



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

B371

Council 14 December 2010

LEADER'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

***Written report by the Leader of the Council,
Cllr John Griffiths***

1. Gold Awards

- 1.1 I am delighted to show you the Gold Award that the arc mixed use development recently received at the British Council of Shopping Centres (BCSC) presentation dinner in Central London on 1 December 2010. This industry award recognises excellence in retail projects and St Edmundsbury along with development partners Centros were delighted to receive the award for arc which won the category for in-town schemes of less than 300,000 square feet. Following a detailed written submission, BCSC judges visited Bury St Edmunds in September 2010 to tour the arc development, including The Apex, as well as the wider town centre. Judges were extremely impressed with the imaginative yet sympathetic architecture of the retail led scheme, as well as the integration of the residential and cultural elements within it.
- 1.2 While on the subject of awards, Members will also be pleased to hear that the Borough Council received a Gold Award under the Healthy Ambitions (Suffolk) programme. In brief this is recognition of the work undertaken to ensure that staff can perform as well as they can in the work environment. This award will be presented at Trinity Park in Ipswich on Wednesday 8 December 2010.

2. Shared Services

- 2.1 You will see from the report of the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Organisational Development that the Shared Services project with Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) is progressing well and is on target to present business cases for each of the Phase I services to be examined during January and March 2011. This is a credit to those Members and officers and we must ensure that the momentum is maintained.
- 2.2 Because of the importance of this work I urge you to keep up to date on the progress being achieved. Communications about shared services is continuing, with updates following each meeting of the Shared Services Steering Group sent to all Councillors through the Members' Bulletin and staff through E-Teamwork. A survey of staff and Councillors across both Councils showed that most of those who responded felt well-informed and preferred to keep in touch with developments through electronic and face-to-face briefings. The results of the survey are on GOLD (Goals Openness Learning Dividend), the intranet shared between FHDC and the Borough Council and which is accessible to all

staff and Councillors. Copies of all the reports which go to the Steering Group are available on our website. From January 2011, when the business cases for the Shared Services in Phase One start to come forward, there will be regular newsletters, helping to share information and keep everyone up to date. We will also look at how we can brief Councillors more personally, and perhaps jointly between the two Councils, as progress is made.

3. West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP)

- 3.1 Since my last report the WSLSP has finalised the distribution of over £441,000 of partnership funding. Ten groups have received up to £60,000 so these are significant projects. They represent a good spread across the five priorities of the WSLSP, which cover creating safe, strong and healthy communities, the environment, children and young people and the development of economic prosperity.
- 3.2 Our Environmental Management staff have played a leading role in two successful bids to tackle climate change. One, through the scheme which provides DIY home insulation products, where WSLSP funding will extend the life of the scheme and the other through grants to small and medium enterprises to allow them to reduce their carbon footprint. The Rural Coffee Caravan has been funded to purchase a new tow vehicle and for volunteer costs for a year to enable this vital lifeline for rural villages to continue to function in the West of the county. A number of the projects help address the impact of the recession. For example the Citizens Advice Bureaux are being funded to role out more self-help advice and West Suffolk College is leading a partnership to deliver skills training for the local workforce. Other projects covered include provision of community transport, setting up a network for those suffering from personality disorders, training for the voluntary sector and a cross generation project recording the experiences of minority communities.
- 3.3 The WSLSP still has over £228,800 of capital funding to distribute. Applications for £26,000 of Community Chest for voluntary and community groups have just closed and a final round of capital funding for legacy projects in the West of the county will be launched before Christmas for the remaining £202,000. Details of the process will be included in the Members' Bulletin once finalised.
- 3.4 The WSLSP Board is conscious of the changing landscape for local partnerships. On the day after this meeting of Council the Board members and officers will be meeting for a session to explore possible future roles for the partnership once the funding has been distributed.

4. Rural Issues

- 4.1 Since the last report, Stanton Community Village Hall Management Committee has been awarded £3,531 towards new chairs and equipment for their newly refurbished village hall; Bardwell Parish Council has been awarded £2,160 towards new chairs and tables in the Tithe Barn and £2,374 towards emergency work to protect the Tithe Barn from future water damage; and Horringer Parish Council has been awarded £3,577 towards the resurfacing of the short access road from the A143 to the Community Centre car park.
- 4.2 The Cavendish Community Shop Steering Group is in the process of applying to the Suffolk Rural Economy Scheme. Following the closure of the 'Duck and Grouse' shop the community decided to come together to ensure that the village retains a grocery store facility. The Steering Group has held several public meetings and has received support and advice from the Rural Economy Scheme's Retail Advisor and from Suffolk ACRE. A grant to

assist with the costs associated with fitting out the new community shop should be issued in due course.

- 4.3 The Rural Area Working Party has met twice since my last report. In the September meeting items included a presentation by Steve Cook, former Chief Executive of Havebury Housing, on the 'Village Hub' concept; participation of our rural communities in the future stages of the delivery of the Local Development Framework; targeting of campaigns to promote the take up of benefits in rural areas; and a final report on the review of rural area funding. In the November meeting, items included a further report on the potential involvement of St Edmundsbury villages in the 'Village Hub' concept; replacement Local Plan Policy for Ixworth; off-street car parking charges; rural youth outreach work; and Rural Action plan monitoring and its future extension.
- 4.4 The current Rural Action Plan finishes in March 2011. At the November meeting of the Rural Area Working Party meeting Members agreed that they would like to see a new plan to cover the period from April 2011 to March 2014. Work is therefore underway to develop new projects, and public consultation has commenced. Members are welcome to offer their suggestions for project ideas to the Economic Development Officer for Rural Areas.
- 4.5 The Parish Conference took place on Monday 22 November 2010. There were presentations on local government finances, Suffolk Sport 'Fit Villages' and 'Cycle Suffolk', oil consortium buying, and the Local Development Framework. There were also workshops on the Big Society, setting up a youth club, and training for community leadership skills. The event was well attended and well received.