



Council 18 December 2012

LEADER'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by the Leader of the Council and Corporate and Rural Affairs Portfolio Cllr John Griffiths

Portfolio includes:

- Communications;
- Economic Development;
- Property, Asset, Facility and Estate Management (including West Suffolk House);
- External Relations, including Local Enterprise Partnerships;
- Rural Affairs;
- Shared Services; and
- Vision 2031

1. SHARED SERVICES

- 1.1 I am delighted to confirm that we now have a Joint Leadership Team in place. The final structure with confirmed appointments is attached to my report. These appointments are a key element of our journey towards a single set of services across two councils. In themselves, they have delivered savings of £870k across both councils (higher than the original target for management team savings).
- 1.2 The team have all now started in their new roles, and I am sure all Members will join me in wishing them well, in what will inevitably be an exciting but challenging time.
- 1.3 The aim between now and next March is to draw up and appoint to single structures across all services. There is a lot of hard work and inevitably some more pain to come. However, we have a clear end goal and I am very pleased with the progress we continue to make to ensure that we have resilient, fit for purpose services which will withstand the inevitable financial pressures to come.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

- 2.1 Working with the Human Resources and ICT staff the communications team continues to develop the tools needed to support both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath councils to communicate effectively. There is currently a great deal of work on internal communications as services come together, including

getting consistent use of the 'Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury working together in West Suffolk' brand, plus our own individual St Edmundsbury or Forest Heath branding, where appropriate.

- 2.2 This will help our external communications as well, as we need to ensure people are clear about what shared services means. There could be times when they deal with staff from a different council to the one they expect, for example, and clearly showing we work together across the whole of West Suffolk will help that understanding. You will probably have spotted the 'West Suffolk' branding on our new orange bin lorries.
- 2.3 There has been a tremendous amount of work in Haverhill to support communications for the opening of Haverhill House by HRH The Princess Royal. Similarly the communications team worked with partners on the announcement of £4 million in funding from our two Local Enterprise Partnerships for Haverhill Research Park.
- 2.4 There are also ongoing improvements to the St Edmundsbury website, especially to the search function to help make it easier for people to find the information they need. The team always welcomes suggestions for further improvements, so if you cannot find something on the website please email communications@stedsbc.gov.uk.
- 2.5 Social media is also becoming a greater part of the team's work. We have a St Edmundsbury Facebook page which is updated regularly and 1200 Twitter followers, many of them local businesses. These are additional, and increasingly useful, routes for communications to complement the traditional methods such as media releases.

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Haverhill Research Park

- (a) On 6 November 2012 I had the double pleasure of attending the ground breaking ceremony for Haverhill Research Park and meeting with Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
- (b) Firstly, it was a huge pleasure, and indeed relief (following the hard work by the Economic Development team), to see the development of the research park starting on site; not least because this initiative will result in around 2,000 new jobs from up to 450,000 sq ft of office/laboratory/technology and supporting accommodation for a wide spectrum of companies from start-ups to international companies. The site will also be home to 150 new homes, a family pub/restaurant and a crèche. Future proposals for the site could also include an innovation centre to support fledgling companies.
- (c) Secondly, the occasion provided the opportunity to talk directly to the Minister about some of the challenges we face and particularly those that prevent us from delivering more growth in our area. The Minister was very interested and, I believe, impressed by what we have already achieved along with our partners.

3.2 **Municipal Journal: Best of the Best District Councils**

The Municipal Journal (MJ) is a national publication with a wide readership. St Edmundsbury, along with colleagues from South Norfolk, Breckland and Ipswich District Councils, has been selected to provide material for an article entitled 'Best of the Best District Councils'. The article draws on our experience of working with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and will be published in the New Year.

3.3 **Business support**

- (a) Work is currently being undertaken to join up business support activity across the districts to bridge the gap left by the retraction of Business Link and to provide support that is not currently provided for by the market.
- (b) The borough council, in partnership with Menta and Job Centre Plus, delivered a successful business support programme whereby unemployed people were given an hour of free business advice. This session helped give the recipients the confidence to attend further advice sessions and courses delivered by Menta.

4. **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

4.1 **New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP)**

I continue to support the work of the New Anglia LEP in my role on the board representing the Suffolk District Councils. New Anglia continues to be seen as one of the more proactive and effective LEPs in the country. The New Anglia LEP conference was held at Wherstead Park on 22 October this year and Michael Fallon MP was the keynote speaker. The conference was themed around the opportunities for growth in our area and was well attended by a broad range of delegates. New Anglia is also progressing a number of other initiatives that include the Growing Places Fund (from which Haverhill Research Park was part funded); Rural Growth Networks; the Mid-sized Business Pathfinder; Skills Economy Project; the Sector Strategy Board; and the Green Pathfinder.

4.2 **West Suffolk Partnership (WSP)**

- (a) The WSP aims to stimulate an environment in which local organisations and individuals can work together to make the most effective use of their joint resources. In addition to the board-level and officer groups which have started meeting this year, the WSP had committed to create a Network to help inform its work. Via the Members' Bulletin you all received an invitation to the launch of the Network, which took place last week at Great Whelnetham Community Centre. It was the first opportunity for organisations and individuals which want to be part of the wider partnership to come together.
- (b) Following a brief introduction to the WSP there was a series of two minute pitches from some of the groups attending, where they outlined what they had to offer West Suffolk. There was then an opportunity to learn more at a "market-place", where organisations had stalls and more time to discuss their work. The format of the event was designed to

promote an understanding of the great variety of public, business, voluntary, community and third sector provision which already exists across West Suffolk. It was also a forum for groups to make connections, maximise the value of work already going on, identify opportunities for future collaboration and discuss the challenges facing West Suffolk.

5. PROPERTY, ASSET, FACILITY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Hamlet Croft

I reported last time that Bloor Homes had completed the purchase of the Hamlet Croft land. Work started on site at the end of November, which will mean that the new homes will be available in Haverhill town centre next year.

5.2 Vinefields Farm, Bury St Edmunds

Another housing development is under way in Bury St Edmunds, following the Council's grant of access rights to Hopkins Homes.

5.3 Victory Ground

The sale of the Victory Ground to a new community interest partnership is nearing completion. National grants have been obtained from a number of sporting bodies to assist in this exciting project. Work should start very soon to build a new sports hall and pavilion, which (amongst other local benefits) will keep this excellent sporting facility as a venue for regional events.

6. RURAL AFFAIRS

6.1 A Rural Initiatives Grant of £1,000 has been awarded to Horringer Hedgehogs, the Baby and Toddler Group for Horringer and surrounding villages. This is just one example of the many grateful letters that our rural Economic Development Officer receives: "We would like to thank SEBC for supporting us this year. Our birthday parties and happy hands classes have now begun and have been a hit! It's been lots of fun planning and now everything has been completed we are looking forward to a busy 2013! Thank you so much, without your grant we couldn't have made this possible, the new equipment is fantastic and we have had lots of positive feedback from the community and group users."

6.2 Furthermore, a grant of £1,176.77 has been awarded to the Great Barton Bowls Club for a new bowling mat; a grant of £580 has been awarded to the Troston Village Hall Management Committee; and a grant of £400 has been awarded to the Bardwell Baby and Toddler group towards new equipment, a storage trolley and an access gate.

6.3 I am pleased to report that the Parish Conference, that took place on Thursday 22 November 2012 at Great Whelnetham Community Centre, was a success. David Ruffley MP was our guest speaker, and he outlined various Government initiatives that were available to our rural communities. There were also presentations on the new officer structure and shared delivery with Forest Heath, and the changes to Local Government finances. These were followed by workshops on how parishes can make the most of the 2011 Census information and how villages can create and sustain local food opportunities.

- 6.4 Funded from the Rural Action Plan, Community Emergency Kits for villages have been ordered and the first ones will be distributed towards the end of the year. These kits contain items such as two-way radios, lanterns, first aid kits, wind-up torches, radios and phone chargers. To be eligible for a bag the community must have completed an emergency plan for their area, which identify local risks such as flooding and provide details of how the community would work together and support one another during an incident. They also identify local resources, for example access to tractors or chainsaws that could be used during an incident, or to support the emergency services.
- 6.5 Seven villages have now benefitted from the Rural Action Plan's Projector and Screen Grant, which gives a grant of up to £250 towards equipment to be used to make village halls more attractive to hirers. Applications from several other villages are also in the pipeline.

7. VISION 2031

- 7.1 Having a long term vision for the development and service provision across the borough remains a high priority for the borough council. To this end, I am pleased to report that the programme for the preparation of the revised draft Vision 2031 documents remains on course for bringing before the Council in the new year, prior to further public consultation in April and May.

Joint Leadership Team

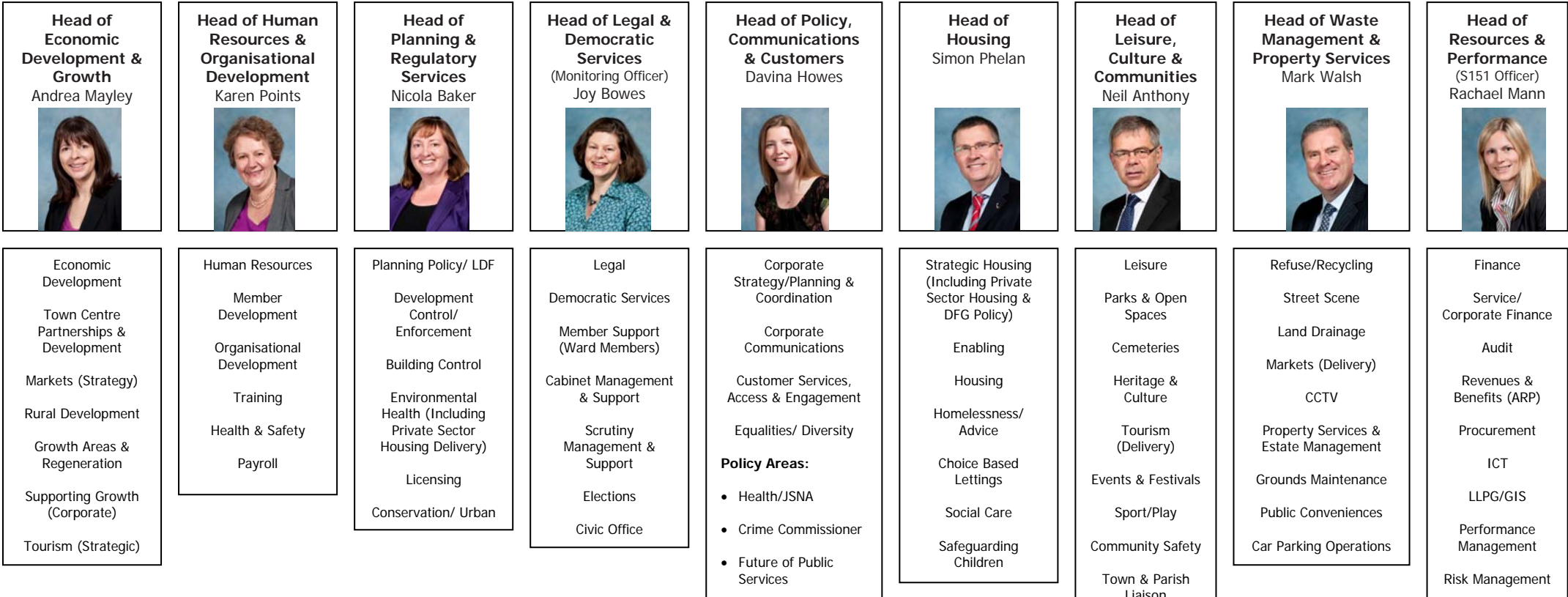
**Joint Chief Executive of
Forest Heath District Council &
St Edmundsbury Borough Council**
Ian Gallin



Director
Liz Watts



Director
Alex Wilson



Notes

1. Emergency Planning response will be a requirement of all Directors & HOS on a rota basis.
2. Service areas, which sit beneath HOS posts are illustrative and describe the groupings of services that will sit together and is not an exhaustive list.