



## Council 27 September 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.

#### **Highlights**

- ◆ **The first ever Business Festival is proving to be a great success.**
- ◆ **The Bury St Edmunds Christmas Lights are being switched on on 17 November 2011 and the Christmas Fayre is being held on Friday 25 to Sunday 27 November 2011.**

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

##### **1.1 Business Festival**

- 1.1.1 At the time of the publication of this report, the first ever Business Festival, held from 13 to 23 September 2011, is proving to be a great success. It has been organised by the Borough Council's Economic Development Services and boasts an impressive schedule of events in various locations in and around Bury St Edmunds. It opened on 13 September 2011 with the Mid-Anglian Enterprise Agency's (MENTA) Trade Fair in the West Wing at Ickworth House. The Festival includes the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Conference, 'Open for Business', at The Apex on 15 September; the Business Festival cycle challenge; the Exhibition of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (EAME); the arrival of the 'StartUp Britain' summer tour bus at The Apex on 20 September; and the Business Show 2011 at the Athenaeum on 22 September. It also includes several business courses run by West Suffolk College and concludes on 23 September with the 'Chambers in the West' Festival Finale in the West Wing at Ickworth House. Sponsorship from Business Link has covered most of the costs. Attracting the first New Anglia LEP Conference and EAME, both regional or sub-regional events, and being the only location in the East of England visited by the 'StartUp Britain' bus on its national tour, are particular coups for the Festival

and it has helped to confirm the status of both Bury St Edmunds as a sub-regional centre and The Apex as an important venue.

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

- 1.2.1 West Suffolk College gained funding from the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership to run 'Building Blocks for Business', workshops on essential business practices for people who work in West Suffolk. A first phase of courses was run in spring 2011 and as these were very successful, a second phase is being run in autumn 2011 and next spring 2012, including some as part of the Bury St Edmunds Business Festival. The WSLSP funding enables these courses to be offered at a very reasonable cost. Topics include enhanced presentation skills; sales and negotiation techniques; business techniques and social media - the business benefits; developing excellence in customer service; time awareness and email management; and effectively managing staff performance.

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

### **2.1 Events**

- 2.1.2 As referred to my other report (Report C148), on 23 July 2011, the first 'Churchgate Showcase' was held with many attractions including a fashion show, zumba dancing, choirs and vintage vehicles. The Abbeygate Picture House hosted a flight simulator on the big screen and people had the chance to play Nintendo Wii games. The Tourism Team worked with the Churchgate Area Association to organise the event and designed and printed the programme. Over 2,000 people visited and the feedback from visitors, businesses and residents was very positive. Inclusion of this area in the Christmas Fayre is now being discussed. Heritage Open Days took place between 9 to 12 September 2011 and included over fifty properties and guided walks, all free of charge. Highlights included a free coach visiting Fullers Mill, West Stow and Lackford Lakes and a tour of the Magistrates' Court with mock trials taking place.

### **2.2 Clare Tourism**

- 2.2.1 'Visit Clare', a new guide for Clare was launched in September 2011 at the Clare Library. The Library has also taken on the role of a Tourist Information Point, with the Borough's main Tourist Information Centre (TIC) providing display boards, information and help to the library staff. The Tourist Information Point will be stocked regularly with information on what to do and see in Clare and the area around. The TIC continues to work with the Clare Tourism Forum on ways to promote this historic town.

### **2.3 Review of Summer**

- 2.3.1 The Bury St Edmunds' Association of Registered Tour Guides has had a good season with an increased number of coach bookings. The daily tours continue to be an important part of the town's tourism offer. Walks this year have included the 650<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Magistrates' Walk, St John's Street Trail and St Edmund Walk. Evening tours have finished at various pubs, cafés or hotels in the town which businesses have appreciated. The TIC has increased its sales for summer 2011. New 'surprise' merchandise included plants and vegetables from the Abbey Gardeners and buckets and spades, for use in the sandpit in the new children's play area in the Abbey Gardens.

### **2.4 Christmas Fayre**

- 2.4.1 Arrangements are well underway for the Christmas Fayre in Bury St Edmunds, which is arranged for Friday 25 to Sunday 27 November 2011. All stalls have been taken and

advertising and media coverage has already started. Greene King has agreed to offer some sponsorship for the main stage on Angel Hill and allow their staff car park to be used on the Saturday and Sunday. The Theatre Royal's pantomime will start on Friday 25 November to coincide with the Fayre. The programme will be ready at the end of October 2011 and an official launch will be held at the Brewery Tap in early November. The TIC will also be selling Charity Christmas cards from 17 October 2011.

### **3. Bury St Edmunds Town Centre**

#### **3.1 New Bid4Bury Website**

3.1.1 Bid4Bury has engaged a marketing company from Newmarket, Cubiq Design, to produce a new website which promotes not just Bid4Bury but the whole town. The site will be smart phone compatible and the possibility of creating an I-phone application is also being considered. The site will be launched in autumn 2011, together with a retail, food and drink brochure, a professional services brochure and a new map of the town. Bid4Bury members will be included free, both on the website and in the brochures, and non-members can pay to be included.

#### **3.2 Christmas Events**

3.2.1 Bid4Bury is taking sole responsibility for the Christmas lights in the town this year. Over £10,000 has been spent on new lights and the lights will now be spread across the whole of the Business Improvement District (BID) area. The switch-on for the lights will take place at about 7pm on Thursday 17 November 2011. The Charity Market will now be held on the same day and there will be other activities too. The event as a whole will start at 2pm. The four Thursdays in December 2011 will as in previous years, be late night shopping evenings, but Bid4Bury is trying to attract sponsorship and add other activities to attract more visitors.

#### **3.3 New Shops**

3.3.1 Several new shops and businesses have opened in Bury St Edmunds over summer 2011, including the Really Rather Good Coffee House at 31 Abbeygate Street (was Mr Everetts); Amma Alterations and Boutique at 46 Abbeygate Street (was Anglia Wine Merchants); Fenn Wright Manson on Auction Street (was Calendar Club); Tattoo Junction at 73 St Andrew's Street North (was Vintage Romantics); Beautiful Beers at 2 St John's Street (was Toy Box Two); Bury Bridal Shop at 14 Brentgovel Street (was J2 by Javelin); and the Cheque Centre at 14 Buttermarket (was the Local off-licence). More shops are opening soon, including Mountain Warehouse at 19-21 Cornhill (was Stead and Simpson) and the Hatter Street Studio and Café at 22B Hatter Street (was the Greek Taverna).

### **4. Markets**

#### **4.1 General**

4.1.1 As reported in the 16 September 2011 edition of the Members' Bulletin, a business plan for the markets service will be presented to the Markets Traders Forum before this meeting of full Council is held. This develops the recommendations within the original report produced by the National Association of British Market Authorities. The business plan sets out the path to create an environment for success for both markets in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. A copy of the business plan will be available to Members upon request.

## **4.2 Bury St Edmunds**

- 4.2.1 There has been a strong demand from traders for pitches in the market over summer 2011 and in July the amount of stall space sold was 8.8% higher than in the same period in 2010. There have been new traders selling books, ladies fashions and hand-made chutneys using local ingredients, and they have all reported good sales. The recycling project continues to provide savings on waste tipping charges and the markets team has worked closely with traders to ensure its success.

## **4.3 Haverhill**

- 4.3.1 Trade is similar to last year, and the Friday market has been strengthened by two traders selling hats and belts and confectionery.

## **5. Property Services**

### **5.1 Suffolk Business Park**

- 5.1.1 Signs that interest in commercial development activity is on the rise again have been confirmed by enquiries about land held by the Council at Suffolk Business Park. Officers hope to cultivate this interest to produce a sale of part of the land early in 2012.

## **6. Asset Management**

### **6.1 Hamlet Croft**

- 6.1.1 Following the successful informal tender of the former football ground at Hamlet Croft, Bloor Homes is preparing its planning application for 91 new houses, including 27 affordable units. Pre-planning discussions are well underway and the design is taking form, taking advantage of the broad woodland belt within the site as a major landscape feature. The application should be submitted in autumn 2011.

### **6.2 Haverhill Council Offices**

- 6.2.1 Both Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council recently endorsed the revised business plan for the Haverhill offices. While the initial refurbishment and renewals works are more extensive than originally envisaged, the end result will be a fit-for-purpose, flexible office with an extended life of 30 years. Savings in running costs are expected to be more than originally estimated, especially when the photovoltaic panels are installed on the roof in 2012, which will enable both Councils to benefit from the Government's Feed in Tariff. The building should be fully occupied by spring 2012 with staff from the two Councils and four voluntary organisations.

### **6.3 Sales of Ground Leases**

- 6.3.1 A further two ground leases were successfully sold at auction in July 2011. Both were long leases where the Council does not receive any rent. They had been declared surplus in a previous asset management review of ground leases. The sale of the ground lease of St Olave's Precinct in Bury St Edmunds is scheduled for sale at auction in autumn 2011. The individual shop tenancies or customer offer will not be affected by this sale.

#### **6.4 Advice to Other Councils**

- 6.4.1 The Council has hosted a number of visits in the last few months from officers and elected Members of other councils, and property advisers, who want to learn how we have achieved major asset management and property transformations at West Suffolk House and The Apex. Our visitors have been impressed at our achievements. The message of our successes continues to spread and further enquiries are coming in.

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