



Council 27 September 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

1. Commitment for Haverhill

1.1 Haverhill High Street

1.1.1 Suffolk County Council is drawing up a scheme for the improvement of the High Street in Haverhill. Following a special meeting of the Haverhill Area Working Party and the ONE Haverhill Board meeting together with the Suffolk County Council's Portfolio Holder for Roads, Transport and Planning, it is planned that this will be the subject of a consultation exercise in autumn 2011. Following the consultation, a final scheme will be brought to the Haverhill Area Working Party for approval and it is hoped that work on site will start in spring 2012.

1.2 Plaza Events

1.2.1 The Plaza, the new public space beside the Haverhill Leisure Centre in Ehringshausen Way, continues to be well-used. Events over summer 2011 have included street theatre from Samuel Ward Academy, 'Art in the Open' from Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College, gymnastics and parkour from Haverhill Gymnastics Club, a voluntary sector fundraising event, a Family Fun Day, a medley of workshops, a street performer and a fire prevention event with the Fire Service.

1.3 Haverhill Business Ratepayers Event

1.3.1 The Council's annual business ratepayers consultation meeting will be held at Genzyme on Friday 21 October 2011 at 2.00 pm. It is being run in partnership with Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and Genzyme are kindly hosting it at no charge. The speakers will include

Matthew Hancock MP; Neville Rayner, Chairman of the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership; Alex Till, Chief Executive of the Mid-Andlian Enterprise Agency (MENTA); a speaker from the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce and our own Chief Executive, Geoff Rivers. Councillors will be invited to attend, so please put the date in your diaries.

1.4 **Shops and Lettings**

- 1.4.1 New shops have opened in Haverhill over summer 2011, including Glasswells Furniture Clearance Centre at 59 High Street and a Curb BMX shop at 4 Queen's Square. The shop vacancy rate in Haverhill remains very low at 4.8% with nine vacancies out of about 187 units.

2. **Community and Youth Development in Haverhill**

2.1 **Community Safety**

2.1.1 **ONE Haverhill**

- (a) The ONE Haverhill Board held its first joint public forum with the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) on Monday 5 September 2011. The meeting was chaired by Suffolk County Councillor Tim Marks as Chairman of the SNT. Various issues were brought forward and ONE Haverhill Board will discuss this initial meeting and the issues raised at their next meeting.
- (b) I have been elected as Chairman of the ONE Haverhill Board. We have set up two 'task and finish' groups bringing in various members from outside the Board. The two topics selected are: a five-year youth action plan; and Promoting Haverhill. Both groups have had their first meeting and will be reporting back to the Board.

2.1.2 **Positive Futures, Teenage Kicks football project**

- (a) This project started in the spring but comes to an end this month. During the first 16 weeks, 730 young people attended, with an average of 45 young people each week, and 71 people one week. The project helps keep young people occupied and off the streets so is very worthwhile. Funding came from a variety of sources, including the Town Council.

2.1.3 **Haverhill Town Pastors**

- (a) The Town Pastors have started regular patrols on Friday evenings in the town centre. They have been trained and are being well received by the licence trade and door supervisors. It is hoped that their presence will provide reassurance and a point of help and support on the streets of Haverhill. Town Pastors are drawing on the expertise of the existing youth workers and the 'On the Spot' bus but this project is still in the early stages of development.

2.2 **Community Development**

2.2.1 **Haverhill Big Day Out**

- (a) This took place on the Recreation Ground on 27 July 2011, and the Community Development Unit staff gave practical support. Around 2,000 people were given wristbands, which entitled them to gain free access to all the day's entertainment. The event offers families an important opportunity to engage with Haverhill's service providers, including voluntary and community groups, and to enjoy a good day out.

2.2.2 **Partnership with Older People in Suffolk (POPs) Forum**

- (a) On 15 July 2011, Borough and Town Councillors and Council officers helped at an event in Haverhill organised by the AgeUK Partnership project. 32 older people aged 50-99 years attended and heard about various projects and activities currently on offer in the town or opportunities available elsewhere that could be replicated. They also took part in 'round table' discussions. When the final report is published, it is hoped the Borough Council will be able to help improve the services available to older people living in Haverhill.

2.3 **Youth and Community Development**

2.3.1 **U-Festival**

- (a) Despite rain on all three days, the Haverhill U-Festival events on 4, 11 and 18 August 2011 were hugely successful with up to 150 young people attending each one. The three events had different themes with the first concentrating on football-based activities and competitions with the 'street football' cage; street art workshops, BMX and skating at the second; and a DJ, live music and the 'On the Spot' bus at the final one.

3. **Strategic Housing**

3.1 **Social Housing Reforms: Tenancy Strategy**

- 3.1.1 Preparing for social housing reforms being implemented by the Government has occupied much of the Housing Team's time during the last few months. They have been working with Registered Provider partners and the Homes and Communities Agency to develop our understanding of the changes. A Members' Working Group has been set up to consider the key issues and the implications for the Borough. The Borough Council is one of the few authorities which has been actively preparing for the changes and officers are in demand across the country to share knowledge and experience about our approach. This has included jointly presenting a workshop at the Chartered Institute of Housing's National Conference in June 2011.

- 3.1.2 A key part of the reforms and a requirement of the Localism Bill will be for authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy to give Registered Providers strategic guidance on the tenancy changes which the social housing reforms will bring. Officers have prepared a consultation document on the issues that will need to be in the Strategy and a twelve week consultation period was launched at the beginning of September 2011. Further information has been published in the Members' Bulletin and a Members' awareness session has been arranged for 25 October 2011 to look at the issues in greater detail.

3.2 **Housing Event at The Apex**

- 3.2.1 The Housing Team is hosting a 'Housing...What Housing' Event on 5 October 2011, from 11am to 7pm at The Apex, Bury St Edmunds. This will be an opportunity for members of the public to engage with a wide range of agencies and housing providers who will have stands at the event and will offer housing information and guidance. Officers will be promoting Council services and making the public aware of our work in meeting housing needs and providing information on the recent Government reforms in social housing.

- 3.2.2 'Box of Frogs' street theatre, which is a theatre company providing thought-provoking and stimulating drama scenes will be encouraging the audience to discuss the issues of today, at the event. Please could Members put this date in their diaries.

3.3 Access Scheme

3.3.1 The Access Scheme launched at the end of April 2011. This scheme is proving a valuable tool for the Housing Options Team to assist homeless households access accommodation in the Private Rented Sector. The scheme allows households to have money 'loaned' to them for the rent in advance via the Ipswich and Suffolk Credit Union. If households are unable to find the funds for a deposit for a private rental, the Council can offer a 'bond' to be held against any damage. To date, 8 households have been accommodated using the scheme.

3.4 Dale Farm Gypsy and Traveller Eviction, Basildon

3.4.1 Members will be aware from recent press coverage that about 90 families of Gypsies and Travellers are being evicted from the Dale Farm site in Basildon, Essex and it is possible that some of them may come to Suffolk. A multi-agency contingency plan to manage any movement from Dale Farm to Suffolk has been developed, and there is also an established protocol between District Councils and the County Council for managing unauthorised encampments. This protocol has been in place since 2008 and has been used successfully in many cases already. In the event of any unauthorised encampments from Dale Farm or indeed anywhere else, officers will work proactively with the encampments, and this work will involve the Ward Councillors. Although we are not expecting large numbers of families to move to Suffolk, all local authorities, police, health and the voluntary sector have agreed to work together to manage any potential community tensions that may arise.

3.5 Housing Register Figures

3.5.1 For information, the Housing Register figures at the beginning of September 2011 were as follows:-

Home-Link Monthly Stats									
Date	01-Jan-11	01-Feb-11	01-Mar-11	01-Apr-11	01-May-11	01-Jun-11	01-Jul-11	01-Aug-11	01-Sep-11
Band A	68	64	63	63	67	65	77	74	84
Band B	162	171	175	173	183	163	186	180	167
Band C	911	948	975	977	1000	924	938	945	971
Band D	723	736	750	753	763	669	678	680	675
Total	1864	1919	1963	1966	2013	1821	1879	1879	1897
Homeseeker	1447	1477	1514	1519	1554	1410	1453	1444	1458
Transfer	417	437	442	447	459	411	426	425	439
1 Bedroom	1037	1060	1084	1099	1125	996	1014	1016	1029
2 Bedroom	561	582	590	593	610	568	605	603	593
3 Bedroom	211	221	232	218	221	204	205	205	217
4 Bedroom	50	51	52	52	53	50	50	50	52
5 Bedroom	0	1	1	4	4	3	5	5	6
Single			950	905	924	817	827	836	850
Couple			272	272	281	258	274	268	270
Family with children			766	746	763	707	734	732	736
Other household types			38	43	45	39	44	43	41
Statutory Homeless			22	23	23	19	22	23	25
Homeless Prevention			66	57	65	65	76	73	66
Homeless Other			198	197	194	183	188	190	191
Over 65s							191	194	194