



## Council 5 April 2011

### 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.

#### 1. **Economic Development**

##### 1.1 **Business Park Signs**

New business park signs have been erected in the past few weeks, two in Bury St Edmunds on Suffolk Business Park and Bunting Road and one in Haverhill on Boundary Road. Two new signs have also been erected in the rural area at Rougham Industrial Estate and Shepherd's Grove, Stanton and these are the first business park signs to be erected outside the two towns. The signs are large and their purpose is to enable visitors to locate every business in the area they serve.

##### 1.2 **Building Blocks for Business**

Thanks to a grant from the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership, West Suffolk College is able to offer several workshops for people working in West Suffolk at venues all over West Suffolk at a heavily subsidised rate. The workshops are on topics of interest to business, such as time awareness and email management, lean business processes, leading effective teams, effectively managing your team's performance and how to target training for better business. If you are interested, contact Jacqui Holland-Jones either by telephone on (01284) 716386 or by email [jacqui.holland-jones@wsc.ac.uk](mailto:jacqui.holland-jones@wsc.ac.uk) or look on their website: <http://www.westsuffolk-ac.co.uk/employers/Upskilling-the-West-Suffolk-Workforce.php>

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

### **2.1 Tourist Information Centre**

The TIC is expanding its range of ticket sales and is now selling tickets on behalf of Whippet Coach Tours, County Tours and John's Coach Tours. The TIC is also working with the staff based at the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds and selling plants, vegetables and flower baskets. On 1 April 2011 the TIC took over the bookings and promotion of the Unitarian Meeting House in Churchgate Street, Bury St Edmunds. The Meeting House is one of Bury St Edmunds' most beautiful buildings and celebrates its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The TIC has been working with the Meeting House to promote and sell tickets for the anniversary events. The TIC was used as a case study by East of England Tourism's handbook '*Strategic Options for Tourist Information Centres*' in the '*service diversification section*'. It examined how the TIC and the Shopmobility services merged, benefiting both services and saving money. Tourism staff working with the Bury Tourism group have updated the '*Visit Bury St Edmunds*' website, which is now number one on google searches for Bury St Edmunds.

### **2.2 Events**

TIC staff are working with the Churchgate Street Residents and Business Association in planning an Olympic themed street fair in July 2011. The Christmas Fayre continues to excite interest and a DVD of the 2010 event has been sent out to interested groups and travel companies.

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

### **3.1 Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Bid4Bury Annual General Meeting was held on 21 March 2011. The meeting heard about the first year of the BID organisation and listened to Mark Cordell, the new Chief Executive, outlining his plans for the next 12 months. Bid4Bury has been upgrading the town-link radio system in order to give businesses in Bury St Edmunds better security. The Bid4Bury street rangers, unmissable in their purple uniforms, patrol the town to help improve security. Bid4Bury is also organising the usual range of events, such as the Flower and Continental Market, which is taking place on Sunday 29 and Monday 30 May 2011. This year the market will have a new look, with some new attractions, including a farmers' market and a small 'livestock' area, featuring chickens, geese and possibly some petting animals for children. It is also organising a Bid4Bury Treasure Hunt to help the town celebrate the royal wedding.

### **3.2 Shops in the Town Centre**

Two shops are opening soon: @home in unit 1, Cornhill Walk and Engrave Cut and Copy at 20 St John's Street. Specsavers is moving from behind the Corn Exchange to the unit that was previously occupied by Monsoon.

## **4. Markets**

### **4.1 Bury St Edmunds**

Trading has been reasonably good on dry days, although this is traditionally a quiet time of year and many traders choose this period to take a break. New stalls include one selling artificial flowers and another selling DVDs.

## 4.2 **Haverhill**

A Market Officer has been appointed for Haverhill and has started an induction programme. There is a new stall selling Portuguese bread and cakes stall.

## 5. **Asset Management**

### 5.1 **Southgate Community Centre**

On 16 March 2011, the Cabinet approved in principle the decision to transfer at nil value the freehold of the Southgate Community Centre to the newly formed Southgate Community Partnership, subject to the Partnership completing its business planning and implementing the Council's aspirations for increased community involvement and accepting in the transfer of the property sufficient safeguards to ensure that the centre remains in community use. Council will be asked to endorse this decision, which includes that the Portfolio Holder for Bury St Edmunds and Community Safety and I are given delegated authority to confirm that the Council's requirements and safeguard measures have been met and to approve the transfer. A target date of June has been set. I am hopeful that the Southgate Community Partnership will lead the way as the first of several transfers of community centres.

### 5.2 **Bury St Edmunds Rugby Football Club**

I am pleased to report that another community asset transfer has recently been completed. Bury St Edmunds Rugby Football Club now owns its grounds and this will help the Club to expand further its programme of sports development for both adults and children.

### 5.3 **Hardwick Shopping Parade, Bury St Edmunds**

I am also pleased to report that the freehold of Hardwick Shopping Parade has successfully been sold at auction. This sale was an outcome of the Asset Management Review of long term ground leases.

## 6. **Economic Partnerships**

### 6.1 **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP)**

The East of England Development Agency, Business Link and other regional agencies are now being wound down. In their place new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are being created and I reported on our membership of two LEPs at the last meeting of Council. It is still not at all clear how the LEPs will work. Equally unclear is the future of the sub-regional economic partnerships, such as Choose Suffolk and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, in both of which we play a very active role. We are working with all these organisations to clarify what they will be doing in future and to try to bring the maximum economic benefit to West Suffolk.