



Council 28 June 2011

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Written report by Cllr Sara Mildmay-White, Culture & Sport Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

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

1. *Nowton Country Fair*

- 1.1 The 22nd annual Country Fair was held at Nowton Park on Sunday 19 June 2011. Like all Councillors and Council staff, I was extremely saddened to hear that a member of the public died following the horse and carriage bolting. Our deepest sympathies are with her family and everyone else involved in this dreadful accident. It is a tremendous shock to us all that an incident like this happened at such a popular family activity and we are now working with the police and Health and Safety Executive to find out exactly how this tragedy occurred.

Heritage

2.1 Commercial

- 2.1.1 At the beginning of the financial year car park charges were introduced at West Stow. The modest charges have been fairly well received by visitors and the new income stream means that the users of the site are helping maintain the facilities on offer.
- 2.1.2 The Heritage ticket continues to prove popular with the public as they have the opportunity to visit both Moyse's Hall Museum in Bury St Edmunds and West Stow once they bought the ticket.
- 2.1.3 In April 2011 the new events programme for Moyse's Hall and West Stow was launched in the form of a fold out leaflet and not only advertises the range of heritage events on offer but also directs potential visitors to the website where they can find even more information about our sites.
- 2.1.4 Moyse's Hall Museum and West Stow are benefiting from new signage installed to ensure that customers can clearly see what our unique sites have to offer. The signs are looking to entice more visitors into to our facilities and view the excellent collections.

2.2 Community

- 2.2.1 The Heritage Community outreach project '*Discover Your Past*' has been busy with a range of projects around the Borough. The projects included using objects and images from the heritage collections in the Oasis Day Centre (part of Age UK Suffolk), to stimulate discussion and the gathering of memories in the form of a book that was presented to the Centre. Also, Suffolk Family Carers enjoyed a special visit to Moyse's Hall Museum as a relaxation from their demanding care duties and lastly '*Discover Your Past*' worked with St John's Community Centre and Middle schools in Haverhill to help communities work with their heritage.
- 2.2.2 During April 2011 a Channel 4 documentary about Anglo-Saxon Medicine was filmed at West Stow featuring Tony Robinson of '*Time Team*' fame. It is not just heritage sites that are popular but our collections are too with a 1950's pram being loaned to the Theatre Royal for the Bury Operatic and Dramatic Society's new production of '*Beauty and the Beast*'.
- 2.2.3 The '*Keeping Time*' exhibition at Moyse's Hall Museum has come to a close and has been very well received with many plaudits from the public. A new '*Keeping Time*' booklet has been produced as a legacy of the exhibition to help promote the town's well known benefactor, his collections and his last resting place here. The next exhibition will be '*Suffolk's Lap of Honour*' which I will be opening on 27 July 2011 and showcases the role of Suffolk people in the Olympics as part of our major commitment to that 2012 theme in St Edmundsbury, which includes '*Go Rwanda*' project.

3. Olympics and Tour of Britain

- 3.1 The Tour of Britain cycle race is once again coming to St Edmundsbury with the start of the 7th stage setting off from Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds on 17 September 2011. This will build on the success of last year and will attract even more people to the town. It will once again involve a community event and will look to have local groups lead off the race which proved so popular last year.
- 3.2 Planning for the Rwandan Convention on 22 to 24 July 2011 is continuing at pace with the president of Rwanda being invited to close the event on the Sunday. This will be a great

occasion for the Borough and we all hope he can attend. The weekend of the convention will be a busy one for the Borough and a fantastic opportunity to showcase all we have to offer as not only will 500 Rwandans be descending on Bury St Edmunds but there will be *'Olympic Open weekend'* events in Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds, 3 nights of amazing acts in Abbey Gardens and up to 2,000 cyclists leaving Nowton Park on the Sunday morning to ride the complete stage of the Tour of Britain all the way to Sandringham.

- 3.3 The *'Sport for Rwanda'* initiative is progressing well and the Cycle to Rwanda team, with their newly appointed third rider. A Support Rwanda sponsor pack is now available where people can donate £20 and receive 2 limited edition pins and a certificate from the Rwandan National Olympic Committee. To further support the *'Sport for Rwanda'* project a Charity Dinner and auction is being held on 9 September 2011 and I ask all Members to join in and book a place. The team are also looking for donations of items to auction on the night.
- 3.4 The Great Britain's women basketball team, which included our Caroline Maclean, cruised to their first BT Paralympic World Cup title with a 63 to 52 victory over second favourites Germany in Manchester. I hope you will join me in congratulating Caroline and the team for their great success.

4. Arts and Festival

- 4.1 The Apex continues to grow in stature as a significant national concert venue with some good audience levels, coupled with some great feedback and glowing praise for the venue and its staff; indeed, a recent quote from a performer was *"Wow – what a hall.....if only London had something like this"*.
- 4.2 Music is not all that The Apex provides, as organisers of the Bury St Edmunds annual beer fest will acknowledge as this year was the most successful so far, with record levels of money being raised for the various supported charities and more than double the figures attending from the previous year. There was also another first at The Apex which was a charity fashion event which was enjoyed by all and was completely sold out with the proceeds going to St Nicholas Hospice.
- 4.3 The Athenaeum has continued to be well used and has kept up to previous years levels and the Public Halls team will be focusing on promoting the Athenaeum to a greater degree over the coming months.
- 4.4 The 2011 Bury St Edmunds Festival has been a big success with an estimated 20,000 people enjoying events over the 10 days, including approximately 6,000 people at free events. Feedback on this year's festival has been extremely positive and there was a real buzz around the Town particularly during the weekend events. The Apex has made it easier for the festival to attract artists to Bury St Edmunds who would not historically have come here. The performances by Staff Benda Bilili from the Congo and Penguin Café are a case in point and both of these attracted new audiences to the Festival and brought more visitors into the Town.

5. Parks and Cemeteries

- 5.1 Members will have seen that the new Abbey Gardens play area is now fully open. The play area has already received some great accolades from children and parents alike and has some great new features and now boasts a tree house and a river crossing. The project, led by the Borough Council, brought together members of English Heritage, the Cathedral, the County Council's Archaeology Service and five different contractors to ensure the project was a success and came in on budget.

- 5.2 Contractors are now on site to start the build of the new Visitor Centre in Nowton Park. This new building will house new changing rooms and toilets, a café, a shop and an education room, and will be a welcome addition to the park.
- 5.3 The Bury in Bloom group invited the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to use the town as a training venue for its "in Bloom" judges this year and on the 22 and 23 June a group arrives to scrutinise the horticultural splendour on offer.
- 5.4 Green Flag judges have once again visited the Borough to look at the Abbey Gardens, East Town Park and Nowton Park to see how we measure up in these annual awards. To help meet the high standards for this year we now have 3 Friends Groups, improved signage and interpretation and the community engagement has improved year on year with over 3,000 volunteer hours recorded.
- 5.5 The proposals set out for the third and final year of the *'Big Lottery Partners in Play Grant Allocation'* have now been agreed by the Big Lottery. All the key milestones have been achieved to date and officers are confident at being able to deliver the remaining targets which are to be met by the end of August 2011. Many thousands of young people have benefited from this initiative and of note is the particular success of the Children's festivals in Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds.