



Council 28 June 2011

LEADER'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

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

1. West Suffolk Business Park (Suffolk Business Park)

- 1.1 I am disappointed that the Borough Council's efforts, alongside those of Churchmanor, did not result in the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) supporting our bid for the Suffolk Business Park (SBP) to be nominated as an Enterprise Zone. The Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP supported Alcobury after an extensive review was carried out by Price, Waterhouse Coopers. The New Anglia LEP supported the Lowestoft/Gt Yarmouth bid. Nevertheless, we will be working with both LEP's to seek continued support for SBP and will be seeking support for the next round of Regional Growth Funding. We will also be enlisting our MP's support.
- 1.2 I should inform Members that I have just been elected by Suffolk Leaders to represent us on the New Anglia LEP Board. This should also help to protect and promote our interests and those of FHDC and West Suffolk.

2. Matters raised at the most recent Suffolk Leaders' Meeting

- 2.1 The Leaders' meeting received a presentation from the Audit Commission and heard the outline plans which are currently under consultation.
- 2.2 There was also a good debate and discussion on locality working from both the County Council's viewpoint and from that of the District Councils. In this context it appears that 'One Haverhill' is quite a ground breaking initiative.
- 2.3 We were all delighted to see that Suffolk County Council has allocated £10m in support of the bid to bring Broadband to Suffolk, including the most rural parts of our area. Detailed business and implementation project plans are being drafted indicating the time spans, castings, project management costs etc. All Councils have been asked to contribute towards this initiative.
- 2.4 Updates on the Health and Police Reforms were given. Once the passage of these Bills through the Commons and Lords has reached the final stages I propose to arrange a seminar for all Members on these two very important issues.

3. West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership (WSLSP)

- 3.1 On 18 May 2011 the Board of the WSLSP met and allocated most of its remaining funding. In November 2010 we took the decision to offer funding for legacy projects which would benefit the area of the WSLSP as a whole. Just over £200,000 of capital funding was available and the Board allocated the bulk of it, over £157,000, to West Suffolk College for the provision of a low carbon centre. This funding will help the College to establish a demonstration area where local tradesmen and the public can come to see low carbon technologies in action. The College will be moving all its construction teaching to the Milburn Centre on Anglian Lane, Bury St Edmunds over the summer and the low carbon centre will also be housed there. The bid for this funding was supported by the Borough Council as there is good cross over with the work of our Environmental Management staff and the grants which they can help both the public and businesses to access.
- 3.2 The Board also agreed to a low-cost loan of £40,000 to the Bury St Edmunds Volunteer Centre to help them secure a building on Eastern Avenue; they intend to develop this into a hub for voluntary and community organisations across West Suffolk. At a time when many voluntary groups are finding it difficult to obtain funding this was seen as an investment which would assist several voluntary groups to come together in one place and make the funding they do have work harder (by sharing premises and support costs etc).
- 3.3 The other key decision made by the Board was that they should continue to meet for the time being to provide a strategic forum where representatives from the public sector, businesses, faith, voluntary and community groups could meet to consider issues which impact on the West of Suffolk. The WSLSP Manager has been asked to do some further research on how a new model might work.

4. Rural Issues

- 4.1 The Parish Conference took place in May at Stanton Village Hall. This is the first time the Conference has taken place in Stanton and it was well attended. Attendees were introduced to the new Rural Action Plan, and given updates on the Rural Vision 2031 and the Localism Bill. Following a refreshment break delegates took part in interactive workshops on emergency planning for parishes and social housing reforms. Feedback following the event was good, with clear indication that the event was 'very useful'.
- 4.2 The Rural Area Working Party met on 15 June 2011. Members considered a review of issues following the Spring Parish Conference and discussed ideas for presentations and workshops for the Autumn conference. A discussion was also held with colleagues from Suffolk County Council and bus operators to identify practical solutions following the recent bus cuts and Suffolk County Council's intelligent lighting system was considered; finally Members were given an update on Rural Vision 2031.
- 4.3 Several Rural Action Plan projects are currently being developed or are now underway. For example, a community enterprise event, '*Enterprise now*', is being held at Great Barton Village Hall on 30 June 2011. The aim of the event is to provide information and support for people interested in community shops, pubs, post offices, transport initiatives and the like. The event is free, but people have been encouraged to book their place early not least because the event is open to anyone from the East of England. Menta has been commissioned to carry out support sessions led by an 'enterprise champion' for people wanting to start a new business in the rural areas. Villages that are interested in having this resource are being asked to contact Menta in order that they can plan their programme of support sessions. Great Bradley was one of the first for 2011, and its first visit was very successful.

- 4.4 Officers have arranged for a falls prevention advisor from the NHS to attend some Coffee Caravan visits in Ousden and Cowlinge, as there are often people attending the Coffee Caravan who would greatly benefit from advice on this topic.
- 4.5 Great Livermere has won the district round of the Village of the Year 2011 awards. The village will receive a prize of £500 from the Borough Council to be used towards community initiatives, and an engraved rose bowl, which will be presented to them by the Mayor at their next community event. The County judging round will take place on 27 and 28 July 2011 and we wish Great Livermere great success.

W:\Democratic WP Services\Committee\Portfolios\2011\Leader\11.06.28 Leader.doc