



Council 28 September 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

- ◆ The new MENTA Business and Training Centre in Haverhill has opened.
- ◆ Bury St Edmunds Tourist Information Centre (TIC), the Christmas Fayre and the Tourism Manager have all won Suffolk Tourism Awards.

1. **Economic Development**

1.1 **New MENTA Business and Training Centre**

On 16 July 2010 the new MENTA Business and Training Centre at 2 Hollands Road, Haverhill, was opened by West Suffolk MP, Matthew Hancock. It offers training and meeting rooms as well as units for small businesses to rent. It is in what was the Millers Graphics building and is close to the Hollands Business Centre, also 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. Details are available from MENTA on (01284) 760206.

1.2 **Business to Business Event**

Once again, the Borough Council is partnering with the Bury Free Press, MENTA and the Bury St Edmunds Chamber of Commerce in organising with this year's Business 2 Business exhibition, which will be held on Thursday 28 October at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre. I will officially open the event. About fifty businesses will have stands and five seminars are planned on the topics of apprenticeships, Olympic opportunities, green business, broadband and innovation.

1.3 **Haverhill Business Ratepayers Event**

Last year, two business ratepayers' consultation events were held, one in Haverhill and one in Bury St Edmunds. It was generally agreed that this had worked well and it is planned to repeat both events this year. The Haverhill event will be held first at 6pm on Tuesday 16 November 2010 and Genzyme has very kindly agreed to host it free of charge. An innovation this year is that it will be held in partnership with the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce. The Chief Executive will review the past year and discuss plans for next year, and Dr Dorian Hindmarsh of Hethel Engineering Centre in Norfolk will talk about how Hethel can help manufacturing companies in Haverhill. The Bury St Edmunds meeting will be held in January 2011. Councillors are most welcome to attend both events.

1.4 **Apprenticeship scheme**

The Borough Council's Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) funding is being used to support apprentices in a partnership with West Suffolk College, which is extending the scheme and making the Council funding go further. The scheme provides financial support to employers to help them take on and retain apprentices. Over thirty apprentices have been supported so far, with another six about to sign up.

1.5 **New Business Park Signs**

Planning applications have been submitted for five new business park signs at Shepherds Grove, Stanton; Rougham Industrial Estate; Boundary Road, Haverhill; and Bunting Road and Kempson Way, both in Bury St Edmunds. Subject to planning consent being granted, the signs should be in place within the next three months.

2. **Tourism and Tourist Information Centre (TIC)**

2.1 **Awards**

Congratulations to Sharon Fairweather, our Tourism Manager, and her team who won several awards at the Suffolk Tourism Awards ceremony on 9 September 2010. The Bury St Edmunds TIC won the Best Tourist Information Centre award, the Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre won the Best Large Event award and Sharon herself won the Outstanding Achievement award for her 'outstanding contribution to tourism in Suffolk'. Well done to all concerned, especially to Sharon for her richly deserved award.

2.2 **Bury in Bloom**

The TIC has been working with Bury in Bloom and produced a '*Bury in Bloom Trail*' around the town taking in some of the best floral displays. On 5 July 2010 over thirty Canadian garden journalists visited Bury St Edmunds, staying at the Angel Hotel and having a guided tour of the Abbey Gardens with the head gardener and a presentation on Bury in Bloom. They all enjoyed their visit and we hope they will be writing articles about the gardens and the town in the coming months.

2.3 **Events and Activities**

Horse and carriage rides were introduced to Bury St Edmunds this summer and have been a great success with most tours being full. Other tours this year have included guided tours of Clare and Ixworth, proposed in the Rural Development Plan, and tours of the Great Churchyard in Bury St Edmunds with a Victorian gentlemen. Heritage Open Days took place on 9 to 12 September, with over fifty talks, tours and properties taking part, all of which were free.

3. Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Management (TCM)

3.1 Business Improvement District (BID)

Many of the Bid4Bury projects are now well underway. Sub-groups involving board members and businesses have now been set up for the main BID projects: security, marketing, Christmas, events and business.

3.2 Security

Bid4Bury now has an agreement with the Ipswich BID (Ipswich Central) to provide street rangers for the town centre. The vacancies were advertised and interviews have just been held. It is anticipated that the rangers will be on duty on the streets by October 2010 after initial training. They will have hand-held portable computers to report any incidents to the relevant bodies, as well as to record business visits and concerns. A contract for the provision of a new town-link radio system has been agreed. It updates the system from analogue to digital, with all 120 participating businesses receiving new digital radios at no extra cost to them. The new contract for crime prevention software has also been agreed and starts in October 2010. These security agreements will give Bury St Edmunds one of the most comprehensive and modern town-managed security provisions in the country.

3.3 Marketing

Bid4Bury marketing is looking at an all encompassing 'brand' and 'logo' for the town, which it hopes other organisations and authorities will also take up, and presentations by interested agencies have now taken place. A new inclusive professional website for the town is being considered and a newsletter has gone out to all levy-paying businesses.

3.4 Christmas and Events

The Flower and Continental Market, St Johns Street Fair and Suffolk Motorsport Day were all organized by TCM over the summer and were all very successful. Armed Forces Day, Help for Heroes events throughout the town, jointly organized by TCM, the Borough Council and many businesses, were also very successful and raised £41,000. The Christmas lights contract for 2010 has now been agreed and plans are now being drawn up for Christmas events and to encourage late night shopping with entertainment and music.

3.5 New Shops in the Town Centre

Several new shops have opened in the town centre in the past few weeks, including Escape women's fashions in Cornhill Walk; Elizabeth Mulholland Dress Design Studio in Langton Place; Mortimer and Gausden solicitors in Langton Place; Apocalypse Miniature Wargaming on Risbygate Street; and Eat, Drink, Listen on Woolhall Street in what was previously Club Ruin. Clinton Cards has moved temporarily to another unit on Buttermarket whilst their premises are being refurbished. Several more shops are due to open in the next few weeks, including Poundland on Buttermarket; Tesco on St Andrews Street South; Sahara Womenswear on the Traverse and Carluccio's on Auction Street.

4. Markets

4.1 Bury St Edmunds

Income in Bury St Edmunds during the last quarter was slightly below budget owing mainly to the disappointing summer weather. The market has had some interesting new products on offer including an Indian food takeaway and mobility aids.

4.2 Haverhill

Income and occupancy in Haverhill have been very consistent with last year, and a new herbs and spices stall has taken a permanent place after a trial.

4.3 Market Review

The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) have completed their review of the two markets and presented their report and recommendations to Councillors, market traders, stakeholders and the Area Working Parties of both towns. Following recommendations from the Area Working Parties, which were endorsed by the Cabinet on 15 September 2010, these will now be implemented, the first of which is the formation of a Markets Forum.

5. Property Services

- 5.1 Despite the challenging economic climate, the Council continues to find new tenants for its properties. The latest of these is a new venture, *'Apocalypse Miniature War Gaming'* in Risbygate Street, Bury St Edmunds, which opened during the crucial school summer holidays, thanks to the efforts of the Estates, Economic Development and Legal Teams working together to help them. We wish them well.

6. Asset Management

6.1 School Yard, Bury St Edmunds

A report considering the future use of two parcels of land at School Yard, Bury St Edmunds, was presented to the Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party and Cabinet in September 2010. The most appropriate short and medium term use for both sites is as specialist car parks, to meet known demand for weekly ticket holders and a 'sustainable' low emissions short stay car park. Here, the charges will be less than standard short term charges, to reward and incentivise owners of low emissions cars. In the longer term, the sites might be suitable for housing, in conjunction with adjoining land.

7. Economic Partnerships

7.1 Local Economic Partnerships

The coalition Government has announced that all the regional development agencies, including the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), will be abolished, together with other regional economic agencies, like Business Link. In their place, local authorities, businesses and other organisations have been invited to submit proposals for *'Local Enterprise Partnerships'* (LEPs), which the Government believes will allow economic development to be more locally based. The deadline for submitting expressions of interest for LEPs was 6 September 2010, and the Government received 56 proposals from across the country. St Edmundsbury was part of two of these: one covering Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough and one for an East Anglian LEP from a partnership of Suffolk organisations. The Government's response to the proposals will be set out in a forthcoming white paper.