



Council 28 September 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 were launched on 16 July 2010.
- ◆ The new MENTA Business and Training Centre opened on 16 July 2010.
- ◆ 70 affordable homes have been completed on two sites at Moreton Hall, Bury St Edmunds.

1. **Commitment for Haverhill**

1.1 **Queen Street Gates**

The Queen Street gates were launched on 16 July 2010 by Matthew Hancock MP and the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Griffiths. They were assisted by local schoolchildren who paraded between the two sets of gates and installed some of the finials to the top of the gates. Matthew Hancock MP was very complimentary about the gates and about the town saying *'it is a town that's on the up and going forward and that sense of dynamism is reflected in these gates'*. Local businesses also took part by organising various activities and there was a stilt walker and juggler entertaining the crowds. As a result the local businesses would like to organise a group to do more activities in the run up to Christmas.

1.2 **New MENTA Business and Training Centre**

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 also opened on 16 July 2010 offering conference and meeting facilities in a Boardroom and two well equipped training rooms as well as premises for small businesses. This project was supported by the Borough Council, the East of England Development Agency's (EEDA) Economic Participation Funding and Suffolk County Council.

1.3 **Town Centre Management (TCM)**

During the summer Queen Street was home to stilt walking, juggling, teacup rides and children's workshops on jewellery, magic tricks and football skills. A survey, organised by the TCM, has been launched on 16 September 2010 to collect data on visitor behaviour patterns in the town centre. This survey will be widely distributed and the findings used to help improve the town centre offer.

1.4 **Shops and Lettings**

New shops opening in the town centre include Photos2Prints at 7 Withersfield Rd; Cool Kites in Lower Downs Slade and GJ Hunt Flooring at 56 High Street. The former Your Move shop in the High Street, which has been vacant for nearly 3 years, has now been let to Ladbrokes.

1.5 **Haverhill Community Football Project (HCFP)**

As also mentioned in the report of the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Sport, the HCFP was officially opened on 7 August, the first day of the new season. The event was very well attended and Haverhill Rovers won the opening game 1-0. Subsequent games have been attended by larger crowds than previously and the facilities are being used by other groups in the town for meetings and social events. The new Haverhill Player Development Centre is now being developed with the Suffolk Football Association and Abbeycroft Leisure.

2. **Community and Youth Development in Haverhill**

2.1 **U Festival**

The U Festival took place at the Burton Centre on 23 August 2010 in extremely wet weather. Despite the weather, over 200 young people turned up and enjoyed DJ workshops, live music, five a side football, video workshops, street art and street dance. The festival was organised jointly by the Borough Council, Suffolk County Council and Haverhill Town Council.

2.2 **On the Spot Youth Provision**

This mobile project has been well received by young people in the town since its launch back in May. The vehicle has been to most of the summer events in the town including the Big Day Out and the U Festival. Friday evening sessions are going well and draw up to 60 young people each night. There have also been motivational sessions undertaken with residents of Cangle Housing and summer workshops for the CB9 Media Hub.

2.3 **A Safer Night Out**

I was delighted to open both days of this event held at Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College on 6 and 7 July. 140 year 10 students attended to explore the risks associated with alcohol abuse and learnt how to not only stay safe themselves but how to help friends who found themselves in difficult situations. Interactive scenarios explored the effects of alcohol on the body, consequences and the law, risks they might encounter and how to stay safe. Feedback was incredibly positive and a full evaluation report is available. West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership, Focus 12, Extended Schools, Youth and Connexions Services, Suffolk Primary Care Trust, Police and Children's services participated in the event on both days.

2.4 **Clements Primary School Site**

The Borough Council have 'swapped' land with Suffolk County Council to bring the new school forward. To compensate for losing a portion of playing field at the Puddlebrook site, the Borough Council will take ownership of the Clement Primary School site once it is cleared. Local residents are concerned about the future use of the site and to this end a consultation will be arranged for late October 2010 to get their views and suggestions. Publicity and invitations will be sent out shortly.

3. **Strategic Housing**

3.1 **Local Investment Plan (LIP)**

The LIP has been updated to include some minor changes requested by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and will now be formally signed by the HCA and the Leader of the Council. A monitoring group will meet quarterly to oversee the implementation of the plan. This will include the HCA, County Council, Health and Housing Association representation. The Borough Council will take a lead role on that group. Bids for funding towards the cost of delivering the rural exception schemes at Bardwell and Cavendish have been submitted to the HCA. Both of these schemes having been identified in the LIP as priorities for 2010/2011 and will provide a total of 16 units, 8 on each site.

3.2 **Affordable Housing**

70 affordable homes have been completed at St Edmundsgate and Kingsbury Grange, in Bury St Edmunds, and have been handed over to Granta/Metropolitan Housing. There will be a formal opening ceremony later this autumn. Suffolk Housing Society has started work on 25 affordable homes to form part of the Abbotsgate Development in Bury St Edmunds. This scheme is costing £2,854,000 and the HCA has granted £1,157,727 towards the costs. Units will all be built to a high standard and are scheduled for completion in March 2011.

3.3 **Sheltered Housing in Stanton**

Havebury Housing Partnership is looking at options for the future of Field Court Sheltered Housing Scheme in Stanton together with their strategic partners. This forms part of a county wide review of sheltered housing driven by the drop in demand for such housing. This scheme was built in the 1970s and includes 18 bedsitting rooms which are proving difficult to let, it takes on average 13 weeks to fill voids. I attended the initial discussions, along with Councillor Thorndyke, the Ward Member, and other stakeholders, to consider a range of future options. These options will be developed in more detail and brought back to the group.

4. **Housing Options**

4.1 **Housing Register**

The housing register currently has 1777 applicants: 56 Band A; 160 Band B; 857 Band C and 704 Band D. Between 1 January and 1 September 2010 1320 new applicants registered and 335 applicants were housed. The register is continuously reviewed and those applicants who have not bid for 12 months are contacted and removed from the register unless there is a valid reason for remaining inactive. By doing this the register is no longer a 'waiting list' and provides a more robust picture of housing need. Of the 336 applicants who have been housed, 106 were Band A; 96 Band B; 116 Band C and 18 Band D.

5. **Havebury Housing Partnership: Nomination of Non-Executive Directors**

- 5.1 You will see that item 9 on the agenda for this meeting of the Council asks for nominations for two non-executive directors for the Havebury Housing Partnership (HHP) Board. These nominations are to replace Councillor Clements and former Councillor, now Honorary Freeman, Sheila Wormleighton M.B.E. who have both completed their maximum terms of office. Both have been superb and passionate advocates of HHP and its tenants, as well as excellent representatives of this Council on the Board.

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