



## Council 18 December 2012

### CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

#### ***Report by Cllr Sara Mildmay-White Deputy Leader of the Council and Culture and Sport Portfolio***

**Portfolio includes:**

- Arts and Cultural Development;
- Cemeteries;
- Festivals and Events;
- Health and Wellbeing;
- Heritage Services;
- Parks and Open Spaces;
- Public Halls; and
- Sport and Olympics.

#### **1. Health and Wellbeing**

- 1.1 On 28 September 2012 the Head of Leisure joined over 150 delegates from across the county in attending a stakeholder event run by Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board. The event was an opportunity for partners from public services, businesses and the voluntary and community sector to come together to discuss a first draft of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk. There was a wide-ranging discussion around the four themes of the strategy which are Ageing Well, Young People, Wellbeing and Mental Health. The Borough and District Councils gave a presentation illustrating the contribution which we, and those we fund make to wider community wellbeing.
- 1.2 A revised version of the draft strategy, taking on board comments made at the event, was circulated with the Members' Bulletin last month. I was pleased that the comments made in September resulted in a greater emphasis on prevention of ill health and encouraging healthy lifestyles. The Health and Wellbeing Board has received a final draft of the strategy for debate on 14 December 2012. The Strategy will then go through the individual decision-making processes for all Board members so will be debated by Cabinet early next year. It will become operational on 1 April 2013 when the Board, which has been meeting in shadow form, formally takes on its statutory role.

## **2. Heritage Services – West Stow and Moyse's Hall**

- 2.1 There were several well attended candlelit ghost tours held at Moyse's Hall Museum on evenings leading up to Halloween. Moyse's, being the oldest domestic building in Bury St Edmunds, has witnessed riots, great fires, murder and has been a prison and a tavern at different times in its history, so lends itself well to these ghostly extravagances.
- 2.2 Owing to the success of the single weekend Dr Who event last year a decision was taken to extend it to a full week this year, during the October half term break. The event this year attracted over 2,000 visitors from a very different and much younger audience than usual. The event also helped promote the new Day Ticket option as well as return visitors using their Heritage Ticket.
- 2.3 20 November is the Feast day of Saint Edmund and to celebrate this year's anniversary Moyse's Hall hosted an evening lecture examining the life, death and Sainthood of the 9th century King of Anglia and the miraculous events which meant the town became a centre of pilgrimage. A second opportunity to attend the lecture was made available the following afternoon. This same two option approach is being used for the December Mr James lectures which are already sold out.
- 2.4 Moyse's Hall was in use the evening of the Christmas lights switch on in November and also helped serve as a covered venue during the Christmas Fayre.
- 2.5 The car park at West Stow has been resurfaced and enlarged; this work was finished by the first week in October. A new sign at the entrance explains all the attractions available for visitors.
- 2.6 The Yule fest event was held at West Stow this year over two admission free weekends in November. The heritage gift shop was full of unusual Christmas gifts and the museum contained a multitude of interesting craft stalls. Anglo-Saxon re-enactors helped explain the Village in the decorated Hall. Other entertainment was provided in the form of live music from West Suffolk College students, a hurdy gurdy player and the Lowestoft Signing Choir.

## **3. Parks**

- 3.1 In the last quarter of 2012 the Borough's parks and open spaces played host to twenty one separate entertainment based events. Hardwick Heath and Haverhill Recreation ground each played host to a travelling circus.
- 3.2 The Halloween trail in East Town Park proved very popular again this year attracting around 4,500 attendees. Here in Bury St Edmunds the Round Table's fireworks display in the Abbey Gardens attracted an estimated 6,500 attendees.
- 3.3 The Abbey Gardens Friends have been busy; a new tree walk leaflet for the gardens has been created. The Friends have also received a generous donation of £20,000 towards a thorough clean up and replant of the sensory garden. Plans are also being drawn together to improve the appearance of the water garden and the shelters located at either end of the facility.

- 3.4 The ground works on the new Jubilee Park (Former Clements School site) in Haverhill are nearing completion; the new playground facility will be installed in February/March 2013 once a grass sward has been established on site. This new open space in the centre of Haverhill will also provide room for a new allotment site which will reduce the waiting list in Haverhill by around 30 people (this equates to about half the waiting list).
- 3.5 The Parks Service has worked alongside the Haverhill in Bloom team to secure funding from both the One Haverhill organisation and Haverhill Town Council for improvements to St Mary's Church Yard. The proposed improvements will include providing some historical interpretation of the area which will be mounted in bricked-up window voids surrounding the boundary of the church yard, the repair of damaged memorials and some soft landscaping works.
- 3.6 The Parks Service has also worked with planning officers on the production of a Supplementary Planning Document for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Facilities. This document will, once adopted, provide developers with clear guidance as to the level of contributions the Council would be seeking for Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Facilities on a per property basis.
- 3.7 The Borough's Arboriculture Officer has been busy with public enquiries about the Ash Die Back disease (*Chalara fraxinea*). To-date there has not been any evidence of the disease identified to any trees standing on public owned land in the Borough.

#### **4. Arts and Cultural Development**

##### **4.1 Apex Review**

- 4.1.1 I would like to thank the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for an excellent piece of scrutiny on 5 December, which is summarised in more detail in Cllr Nettleton's report. The detailed and frank discussion with representatives of the Theatre Royal and its funders was particularly helpful in understanding the options for future collaboration between the Apex and the Theatre. It also highlighted the due diligence issues Councillors will need to consider in assessing any future proposal received from the Theatre in the New Year. Very few people would dispute the benefits of some form of partnership between the two venues, but Cabinet has taken on board the very sensible issues that the Committee has raised. If the Theatre invites us to join any kind of partnership, we will ensure that enough time is allowed in any decision-making timetable for further detailed examination by Councillors.
- 4.1.2 It was also good to see a detailed internal and external evaluation of the Apex's performance in its first two years. I hope all Members have had a chance to read the report. There is still some way to go with the project, and obviously reducing the level of subsidy remains a priority, but the overall trends in audience numbers and income generation are very promising, even after such a short time. Sodexo Prestige have also now started work in the building as our commercial partner for catering and hospitality. As either a concert hall or a hall-for-hire, the Apex has quickly established itself as a significant regional venue, and is a considerable asset for the local community and economy.