



St Edmundsbury  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# E136

## Council 30 September 2013

### CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

#### ***Report by Cllr Sarah Stamp Heritage, Arts and Culture Portfolio***

**Portfolio includes:**

- Arts and Culture
- Festivals and Events
- Heritage Services
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Public Halls
- Tourism (Destinations and Events)

#### **1. *Parks and Open Spaces***

- 1.1 Since my last Portfolio Holder's report in June 2013, there have been thirty two externally organised events held in the Borough's parks and open spaces including the Abbeyfest music concerts, open air theatre at East Town Park and 'It's a Knockout' at Hardwick Heath.

I was delighted to hear that the summer season of outdoor park events organised by Haverhill Town Council in the Borough's Parks sites in Haverhill attracted more than 12,500 people.

The weekly Parkruns at Nowton Park are being well attended with over 90 runners completing the 5km course each Saturday morning.

- 1.2 I am pleased to announce that Abbey Gardens, East Town Park, Nowton Park and West Stow Country Park all retained their Green Flag accreditation this year. The teams of volunteers as well as the staff involved in the maintenance and management of the sites are to be congratulated on their continued success.
- 1.3 The Jubilee Park in Haverhill has now been formally recognised as a Queen Elizabeth II Field site; this will add protection to its status of being a Public Open Space and it will also enable officers to apply for funding to assist in the new play area on site.

- 1.4 The Parks Service has, over much of the summer period, been busy dealing with a spate of traveller encampments on green spaces in the Bury St Edmunds area, the most recent being HolyWater Meadows. These encampments have meant that quite a lot of officer time has had to be directed to liaising with concerned residents and following the necessary procedures to ensure that court orders for eviction could be obtained. The St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Waste Management team have responded quickly to address the mess which has been left after each encampment.

To try and deter repeat encampments on vulnerable sites, the Cabinet has expressed support for the introduction of pre-emptive injunctions on certain sites and more details on this move will be made known in the coming weeks.

## **2. *Bury In Bloom***

- 2.1 I would like to congratulate everybody involved with this year's Bury in Bloom. Once again Bury St Edmunds is the proud recipient of the GOLD award from Anglia in Bloom. The reason we are so successful each year, is because the judges are always so impressed with the community's floral displays, alongside our fantastic Parks Department, under the watchful eye of Damien Parker. Damien and his team have done Bury St Edmunds proud, but we must not forget all the others that contribute the street cleaners and waste management and all of those on the committee.
- 2.2 The Abbey Gardens looked particularly stunning this year, as did the whole town, and yet again our partners Bid4Bury, through their contribution, made it possible to have floral displays across the whole of the town centre by paying for the increase in hanging baskets.

## **3. *Heritage Services***

- 3.1 We have a first round pass for the Heritage Service bid for Heritage Lottery 'Skills for the Future' funding with partners in Suffolk Archaeology and the Suffolk Record Office. This will develop skills for trainees to work on heritage collections cataloguing. Another Lottery Bid has been submitted with partners across the region for a series of 1970's exhibitions which would feature the early work in 1973 by the Cambridge students at West Stow Anglo Saxon Village and at Moyses Hall Museum, a 70's Star Wars and Sci-Fi event.
- 3.2 Finds from the Suffolk Archaeological Services excavation in Peckham Street, near Tayfen Road were on display at Moyses Hall for most of the summer and attracted a good number of visitors.
- 3.3 Also at Moyses Hall, the series of 'Pot Luck' activities has been developed from Victorian, then to Medieval and then to Second World War. Each topic involves the participation of up to twenty local businesses which have ranged in type from 'Game' to 'Frankie and Bennys'. This successful formula is planned to continue with more topics.

- 3.4 The summer holidays of 2013 saw the return of 'Activity Thursdays' at West Stow with archery, spear throwing, pot making, wood working, mini digs and more. Some of the dates have also linked up with visits from the Warren Hill Raptor Project which involves young offenders. At Moyse's Hall, 'Drop-in Wednesdays' have provided summer activities. Heritage Ticket owners can take advantage of both as well as free parking at Nowton Park.
- 3.5 In July, a new project for the under-fives began at West Stow called 'Little Steps in history'. A special ticket allows access to an interactive area where all kinds of exploration activities have been set up in one of the reconstructed buildings to stimulate young minds and provide a social opportunity for their parents.
- 3.6 In August, the 'West Stow 40 Years' event attracted great publicity in the papers, on BBC Radio Suffolk and Anglia TV. It celebrated the group of Cambridge students that first started off the West Stow reconstructions and brought them back together for some of them, for the first time in 40 years. The coverage also highlighted the St Edmundsbury Borough Council's commitment to this project to date.
- 3.7 Paintings from the collections have been loaned to The Sainsbury Centre at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. They are the Mary Beale "Self-Portrait" and the Sybil Andrews "Day's End" linocut. The Tissot painting "Sydney Milner-Gibson" is now on display at Moyse's Hall Museum.
- 3.8 Haverhill Local History Group is a volunteer organisation. They provide a very small but fully Accredited Museum for Haverhill in the Arts Centre. We continue to try to support the group as they do a fantastic job of gathering and promoting the history of Haverhill and district, mainly in the form of documents and photos which they present as exhibitions in the Haverhill Arts Centre. The most recent exhibition - called 'Hail Haverhill Hail', which is the first line from an old poem about the town - was unusual as it was externally funded (from SHARE Museums East) and showed some of the objects from their collections over the August Bank Holiday weekend. Their first meeting of the 2013/2014 season is in Haverhill's Arts Centre Studio on Wednesday 25 September 2013 - when Frances Harper will be speaking on The Story of Silk from China to East Anglia.

#### **4. *Tourism (Destinations and Events)***

- 4.1 We are working with RAF Lakenheath and taking part in their 'Welcome to Britain' meetings. These are held monthly and consist of a talk by the tourism officer and a visit and tour of Bury. We have been working with local businesses and now have a list of shops, businesses and restaurants which give discounts to military personnel.
- 4.2 At the time of writing, the Heritage Open Days programme for West Suffolk is now available and takes place between 13 and 16 September 2013. There are over 35 different places, tours and talks happening during this period all of which are free of charge.

- 4.3 Both main events during the summer went very well and had good weather. Armed Forces and Love Your Local Market Day generated 30% more footfall in Abbeygate Street than the previous and subsequent Saturdays.
- 4.4 The St Edmunds Community Fete which was funded by Bury St Edmunds Town Council and organised by the tourism team was a great success with over 2,000 people enjoying the activities in the Abbey Gardens. The event received good publicity in the local media both before and after the event.
- 4.5 Events still to come this summer include the Street Food Festival on 28 September 2013 which will take place within the regular Saturday street market in Bury St Edmunds. This will have approximately 15 street food vendors, street art and street music. Continuing with the food theme there will be a Farmers' market on Angel Hill on Sunday 13 October 2013. This will be part of the Cathedral's annual Harvest Festival celebrations.
- 4.6 Hits to the 'Visit Bury' website continue to increase. June 2013 figures increased by 25% and July's by 30%. The Facebook page now has over 500 followers.
- 4.7 Journalists are continuing to visit and have included a representative from Group Travel Magazine and Country Living. It is hoped that there will be features regarding the Christmas Fayre and Christmas shopping in the October/November 2013 issues.
- 4.8 The Tourist Information Centre is working with The Newmarket Experience to provide ticketing, information and bookings of their tours. The Summer Strolls programme which was a selection of walks in Bury St Edmunds and Clare and included either afternoon tea or refreshments proved to be very popular with several tours selling out. Work has already started on the autumn 2013 programme.
- 4.9 I was pleased to recently attend a meeting of the Bury St Edmunds tourism forum and learn about their work. It is good to see so many venues and attractions in the town working in partnership to promote Bury St Edmunds.

## **5. Public Halls**

- 5.1 I am delighted to have taken over as Chairman of The Apex Performance Panel, with the continued support of my predecessor, Councillor Mrs Sara Mildmay-White. The Panel has now met five times and has closely scrutinised issues such as finance, programming, marketing and our continued partnership with Sodexo Prestige.
- 5.2 The tables and chairs have arrived in Charter Square provided by our catering partner Sodexo Prestige and it is pleasing to see that the general public are making full use of them. Together with the new planters stocked by our Parks team, they really add colour and vitality to the building's façade, encouraging people to visit and making the building look more inviting.
- 5.3 I am pleased to report that as part of our drive to become more commercial, we have secured a partnership with the Best Western Priory hotel who will be sponsoring blues and jazz events at The Apex. We hope this will be the first of many such collaborations.