



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

D42

Council 19 June 2012

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Anne Gower, Housing, Licensing and Environmental Health Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Haverhill
- Haverhill Masterplan;
- Haverhill Town Centre Management;
Haverhill Youth and Community
Development;
- Environmental Health
- Licensing; and
- Strategic Housing and Homelessness.

1. *Environmental Health: Commercial and Food*

- 1.1 In March/April 2012 the Commercial and Food team of Environmental Health introduced the National Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) for food businesses in the Borough. This will build on the success of the earlier "scores on the doors" scheme, which has been run since April 2010 by this Council.
- 1.2 The aim of the new scheme is for it to be used by all English local authorities to give the degree of consistency already achieved in Wales and Northern Ireland. It will help consumers choose where to eat out, or shop for food, by giving them information about the hygiene standards. This information provided at inspection checks compliance with legal requirements, and through this, will, hopefully, encourage businesses to improve their standards. Restaurants, takeaways, cafés, sandwich shops, pubs, hotels, supermarkets and other retail food outlets will all be included in the scheme which awards the business a rating ranging from '0' (urgent improvement necessary) to '5' (very good) at the top.
- 1.3 All eligible businesses have been sent a replacement sticker and certificate, which they are encouraged to display on their premises. The ratings will then be reassessed at subsequent routine inspections. Businesses have also been sent details of how they can appeal if they think the rating is incorrect, or how they can improve their ratings.
- 1.4 This introduction of the scheme was funded by a £7,000 grant from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Consumers can access ratings at food.gov.uk/ratings.

2. Environmental Health: Domestic and Pollution

- 2.1 I am pleased to report on the support the Borough Council has given to disabled persons living in the Borough through Disabled Facilities Grants. The Council provides financial assistance towards the costs of adapting the homes of disabled residents. The works, which are mandatory, may be as simple as providing a stairlift to enable the disabled resident to access the first floor of their home, to more complex projects involving extensions to the home to provide specialist bathing facilities. By far the most common adaptation is the provision of a level access shower. These adaptations restore and/or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity.
- 2.2 In the last financial year the Borough Council paid £456,376 towards the cost of adapting the homes of 66 disabled occupants, including help for 10 disabled children. The Council received £313,000 towards this from the Government.

3. Strategic Housing and Homelessness

- 3.1 Work has started on the rural profiling pilot, which was approved by Cabinet on 28 March 2012. The pilot will look at how we can achieve detailed information to inform and shape decisions regarding future development in the village of Ixworth, to ensure we are building the right types of homes and services in the future. The current survey we use to evidence rural housing need focuses on the need for affordable housing. It does not provide full information relating to housing aspirations for people across all tenures, nor does it look at the profile of existing homes, and the fit with current housing need. These changes are necessary because the delivery of affordable housing has changed significantly. Regular briefings on the pilot will be provided in Members' bulletins. Part of the purpose of the pilot will be to establish how best to involve Borough Councillors, and local parish councils.
- 3.2 Havebury Housing Partnership (Havebury) has been allocated funds by the Homes and Communities Agency to bring homes back into use in both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. This can include looking at redundant buildings that have the potential to be made into homes. Ward Members are encouraged to discuss any opportunities in their local areas with officers in the housing team.

3.3 Home Link Figures

Home-Link Monthly Stats			
Date	01-Apr-12	01-May-12	01-Jun-12
Band A	104	112	115
Band B	179	156	162
Band C	1132	1023	1071
Band D	716	601	616
Total	2131	1892	1964

Home-Link Monthly Stats			
Date	01-Apr-12	01-May-12	01-Jun-12
Homeseeker	1661	1478	1538
Transfer	470	414	426
1 Bedroom	1154	1004	1049
2 Bedroom	687	636	653
3 Bedroom	223	193	198
4 Bedroom	61	52	55
5 Bedroom	6	7	8
Single	949	824	855
Couple	311	274	282
Family with children	819	745	775
Other household types	52	49	52
Statutory Homeless	43	55	59
Homeless Prevention	72	62	63
Homeless Other	225	205	213
Over 65s	211	188	193

4. *Youth and Community Development*

4.1 **Community safety**

- (a) Helen Lindfield, the Community Safety Officer, took part in the recent Havebury estate inspection, which focussed on the Clements Estate in Haverhill. Although she is not able to support all such inspections, it was an opportunity to engage with residents on an estate where anti-social behaviour is currently an issue.

4.2 **Informative Day**

- (a) This was an event held on Tuesday 24 April at Leiston Community Centre in Haverhill. It was hosted by One Haverhill, and was designed to give local people the opportunity to drop in and talk to a range of experts about the issues affecting them. The agencies and organisations attending covered housing, employment, benefits, debt and health. They also provided advice, support and signposting to other services. Unfortunately, attendance was poor, and I have asked that other ways of providing access to this range of advice are considered.

4.3 **Jubilee Big Picnic**

- (a) On Thursday 7 June 2012 the second Chalkstone Community Picnic in Haverhill was held on the open space at the back of Chalkstone Community Centre from 11am to 3pm. To commemorate the Queen's reign this year it was rebranded as the Jubilee Big Picnic.
- (b) External funding was secured from a number of sources, which meant the activities on offer were enhanced. The popular 4 in 1 mobile bungee trampoline was back, as well as an inflatable slide, trailer trampoline, chair-o-plane fair ground ride and magician. Local partners also supported the event, with a number of craft and sporting activities as well as a face painting. Chalkstone Area Tenants and Residents Association (CATRA) supported the event, and it is the intention that next year they will play a bigger role in its organisation.

4.4 ONE Haverhill

- (a) Since my last report just under £30,000 from the £50,000 grant funding which the Council has provided has been allocated. £15,000 was awarded to Haverhill Town Council for a range of events associated with the Jubilee and the Olympics. Approximately £14,000 was divided between a number of other organisations delivering projects or services in Haverhill. This was the first funding round, and the grant panel convened to make the allocations has reflected on its experience, and is further developing the grant-making process.
- (b) A core group of ONE Haverhill members is meeting weekly to progress the Neighbourhood Community Budget. Using the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) funding provided to enable the pilot, a project manager has been appointed to work two days a week, public relations support is in place, and community engagement support is currently being sourced. During the summer there will be extensive engagement with local residents about the two themes for the pilot: improving opportunities for young people and enhancing the physical environment.

4.5 On the Spot Project

- (a) The project continues to operate well with an excellent response from young people. The steering group is in the process of recruiting a part time co-coordinator to develop the project and expand the volunteer base. The project is now going to be accompanied by a media worker, who will be teaching young people that access the project media skills.

5. Fuel Poverty

5.1 The Council has been actively participating in a Department of Health funded initiative to support vulnerable people in the county with their home heating and energy efficiency. The main phase of the 'Warm Homes Healthy People' Fund ran between January and April 2012. The Environmental Management Team has co-led the majority of services being provided across the County with Suffolk Coastal District Council administering the services. All these services have been provided free or heavily discounted to the client.

5.2 At the end of April 2012, the scheme has received the following level of enquiries:

Borough/ District	Customer enquiries	Energy surveys	Benefits checks	Referrals for insulation	Boiler Repairs	Fuel Payments
Babergh	123	113	5	109	4	41
Forest Heath	91	84	5	51	6	11
Ipswich	109	96	3	57	7	45
Mid Suffolk	60	50	9	29	1	21
Suffolk Coastal	157	146	5	82	12	15
St Edmundsbury	195	161	12	91	8	39
Waveney	165	150	5	101	4	42
Total	900	800	44	520	42	214

5.3 The successes and benefits derived from the scheme for the Borough's residents have been extensive:-

- (a) the initiative has been specifically directed at the most vulnerable residents of the Borough; the frail, elderly, families on low income including those with young children. All could be vulnerable to health problems if their home is cold;

- (b) 195 vulnerable households in the Borough have received advice and help to cut their energy bills, of which 161 households have been visited by an energy advisor. Many of these will receive services that will benefit the household for years to come;
- (c) the opportunity of an independent energy survey by a Local Authority appointed surveyor has been valued by many of the households;
- (d) 36 households received a fuel payment valued between £50 and £250, based on need, to help them with heating during cold weather. This intervention is likely to have had a direct benefit on the health of vulnerable people in that household;
- (e) 8 households were helped with emergency heating while their home heating was being repaired; and
- (f) 12 households opted for benefits checks, a service to help them maximise income.

5.4 Further funding to extend Warm Homes Healthy People has been secured until the end of August 2012. The scheme will look to work closely with the Citizens Advice Bureaux, Age UK, and the local Credit Unions to target promotion of the services in a more focussed way.

5.5 Alongside Warm Homes, the local authority partnership has designed and launched Suffolk Greener Homes for all residents to promote insulation generally. This initiative will offer a community cash back reward for home insulations promoted by any signed-up club, school or other organisation. This will run to the end of December 2012.

6. Haverhill Jubilee Events: Jubilee Plaza and Jubilee Park and Allotment Site

6.1 On Friday 2 June, I was delighted to be able to welcome to Haverhill the Mayor and Mayoress of St Edmundsbury, Councillor Tim Marks and Mrs Margaret Marks, Town Councillor Pat Hanlon, Mayor of Haverhill, Lord Risby of Haverhill, Matthew Hancock, MP for West Suffolk.

6.2 The visit was to celebrate the naming of two venues as 'Jubilee sites', the first being the Jubilee Plaza, and this was marked by the raising of the C9 flag, and unveiling of a plaque to mark the occasion by Lord Risby of Haverhill.

6.3 Having completed the celebrations on the Plaza we then went to the former Clements School site in Haverhill, where both Lord Risby and Matthew Hancock, planted trees to mark the naming of the Jubilee Park. This event marked the start of works to create the new Jubilee Park and allotment site. Whilst on the former school site, Lord Risby and Matthew Hancock MP were able to meet local residents who have helped form the plans for the new development.

7. Licensing

7.1 You will see from the Schedule of Referrals (Report D36) on this agenda that Council is being asked to approve the streamlining of systems associated with the processing of applications.

7.2 The first relates to representations in respect of Licensing Act applications being received by email. Currently the procedures require that a hard copy has to be received in addition to the e-mail before it is considered at a Licensing Act Hearing. However, subject to Council approval, this will not now be a requirement and will streamline the process.

- 7.3 The forthcoming implementation of the Charities Act 2006 will remove the responsibility from local authorities for verifying certain aspects associated with street collections. Removal of this responsibility will also mean that there is no specific need for the Council to consult with Suffolk Constabulary. This again streamlines the system and will enable applications to be determined in a much shorter timescale.

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