



Council 5 April 2011

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

- ◆ Consultation for the new Vision 2031 document continues.
- ◆ A masterplan for the new Haverhill Research Park has been approved.
- ◆ A programme to animate the Plaza is underway.
- ◆ A new photographic resource contains images of recent developments in Haverhill.

1. Commitment for Haverhill

1.1 Meeting with Haverhill Town Centre Businesses

On 15 March 2011, I chaired a meeting organised by the Town Centre Manager for town centre businesses at the new MENTA Business and Training Centre in Hollands Road. The speakers included Geoff Rivers, the Borough Council's Chief Executive, who spoke of the Council's 'post capital era' and highlighted the need to protect our investment and make sure that Haverhill continues to grow in a way that meets the town's needs. Ian Poole, Joint Acting Head of Planning and Economic Development, presented Haverhill Vision 2031 and explained how businesses could influence the ways in which Haverhill will grow and develop in the next twenty years by engaging in the consultation process. Suzanne Buck, of the County Council, touched on the tranche of funds totalling £750,000 from Growth Area funding which has been earmarked for development of the High Street and promised to return after May with full details when the respective Councils had agreed on the expenditure plans. She also confirmed that the County Council had decided to call a public enquiry into pedestrianisation of the High Street and explained the process. It would include an opportunity for any business to make a personal representation to the Inspector and it would start in September 2011 with a probable decision in 6 to 8 weeks. Clair Harvey, also of the County Council, explained the plans for ONE Haverhill, a new body to replace the Haverhill executive and partnership forums. Nic Rumsey gave an update on

the proposed Masterplan for Haverhill Research Park and the Town Centre Manager launched the new Haverhill photographic resource for use by people wanting to promote Haverhill.

1.2 New Plaza

The new plaza outside the Leisure Centre has been transformed into an open space that can be used for entertainments and events. The Town Centre Manager, in partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure, the businesses which border the plaza and local community groups, is planning a programme of events and activities for people of all ages to take place from April to September 2011. The programme begins on 16 April with activity for children, followed by the charity Wash Sailability promoting their service with a small vessel, a local Japanese food company demonstrating the making of sushi and Bento boxes, and a pop-up display of the charity of Snookerability on Easter Saturday 23 April. Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College is planning a cookery demonstration and Samuel Ward Academy some street theatre. Other activities will include street performers, a bridal statue blowing bubbles, exercise exhibitions and a music duo. The programme will be reviewed at the end of the first year and used to plan the next year's activities.

1.3 New Haverhill Photograph Resource

The Borough Council commissioned local firm The Design Office to record images of life in Haverhill over the past year. Distribution of the images has started through a web link, www.cb9haverhill.co.uk. A press release has been issued and the material has been distributed to partners who are interested in promoting Haverhill. Postcards depicting nine of the images have been produced and each Councillor has been sent a post card with the web link. If you would like more cards, please email the Town Centre manager on tina.hanks@stedsbc.gov.uk.

1.4 Haverhill Research Park

The proposed research park covers 12 hectares of land on the western corner of Haverhill by the 'Spirit of Enterprise' sculpture and on the approach road to Haverhill from Cambridge. The developers, Carisbrooke Investments, envisage that the park will provide a high-quality business and research park within an attractive well-landscaped environment, incorporating landmark buildings of high architectural quality. About a third of the site will be used for high value commercial and residential uses to help offset the infrastructure and ground remodelling costs, as the site slopes steeply. Haverhill does not currently have a strong research and development base, but the developers believe that the location of this site, so close to the high quality business and research parks on the edge of Cambridge, could support a research park that would significantly improve the range of employment opportunities in Haverhill and reduce migration out of the town.

1.5 Shopper Survey

The results of the Haverhill Shopper Survey have now been received. An analysis of the 1,095 responses to the questionnaire was kindly undertaken for free by the Kent Business School. The responses to the seven questions have provided valuable information about how people shop in Haverhill and how this experience could be improved. The report shows that many people would support having a better range of shops, for example, it would be desirable to have a shop selling sports clothing and equipment. The report recommends that Haverhill:-

- (a) should distinguish itself from both Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge;
- (b) should use the provisions markets as a test bed for new retail offers;
- (c) could consider encouraging Sunday trading;

- (d) should continue to listen to shoppers and develop a systematic approach to communicating with shoppers;
- (e) could offer tailored training programmes for retailers and retail staff; and
- (f) should encourage collective marketing.

1.6 Shops and Lettings

On 23 March 2011, Ladbroke's opened their new shop on the High Street, although they will be closing their other units. Expression Custom Tattoo Studio has opened at 1 Queen's Head Yard. There are currently 10 vacancies out of about 187 units in the town centre, a vacancy rate of 5.3%, which is low.

2. Community and Youth Development in Haverhill

2.1 Hate Crime

Suffolk Hate Crime Service, in partnership with the Community Café at the Resource Centre and Samuel Ward Academy, recently ran two successful safety days for adults with learning disabilities. The Community Café plans to hold drop-in events for this group between 11am and 1pm on the first Thursday of each month. The school is also hoping to continue their engagement by holding assemblies and workshops to increase awareness of hate crime and the needs of adults with learning disabilities.

2.2 Teenage Kicks

The Teenage Kicks project, which provides the opportunity for 13 to 18 year olds to turn up and play football, has started. The sessions are a diversionary activity provided to get young people off the streets. They will run on Friday nights until 2 September 2011 with the cost being covered by the Borough and Town Councils.

2.3 Parkour

Haverhill now has its own parkour group (parkour is sometimes known as free-running but in its purest form is a non-competitive, physical activity in which participants run along a route, attempting to negotiate obstacles in the most efficient way possible such as jumping, climbing, vaulting, rolling, swinging and wall scaling). A group of young adults in Haverhill wanted to form a group. With the support of the Borough Council's Youth and Community Development Officer, they are now officially constituted and are investigating raising funds to develop a specialist parkour park.

2.4 Community Projects

Alongside these new developments, work continues on the projects outlined in my last report, such as the Community Picnic on the Chalkstone estate in the May/June 2011 half term week and finding volunteers to get the 'On the Spot' truck out to rural villages. I have also been discussing with officers how to improve the response rate to a questionnaire circulated on the Clements Estate as a precursor to a skills project which we are hoping to run there in partnership with West Suffolk College.

3. Strategic Housing

3.1 The Maltings

I am delighted to report that work started during March 2011 on the Maltings building on Mildenhall Road, Bury St Edmunds. This Grade II listed building has been empty for many years but will take on a new lease of life as a social housing scheme. Havebury Housing Partnership is working in partnership with the Borough Council and the Homes and

Communities Agency to refurbish the building to provide 35 one and two bedroom apartments. The project is due for completion in twelve months time.

3.2 Housing Access Scheme

Cabinet approved the changes recommended for the existing Damage Deposit scheme to a more comprehensive Access Scheme to assist homeless households into the private rented sector. The Borough Council will still provide a bond to cover any damage, but will also be working with the Ipswich and Suffolk Credit Union to facilitate loans to customers for the 'rent in advance payment', which is a new addition to the scheme. All housing benefit payments and rent in advance payments will be made directly to the landlord via the Credit Union. The tenant will then be expected to repay the loan for the rent in advance to the Credit Union which is regulated by the Financial Services Authority. The money collected will be recycled into the Scheme to allow further access by other applicants. The Access Scheme will be a valuable resource for the Housing Options Team to assist those households that are homeless, or threatened with homelessness and in priority need into the private rented sector.

3.3 Housing Register

2010 has also seen an increase in the numbers of applicants who wish to join the housing register. In 2009 there were 1480 new applicants, but in 2010 this rose to 1864. The register is constantly changing with applicants joining and leaving it, although the overall number registered has stayed fairly constant for several months.

Home-Link Monthly Statistics			
Date Data Taken	01-Jan-11	01-Feb-11	01-Mar-11
Band A	68	64	63
Band B	162	171	175
Band C	911	948	975
Band D	723	736	750
Total	1864	1919	1963
Homeseeker	1447	1477	1514
Transfer	417	437	442
1 Bedroom	1037	1060	1084
2 Bedroom	561	582	590
3 Bedroom	211	221	232
4 Bedroom	50	51	52
5 Bedroom	0	1	1
Single			950
Couple			272
Family with children			766
Other household types			38
Statutory Homeless			22
Homeless Prevention			66
Homeless Other			198

Please note that the analysis above does not always 'balance' because an applicant may have omitted answering a question on the application form, which needs to be followed up before being completed.