 'On the Spot' youth project.

1. Commitment for Haverhill

1.1 Queen Street Gates

- (a) Friday 16 July 2010 will be the day of the official 'opening' of the Queen Street art project, which has culminated in the provision of two pairs of bespoke gates. These gates have been designed by upper school students in Haverhill and consist of steel lime leaves with a Q motif, arranged to form a stylized crown. They have been manufactured by a local firm, Metcraft, and students and Councillors have helped with the polishing and finishing of the individual leaves. The gates will be placed at both ends of Queen Street to keep traffic out of the street between 10am and 4pm, when it is currently closed to through traffic.
- (b) The whole project was commissioned and supervised by Public Art in the Town Centre of Haverhill (PATCH), which consisted of Councillors, teachers and a representative of the business community. Councillor Karen Richardson was Chairman of PATCH and much of the credit for the end product must go to her. I would also like to mention the enthusiasm and hard work of the Borough Council's Carol Rowntree and the dedication of Neil Williams from Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College.
- (c) The provision of public art was a key objective in the enhancement of Queen Street, the majority of which was delivered in late 2009.

1.2 New MENTA Business and Training Centre

- (a) You will see from the report of the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Asset Management that the new MENTA Business and Training Centre at 2 Hollands Road will be opening in July 2010. It will offer conference and meeting facilities in a boardroom and two well equipped training rooms as well as premises for small businesses.

1.3 Town Centre Management (TCM)

- (a) At the Haverhill Area Working Party the Town Centre Manager suggested that once a month a street performer should entertain in Queen Street and on 28 May a performer called Nik entertained visitors with stilt walking, juggling and other activities.
- (b) The Town Centre Manager has also been working with PATCH and the Queen Street businesses to put together a programme of events for the 16 July.

1.4 Shops and Lettings

- (a) New shops opening in the town centre recently include HET Software in Gurteens; the Smart Fish Bar at 27 Queen St; and Rivas Frames Picture Framing at 1 Queen's Head Yard. Bar Vu has opened on the first floor of Deja Vu on Jubilee Walk and recently hosted the monthly Chamber of Commerce meeting.
- (b) I am delighted to inform you that the derelict building at 81 to 83 High Street has been acquired by the Havebury Housing Partnership.
- (c) There are currently 9 vacancies out of approximately 183 units, a vacancy rate of 4.9%.

1.5 Haverhill Leisure Centre

- (a) Ipswich Town Community Trust has organised multi-sport sessions for children aged 5 to 15 at Haverhill Leisure Centre on Wednesdays from 4pm to 5pm. These sessions have been running since May and end in mid-July. Children can try football, basketball, cricket, athletics, table tennis and other sports.

2. Community and Youth Development in Haverhill

2.1 On The Spot

- (a) The '*On the Spot*' youth project was launched on 3 June and attracted a large number of young people. The project is delivered from a large converted van, which has been kitted out with a TV, DVD player and games console, together with a variety of sports equipment. The van also has an awning which virtually doubles the useable space. The van will enable youth workers to drive around Haverhill to the places where young people are meeting and take the project to them. This aim of this initiative is to effectively engage with young people, particularly in areas where they are congregating in large numbers, and so reduce the perception and the impact of anti-social behaviour. The van has been fitted out by a Newmarket company, Gazeley Horseboxes, and the exterior wrap has been supplied by Stylize, in Haverhill.
- (b) The project has been funded by WS Community Safety Partnership, WS Drugs & Alcohol Action Team and Tim Marks and myself as County Councillors. The Town Council has funded £4,500 and the Borough Council £2,000 for three years to cover the anticipated running costs.

2.2 REACH

- (a) The REACH project opened its doors for business in one of the units vacated by the Salvation Army on the Clements Estate. Run by volunteers from the River of Life Community Church, REACH aims to help address financial exclusion and poverty through a variety of projects, such as the FoodBank, Furniture Bank and Debt Counselling. REACH will also signpost general support services, provide a landline telephone with free calls to 0845 numbers and laptops with Internet access for people seeking jobs..

2.3 IMPACT day on the Clements Estate

- (a) An IMPACT day involving a variety of agencies including the Police, Havebury Housing Partnership, the Fire Service, Vehicle Operator Services Agency (VOSA) and various representatives of the County and Borough Councils took place on 19 May. It was a mixture of advice-giving on such issues as fire and community safety and enforcement activity. 90 advisory notices were issued by the multi-agency vehicle check-point scheme. Areas of graffiti were cleaned up during the day and everyone took away more actions to deal with over the coming days.
- (b) The IMPACT day was followed up on the 21 May with a '*Community Conversation*'. Postcards were given out on the day, distributed via the local primary school and handed out to people on the estate. These were used by residents to record the kind of improvements they wanted to see in the area. Residents were also able to talk to representatives from County and Borough Councils, the police and fire services. Once the results of the '*Community Conversation*' have been collated we will explore how we can work with the County Council to address the issues raised.

2.4 Crucial Crew

- (a) Crucial Crew is taking place now at Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College. It will start on 28 June and will last for two weeks. Crucial Crew is a personal safety event aimed at year 6 children. It is a multi agency event with the Borough Council, Police, Fire, EDF, Abbeycroft Leisure and Road Safety teams taking part. 1200 Middle school children from St Edmundsbury have booked to attend.

3. Strategic Housing

3.1 Single Conversation

- (a) The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is working with local authorities on '*The Single Conversation*' process. This is the process where local authorities and their key partners identify their investment priorities, including affordable housing, infrastructure, economic development, and community. It is the local authority's opportunity to set out its needs for investment in the future, and for the HCA to decide which areas it will invest in. These priorities are set out in a Local Investment Plan (LIP), which is currently in the final stages of development. The LIP will be considered by the HCA and Cabinet in June/July.
- (b) This Council is ahead of most other councils in the Eastern Region and is being hailed as delivering 'good practice'. Officers were asked to hold an 'executive masterclass' for other local authorities in Suffolk to share our experience of the process and I was very pleased to attend this masterclass.

3.2 New Affordable Housing Scheme

- (a) I am really pleased to report that the affordable housing scheme at the Merry Go Round site in St Olaves, Bury St Edmunds has now started on site. It is scheduled for completion in this financial year and will provide eight new homes, a mixture of two and three bedroomed houses, and two and one bedroomed flats. The scheme costs £974,000, of which Havebury Housing Partnership will contribute £414,000 and the HCA £560,000.

3.3 Rural Affordable Housing

- (a) At the Parish Conference on 29 April, there was a workshop on rural affordable housing, looking at how we provide evidence of the need for new affordable homes. This is done by working with the Parish Councils and Suffolk ACRE to carry out housing needs surveys. The workshop was really well received, and Cabinet has approved the recommendation from the Rural Area Working Party to put housing needs surveys on a more systematic basis. Bids for external funding to enable more surveys to be undertaken are being made.

3.4 Homelessness and Housing Options

- (a) I am pleased to announce that the Housing Options Team has recently appointed Carina Austin to undertake homelessness prevention work and to act as a Landlord Liaison Officer. The role of this officer is to make the private rented sector accessible to more people by focussing on the needs of the prospective tenants, while supporting new and established landlords. This support will include providing information on tenancy agreements, and how to prepare a property for the private rental market, along with information on the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. Carina is making a presentation on her new role at the Landlords Forum which will be held here on 22 June.