



Council 14 December 2010

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Written report by Cllr Lynsey Alexander, Culture & Sport Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Sport;
- Public Halls;
- Arts Development;
- Festivals and Events;
- Heritage;
- Parks and green spaces; and
- Cemeteries.

1. Parks and Cemeteries

- 1.1 On 29 September 2010 I attended a very moving commemorative service in Bury St Edmunds cemetery to mark the unveiling of a baby memorial dedicated to the hundreds of babies and children who are at rest in Bury St Edmunds cemetery, some of them in unmarked graves. Over 30 families attended the service in the cemetery chapel. The memorial was unveiled by the Mayor and is free standing granite stone feature of a sleeping baby cradled in a hand on a pedestal. Around the pedestal there are dedicated plaques which can be sponsored by families.
- 1.2 On 29 October 2010 a Halloween Trail event was held at East Town Park, Haverhill and was extremely well attended this year with an estimated 3,000 visitors. The event was funded and promoted by the Haverhill Town Council and supported by the Parks Service and the Friends of the park.
- 1.3 The Parks Service has worked with Bury St Edmunds Town Council and building developer Hopkins homes to commence work on the clearance of a section of land on Ram Meadow to facilitate the laying out of an allotment extension to the existing Cotton Lane allotment site. This extension will provide much needed growing area and will help reduce the current waiting list for plots in the Bury St Edmunds.

- 1.4 Since obtaining consent from the Secretary of State for the playground project in Abbey Gardens, the Parks Service has worked with the Church Council to negotiate a small extension to the play area into neighbouring Church owned land. This extension will enable the inclusion of a tree house and rope bridge which will provide an exciting feature within this well used facility. Tenders are currently out to appoint a contractor and work on site should now commence in February and be completed late April 2011.
- 1.5 The Parks Service has forged greater links with the Probation Service and, in addition to the long standing arrangements for work parties in Bury St Edmunds, they will now be doing litter picks along the railway walk in Haverhill and have been commissioned to carry out some work in Haverhill Cemetery.
- 1.6 The Parks Service has received confirmation from the Forestry Commission that their grant application to progress the management plan for Nowton Park's woodlands has been successful. The plan seeks to conserve the special Victorian character of the Park, encourages greater community involvement and will improve access by increasing the number of woodland paths. This £13,000 grant, which will be paid over a five year period, will help ensure that the woodlands within the Park are managed in a safe and sustainable manner.
- 1.7 Two consultation events have recently taken place at Clements Primary School in Haverhill to discuss how the site will be managed as public open space once the existing school site is vacated and the land is handed over to the Borough Council. Members will be aware that the new primary school building was built on a section of Borough Council owned land at Puddlebrook Playing fields and that there was a planning condition placed on the development which meant that the former school land would be transferred to the Borough Council to compensate for the loss of public open space.
- 1.8 On Saturday 6 November 2010 the Abbey Gardens hosted the Annual Fireworks display organised by the Round Table of Bury St Edmunds. The weather provided near perfect conditions with a cold still evening for the 30 minute display enjoyed by 5,000 spectators. The display was started by the Mayor, with entertainment provided by West Suffolk Radio and a children's fun fair.

2. *Sport*

- 2.1 On 23 September 2010 the St Edmundsbury Olympic Steering Group met with a delegation from the Rwandan Embassy. The meeting included a very informative briefing on Rwanda by Linda Kalimba, Deputy High Commissioner, and was followed with the gathering separating into 3 groups covering Education, Business (including Tourism) and Sport. The groups were tasked to look at ways that could make the most of the Olympic opportunity and investigate ways to develop an ongoing relationship and a lasting legacy. This started on 10 November when a group from the Council and Abbeycroft Leisure visited the Rwandan Embassy to view a number of artistic and cultural items that are hoping to be exhibited in the Borough over the coming period. Indeed, many articles were on show at this years Christmas Fayre and were very popular.
- 2.2 On 26 September 2010 the Rwandan High Commissioner attended the St Edmundsbury Sports Awards evening at the Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre. The evening was the most successful to date, with a record number of people being put forward for the many different categories and this year Paralympic athlete Caroline Mclean won the coveted '*Sports Personality of the Year*' award

- 2.3 On 27 and 30 September 2010 the Council held all day consultation sessions with local residents about the Bury St Edmunds Community Football Project. The intention was to understand any concerns of the residents and take on their suggestions about the new facility before submitting the planning application. The consultations were successful and a planning application has been submitted.
- 2.4 As part of the Haverhill Community Football Project a revenue funding bid was submitted to the Football Foundation for £70,000 for a Football Development Officer. This post is also being part-funded by Haverhill Community Sports Association and a person has now been appointed and commences on 4 January 2011. This is the final part of this successful project and I now look forward to hearing of the future achievement of the scheme.

3. Heritage

- 3.1 In October 2010 it was confirmed that West Stow had achieved full Museum accreditation for the first time and Moyses Hall had its accreditation renewed. The scheme is administered by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council who sets nationally agreed standards for all museums in the UK. The awards for West Stow and Moyses Hall indicate that they met the high standards required in terms of how they are run, how they look after their collections and the services they provide for visitors. The award now allows access to museum funding that is only for accredited museums and is an excellent achievement that recognises the hard work of its volunteers and staff.
- 3.2 The '*Keeping Time*' exhibition at Moyses Hall Museum welcomed visiting Timelords and characters from Dr Who adventures during the weekend of 25 and 26 September 2010. Over 1,200 people visited Moyses Hall to meet the Daleks, a David Tennant lookalike and others dressed in costumes from the show. To add to the theme the '*Tea and Threads*' volunteer group spent the weekend knitting Dr Who scarves.
- 3.3 West Stow Anglo Saxon Village has recently featured in the latest history programmes on both BBC4 and BBC2. Michael Wood's groundbreaking series used the site as a location to show what Anglo-Saxon life could have been like during the earliest period of English history. Friends' members provided both costumed and modern day interpretation of the skills everyday people would have needed. Several visitors commented that they had visited West Stow after seeing the documentary and for anybody who missed the series some episodes can still be viewed online on the BBC I Player.
- 3.4 Haverhill Remembrance Festival commemorated the 90th anniversary of the unveiling of the town's War Memorial and the supreme sacrifice made by the 144 young men in the Great War whose names it bears. The event, organised by the Suffolk Family History Society-Haverhill Group, was supported by the Heritage Service. It was a moving and successful community event with schools, churches and over 20 other local organisations taking part including Haverhill and District Local History Group. The two day event saw the ringing of a bell and calling of names from the memorial, often by relatives, followed by tributes in word, music or song.
- 3.5 On 20 November 2010 Moyses Hall Museum celebrated St Edmund's Day with many activities for children and a lecture called '*St Edmund King and Martyr*' to explain how important Edmund was to Bury St Edmunds, when and why he was killed and how he became Patron Saint of England.
- 3.6 In November, West Stow and Moyses Hall provided popular events for the festive season. The Yule Fest Sundays at West Stow attracted 2,400 visitors who spent over £2,200 in the shop and Moyses Hall held the Historical Market over 3 days as part of the popular Christmas Fayre and was the busiest time of the year once again

4. **Public Halls**

- 4.1 'Stunning' 'Spectacular', 'This venue is just what this town needed!', 'What a Beautiful Place!', 'Absolutely gorgeous, can't wait to come to a performance!'. These were just some of the positive comments received at The Apex Open Weekend on 9 and 10 October 2010. With over 4,000 visitors across the two days the event was a complete success. However, the Sound Check season continues at pace as between the 8 October and 24 December there are currently only 15 days that have no bookings, that is 51 different events. We have also joined up with Greene King to supply our bars and help to promote The Apex and have transferred a number of groups over from the Corn Exchange; these are just some of the ways we will be working within in the community to ensure it is utilised by as many people as possible. Although it is too early to really gauge the success so far against the business plan it is evident we are going in the right direction and I will look forward to keeping Members informed in the future.

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