



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

C148

Council 27 September 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. *Parks and Cemeteries*

- 1.1 Over the summer 2011 period, the Parks Service held or hosted over 25 events in the Borough's Parks which included the Haverhill Show and 'Big Day Out' at Haverhill Recreation Ground and the 'Bury Fest' and Bury St Edmunds Scouts centenary party in the Abbey Gardens.
- 1.2 The summer club at Nowton Park, Bury St Edmunds was again a popular event with over 60 different children's activities taking place including building dens, pirate ships, and giant beasts out of willow.
- 1.3 On Saturday 30 July 2011, the first wedding event was held in Nowton Park and was a very successful day with over 100 guests attending the blessing ceremony and the evening celebrations. Everyone enjoyed the splendour of the walled garden and surrounding landscape, which was especially decorated for the day. Two further enquiries have now been received from other couples who are considering the venue for their wedding reception.
- 1.4 Also over the summer period, three private children's parties were organised by the Ranger Service in the walled garden at Nowton Park. Taking advantage of the natural facilities within the park the parents booked space, ranger activities and the marquee for a 'Party with a Difference'. This new option in the events and activities programme for the park was very well received and likely to become more popular next year. It forms part of our agenda of sensitive income generation in these much-loved community facilities.

- 1.5 On 9 August 2011, I was pleased to be able to officially open the Abbey Gardens Play Area as part of the wonderful Children's Festival. The new Play Area has proven to be incredibly well used over the summer period with thousands of children enjoying the excellent new facilities; indeed, the sand pit area has been particularly popular and we are now even selling buckets and spades in our shops!
- 1.6 Work on the Nowton Park Visitor Centre is well underway and currently on schedule for completion in early January 2012. Anyone visiting the site now, will have a sense of the scale of this excellent new building, which will incorporate renewable energy technology.
- 1.7 At the end of July 2011, the Abbey Gardens had its one millionth visitor since the counters went in at the beginning of November 2010.

2. **Sports and Events**

- 2.1 On 10 July 2011, the twelfth Suffolk Youth Games took place at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre with around 1,000 children taking part on the day and many more involved in practice events before the games. The Games were opened by the Mayor of St Edmundsbury and was attended by Patrick Gihana, from the Rwandan High Commission.
- 2.2 On 23 July 2011, the Churchgate Area Association in Bury St Edmunds put on a showcase event as part of the Olympic open weekend. Hatter Street was closed off and was filled with music and entertainment including a fashion show and a taco eating contest. The showcase was a great success and was enjoyed by nearly 2,000 people and raised over £800 for the Sport for Rwanda appeal.
- 2.3 The following day, on 24 July 2011, a Tour of Britain Tour Ride took place and was the chance for enthusiastic amateurs to ride the same route as the professional from Bury St Edmunds to Sandringham in Norfolk. Over 350 riders set off on the 200 km leg with most finishing and in good times as well.
- 2.4 On 27 August 2011, well over 400 Rwandans from around the United Kingdom descended on Hardwick Heath for their annual Rwanda Family, Sports and Culture Day convention. The Rwandans had chosen Bury St Edmunds for their event this year because of the strong links the Borough has forged with the Rwandan community in advance of next year's Olympic training camp. The teams hailed from London, Birmingham, Coventry and Manchester. The winning team of London were awarded with a trophy and prizes by the Deputy Mayor of St Edmundsbury and the Rwandan High Commissioner. Following the match, light refreshments were organised and the evening's entertainment concluded at around 9.00pm.
- 2.5 Whilst on the topic of Rwanda, the Rwandan Charity Ball took place on 9 September 2011 in the West Wing at Ickworth House. The Ball was organised to raise money for the Sport for Rwanda appeal and help children in the country. The event was very successful and raised £1,700 towards the total of £80,000, which will help over 100,000 school children.
- 2.6 I am also pleased to report that on 17 September 2011, the start of the seventh stage of the Tour of Britain cycle race set off from Angel Hill in Bury St Edmunds and was once again, a resounding success. Building on the achievements of last year the event attracted many people to the town; with thousands enjoying the start, which included a fantastic six-person bike as part of the popular lead off of local groups. Following the start, a community event took place with cycle racing on Angel Hill and a skate park constructed in the Abbey Gardens. These events all continued into the afternoon.
- 2.7 The Cycle to Rwanda project has been gaining interest, so much so that a fourth rider has come forward to join the team. The new member, Mr Neil Dykes, has much experience of

cycling around Africa and will be a welcome addition to the team on their 6,000 mile journey.

- 2.8 On 18 September 2011, the Annual St Edmundsbury Sports Awards took place in The Apex and were attended by over 300 guests and nominees for the awards. The sports personality of the year award was won for the second year in a row by our own Caroline Maclean who was unable to collect the award as she was representing Team GB at the European Championships in Israel.
- 2.9 I look forward to reporting at the next meeting with the progress we are making with the Leisure Facilities Asset Management Review, new facilities proposed for the Victory Sports Ground and the new Bury St Edmunds Community Football Project.

3. Heritage

- 3.1 On 27 July 2011, I was pleased to be able to meet Olympic athletes from the past and some hopefuls for London 2012 when I opened Suffolk's Lap of Honour Exhibition in Moyses's Hall Museum. A delegation from the Rwandan Embassy in London also attended as the exhibition will link to the pre-games training camp in Bury St Edmunds. Local athlete Brian Aldiss was one of those who received a special medal from the Mayor of St Edmundsbury and was one of many that were presented to those who helped with the project. The exhibition will be used as a venue to help promote other Olympic events in the Borough as we approach London 2012. I am especially pleased to have played a part in linking Iris Bird, from my own Ward in Rougham, to the Exhibition who has an Olympic story about her father W.G. Bailey (a pre-war Olympic steeplechase athlete) which the museum is keen to record.
- 3.2 The *Discover Your Past* project was involved with the official opening celebrations of The Centre in St John's Street, Bury St Edmunds which also celebrated its 170th anniversary with Victorian themed activities. A project with the Home School Group culminated in a presentation of their hard work on Victorians and their enactment of a Victorian schoolroom in this former Victorian school building. *Discover Your Past* sponsored a book on the history of the Centre which was launched at the event and museum staff gave a talk on Victorian costume. A decoupage workshop, Victorian toys and costume were also provided as part of working with community groups.
- 3.3 In August 2011, a lottery funded project enabled a group of teenagers to try their hand at carpentry and blacksmithing to recreate an Anglo-Saxon bed at West Stow. The young people had four days to design and construct a replica of a bed that was buried with an Anglo-Saxon woman in Suffolk around the 7th century. Working with members of the staff and Friends' at West Stow, they learned new skills that ensured the project was completed on time. The finished piece of furniture is now on permanent display in the Farmer's house in the reconstructed village.
- 3.4 The *Go Wild* event was held at West Stow Country Park in early August 2011. Forest Heath District Council's Countryside Team organised and ran the event alongside our own staff. Events went on throughout the day and included bug-hunting, pond-dipping in the lake, games, craft activities and a storytelling. A group of Play Rangers were also on hand to help children with the new den building area which has been added to the attractions around the play area.
- 3.5 On 21 August 2011, the second annual Eisteddfod to find the Chief Skald (story-teller) of Suffolk was held in the Anglo-Saxon Village. Visitors enjoyed a fascinating day of story-telling as poets and mythmakers wove tales of heroes and brave deeds, as well as scary beasts and monsters! The Skald competition drew good crowds in the afternoon, as

everyone gathered outside the Hall to hear the different artists and their stories before the judges announced the winner at the end of the day.

4. Arts and Festival

- 4.1 In November 2011, the new Apex gallery will be launched, which will showcase professional art that portrays a musical theme. The artwork will be a welcome addition to the upstairs area and will provide further enticement for people to visit The Apex.
- 4.2 The summer season has seen some great highlights in the auditorium, which included a sold out performance of the Spooky Men's Chorale who were over from Australia; the Jim Jones Revue, supported by local band Three Vicars, which brought a night of rock to The Apex prior to their appearance at a festival in Leicester; and the first classical season was launched following a concert by the New European Chamber Ensemble.
- 4.3 The September to December 2011 programme sees a huge wide variety of different music and entertainment being brought to The Apex and thoughts have already gone towards the festive period. Two nights have been allocated for dedicated Apex Christmas Party Nights on 9 and 10 December 2011. A package has been developed which includes all entertainment, a welcome drink, dinner with wine and Christmas treats to take away which I am pleased to say has practically sold out on both dates. The Apex has also been booked for a corporate Christmas event by a company who generally go to Newmarket Race Course.
- 4.4 Work continues to promote and establish The Apex for corporate business with various activities. Meetings are currently being organised with key hoteliers in order to develop relationships and identify ways we can work together in the future to attract business events to the region. Exhibition space has been booked at Confex – the industry exhibition which will be held at Excel in East London in March 2012. As there is no umbrella B2B organisation to exhibit under currently, The Apex is joining forces with Trinity Park in Ipswich to fly the flag for Suffolk venues. Not only does the association reduce our exhibiting costs but it will also help to deliver the message that West Suffolk is on the map and ready for corporate events from outside of the county.
- 4.5 As referred to in the Leader's report (Report C146) The Apex was delighted to host the forthcoming Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) conference and will shortly host the Exhibition of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (EAME) exhibition as part of the current Bury St Edmunds Business Festival. Taking place from 13 to 23 September 2011, the focus has very much been on promoting and supporting B2B in Bury St Edmunds. In addition to the two major Festival events taking place at The Apex, the Athenaeum is also being utilised to host the Bury Free Press B2B exhibition. Every effort will be made to maximise the associated benefits these events will deliver to us.
- 4.6 Work has been undertaken to promote the Athenaeum, including producing a new wedding and party leaflet and a pop-up promotional banner, both of which will be utilised at the forthcoming Wedding Fair at the Athenaeum in September 2011.