



Council 18 June 2013

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Alaric Pugh Economic Growth Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Economic Development
- Town Centre Management
- Markets (Strategy)
- Tourism (Strategy)
- Car Parking (Strategy)
- Transport

1. *Economic Development*

- 1.1 A new Suffolk wide contract has been signed with Visit East Anglia (VEA) to carry out marketing, promotion, brand management, research and intelligence and business engagement across Suffolk on behalf of all the Suffolk authorities and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. The contract will run until March 2015 and is worth in excess of £300k.
- 1.2 VEA have been carrying out this function previously and have proven successful with high profile campaigns such as "Curious County".
- 1.3 Unfortunately the bid for some of the Government's Local Pinch Point fund for the Eastern Relief Road and improvements to Junction 45 of the A14 was unsuccessful. The funding is required to unlock the 68 hectares of employment land at Suffolk Business Park. Whilst this is disappointing news, there are other options being considered that would see the early delivery of this development.
- 1.4 Work is continuing with partners to complete the Implementation Plan for the Suffolk Growth Strategy. The Suffolk Growth Strategy was launched at the Apex in February 2013 and sets out our ambitions for growth for the next three years. The Implementation Plan will have four key strands that include growth locations; skills; infrastructure; and enterprise and innovation.
- 1.5 Market Stalls: A new initiative is being launched on Bury St Edmunds Market which will enable fledgling businesses to try out their products and business ideas. The scheme is a pilot being tried first in Bury St Edmunds and is part of a growing package of measures to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

- 1.6 Business Festival 2013: This year's Business Festival will be 'Future Focussed', offering events at various locations throughout West Suffolk, including Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket as well as in Stowmarket. Here are some important dates for your diary: this year's Festival runs from Wednesday 11 to Friday 20 September 2013, opening with the Menta Trade Fair on 11 September. This event attracted more than 400 people last year and this year is even bigger with more business stands on display. It will again close with the very successful Bury Free Press Business Awards at which St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council are sponsoring the Lifetime Achievement Award for Services to Business in West Suffolk. Other events include 'The Future of Business in Suffolk' with guest speaker Stephen Aguilar-Millan, the Director of Research at the European Futures Observatory; the Fresh Festival; an International Trade Event; a workshop on intellectual property; workshops with West Suffolk College on subjects such as Project Management and Networking and Relationship Management; Speed Networking; two business breakfasts and a business visit.
- 1.7 For further details look at the Festival website which will be available from early to mid-June www.businessfestival.org or follow www.facebook.com/BusinessFestival/; Twitter - @businessfestbse or #BizFestBSE.

2. *Parking Services*

- 2.1 This period has been shaped by carrying out many of the key recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review into parking charges and strategy for the Borough's car parks.
- 2.2 The new recommended charges were put in place from 8 April 2013 and involved the parking team in some quite radical changes to the management of our car parks. These involved, amongst general price changes, the introduction of new weekly season tickets at key long stay sites, free parking on Wednesday mornings in the Lower Baxter Street car park and the introduction of night charges to several sites. For the first time weekly tickets can now be bought at the pay machine with a debit or credit card, giving our customers the opportunity to benefit from discounted parking without laying out a lot of money in advance payments, an initiative that has been enthusiastically taken up.
- 2.3 Another Overview and Scrutiny recommendation was turning the popular low emissions offer at School Yard East car park from long stay to short stay. Early indications are that this has resulted in an over 20% increase in use of the site whilst low emission users wishing to stay all day are now offered special low weekly ticket prices at the nearby St Andrews long stay car park.
- 2.4 The other major change during this period has been the introduction of the 'Free from 3' initiative on Tuesdays in Bury St Edmunds and Fridays in Haverhill. The promotion of this new offer was helped greatly by the distribution of a customer flyer to visitors in the weeks leading up to the start of the offer, a great chance for the front line team to engage with their customers on a very positive initiative. We also arranged for attendants to be on hand during the first few weeks, to help raise awareness with customers and even arranged for the pay machine coin slots to lock so that no-one could inadvertently make a payment.