



Council 14 December 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 Government's White Paper *'Local growth: realising every place's potential'* has been published.
- ◆ The Christmas Fayre was a great success and Christmas events are taking place in Bury St Edmunds.
- ◆ St Edmundsbury is part of a new Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

1. *Economic Development*

1.1 Local Growth

The Government's White Paper *'Local growth: realising every place's potential'* was published on 28 October 2010. It has three main themes: shifting power to local communities and businesses by establishing local enterprise partnerships of local business and civic leaders; increasing confidence to invest by creating the right conditions for growth; and focused investment. The White Paper recognises the critical role of local authorities in leading the development of the local economy. Two key proposals affecting local authorities are for a reform of the planning system to encourage growth and the possibility of local authorities being permitted to retain locally-raised business rates. The changes to business rates were the subject of the White Paper's only consultation, and the Chief Executive replied broadly welcoming the idea. There is also a proposal for a regional

growth fund of £1.4 billion over three years, which is intended to stimulate enterprise by supporting private sector job creation, especially in areas heavily dependent on the public sector, but it is not clear whether St Edmundsbury would count as an area heavily dependent on the public sector.

1.2 ***'Hard-working Haverhill'***

On 16 November 2010, I attended *'Hard-working Haverhill'*, an event jointly organised by Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and the Borough Council to look at the town's economic future. The event was hosted by Genzyme, a leading Haverhill business, and chaired by the Leader of the Council. The guest speakers were Manuel Loureda, Operations Director at Genzyme; Martin Garratt, Director of the Greater Cambridge Partnership; Dr Dorian Hindmarsh, Business Development Manager for Hethel Engineering Centre in Norfolk; and Geoff Rivers, our own Chief Executive, all of whom were really excellent. The event incorporated the Borough Council's annual business ratepayers' consultation meeting, and businesses were asked for their views. Over 50 members of Haverhill's business community attended and their feedback was very positive.

1.3 ***'Bury St Edmunds.....Bucking the Trend'***

'Bury St Edmunds...Bucking the Trend' is the title of the Bury St Edmunds business ratepayers' consultation meeting which will be on Monday 17 January 2011 at West Suffolk House, starting with a buffet at 5.30pm and presentations at 6pm. The speakers are Roger Wilson, Managing Director, Camera Dynamics, on Vinten and Bury St Edmunds; David Wilson, Area Director, Norfolk and Suffolk, East of England Development Agency, on future economic challenges – business opportunities in an age of austerity; Martin Garratt, Director of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, on Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge – the economic relationship; and our own Chief Executive, Geoff Rivers, on what's been happening and what's coming next. Councillors are most welcome to attend, but please book a place by contacting Economic Development Services on (01284) 757683 or economic.development@stedsb.gov.uk.

1.4 **Job Centre Plus Bus**

The Borough Council is working with various partners, including Jobcentre Plus (JCP), Menta, Business Link, Reed in Partnership and the Papworth Trust, to provide an advice service to local people on job vacancies, employment services for employers and business start-up advice and support. The advice will be available on the Jobcentre Plus bus, which will be parked on the Wednesday market in Bury St Edmunds and the Friday market in Haverhill. The bus will visit a few times before Christmas and then become a regular fortnightly feature from January to March 2011. It will also be encouraging new market traders and offering support to existing traders in line with the findings of the recent markets review.

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

2.1 **Christmas Fayre**

The 2010 Christmas Fayre was bigger and better than ever before. There were over 300 stalls in six different sites: Angel Hill, the Athenaeum, The Apex, Charter Square, Moyse's Hall and the Cathedral. It was the first time The Apex has been used for the Fayre and it proved to be a very good venue. It is difficult to say exactly how many people attended but some indication is provided by the facts that there were 180 excursion coaches and 34,000 people came through the Athenaeum. Feedback has been very positive, with many people commenting in particular upon the great atmosphere. The Daily Telegraph

described the Fayre as the top family market in the UK. Congratulations to Sharon Fairweather, the Tourism Manager, who organised it all.

2.2 **Heritage Events**

Heritage Open Days took place in September 2010 and were a great success, with several new attractions joining the regular participants. Bury St Edmunds also received very good publicity in *'British Heritage'* magazine.

2.3 **Tourism in Bury St Edmunds**

New ghost tours have joined the regular programme of tours in Bury St Edmunds and have been very successful. The horse and carriage rides run during the summer were very popular and will be coming back next year. The Council is working with the Unitarian Meeting House to produce an events brochure for their 300th anniversary in 2011.

2.4 **Tourism in Clare**

The Council is working closely with the new tourism group in Clare and is producing two new leaflets on cycling and green tourism in Clare and Cavendish.

3. **Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Management (TCM)**

3.1 **Business Improvement District (BID)**

Bid4Bury now has three street rangers, working six days a week to help businesses and the Police prevent crime. All have passed initial training in Ipswich, including first aid, and have electronic equipment to record every incident for every bid business. Bid4Bury has replaced and upgraded all the analogue business town link radios and in January 2011 new crime management software will be available to all businesses in the BID area. Finally, Steve Peters left as Bid4Bury Chief Executive Officer on 29 November. I am sure you will all join me in thanking Steve for all his hard work here and wishing him all the best for the future.

3.2 **Christmas and Events**

Considerable Christmas advertising for town businesses is taking place in the run up to Christmas with Heart FM radio, East Magazine, Norfolk and Suffolk Life and other local and regional newspapers. The Christmas lights are up and working with new lights in Market Square, St Johns Street and Kings Road this year. The Bid4Bury Christmas Lights Switch on event was a great success with several thousand visitors packing into Buttermarket and Cornhill, where they were entertained by a water and light show, fireworks and confetti cannons. Late night Christmas shopping evenings are arranged throughout December and a Christmas Charity Night Market was held on 9 December 2010.

3.3 **New Shops in the Town Centre**

Several new shops have opened in the past few weeks, as is usual at this time of year because new shops like to open for the all-important trading period before Christmas. New shops include Ivory café-bar at 2 Abbeygate Street in a unit that has been vacant for over two years; Sahara Womenswear on the Traverse, previously Charles Mansfield; Sports Direct at 26 Cornhill in part of the unit that was Woolworths; Quick Stitch clothing alterations on Central Walk in the unit that was Runik Games; Runability Specialist Running Shop on St John's Street in the unit that was Cerise; Anything and Munnings tearooms at 7 St John's Street, previously Home Touches; SylwiaStyle dressmaker and designer at

18 St John's Street in part of the unit that was Anything; Odyssey 2 at 13 St John's Street, previously Mini Milou; C&B Beautiful at 16 Whiting Street , previously McCarthy Steward Booty solicitors; Carluccio's on Auction Street; Poundland on Buttermarket in the unit previously occupied by Woolworths; Tesco on St Andrews Street South at the back of the unit previously occupied by Woolworths and East Anglian's Children's Hospice on St John's Street in the unit previously occupied by Curtain Exchange. More shops are due to open in the next few weeks, including Europa off-licence at 51 St Andrews St South, previously Caroline's; and Moza Indian takeaway in a shop on St Andrew's St South that has been vacant for a long time.

4. Markets

4.1 Bury St Edmunds

Income in the last quarter has been slightly below budget reflecting the general economic conditions. There has, however, been growth from casual traders and there are new traders selling vinyl records, motor spares and restored antique furniture. A new waste recycling initiative, which will provide significant savings, was successfully introduced in early November 2010. These savings will be put towards implementing the Markets Review recommendations and initiatives. There will be special Christmas markets on Sundays in December, and there will be no markets on Christmas Day or New Year's Day, but apart from this the markets will be operating on their normal days.

4.2 Haverhill

Income at Haverhill has been consistent with last year and recently there has been a rise in overall footage sold compared with last year. There has also been significant growth in casual trader occupancy. On 24 December, the Friday and Saturday markets will be combined to produce a special Christmas market. There will be no market on Christmas Day or New Year's Day but apart from this the markets will be operating on their normal days.

4.3 Markets Forum

A new Markets Forum has been set up to implement the recommendations of the Markets Review. I chair the Forum and its members include Councillors, officers, market traders and retail representatives. There is one Forum for both markets and the first meeting was in October 2010. It had a full agenda and stakeholders received several presentations including a proposal to introduce waste recycling, customer charters and future staffing proposals. Forum members also took part in a group exercise to identify the priority recommendations.

5. Property Services

5.1 Athenaeum

The first phase of repairs to the high-level parapet around the Athenaeum has been completed following its partial failure earlier this year. The remaining repairs will be carried out as quickly as possible so that the scaffolding can be removed.

5.2 Estate Management

The economic climate has shown signs of improvement with an agreement in principle to let 20,000 sq. ft. of vacant factory accommodation in Haverhill to an existing company which wishes to expand its business. Interest continues to be expressed in development

land opportunities at Site E2, Kempson Way, Bury St Edmunds where the Council owns 6.77 acres of employment land suitable for a mixed scheme.

6. Economic Partnerships: Local Enterprise Partnerships

- 6.1 In September, the Government invited bids from areas to form Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) joined in two of these: a proposal to create a LEP for Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough, and Suffolk County Council's proposal to create an East Anglian LEP covering Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. The White Paper on *'Local growth'* approved 24 of the bids received. The Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough bid was amongst those approved, but the East Anglian proposal was not. Since then, Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough have been developing their proposal and outlining what they plan to do, and involving the Borough Council fully in these discussions. Suffolk County Council has revised its proposal and has expressed interest in creating a Suffolk and Norfolk LEP. The Borough Council remains part of this discussion too, because the White Paper indicates that it is possible for LEPs to overlap with each other. If this is the case, the Borough Council could be part of both a Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough LEP and a Suffolk and Norfolk LEP.
- 6.2 I attended a recent summit and workshop organised by the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough LEP project board. There was strong representation from businesses and the voluntary sector, as well as local government and great enthusiasm to see this LEP follow on and improve upon the work of organisations such as East of England Development Agency (EEDA). Two main themes emerged as issues that the LEP wishes to progress: firstly, transport links, primarily the A14 but also rural transport issues including the links from Haverhill; and secondly, skills and young people being ill prepared by education and lacking the necessary skills to join the workforce. Both these issues are very relevant to the Borough Council and demonstrate the need for us to be involved in more than one LEP and link the work these organisations will be doing in the future. I look forward to the Suffolk and Norfolk LEP, when approved, showing the same commitment.