



Council 17 December 2013

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Alaric Pugh Economic Growth Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Economic Development and related Planning matters
- Town Centre Management (Strategy)
- Markets (Strategy)
- Tourism (Strategy)
- Car Parking (Strategy)
- Transport (Strategy)

1. Economic Development and Growth

1.1 Six Point Plan for jobs and growth

1.1.1 The Economic Development and Growth team is currently developing an action plan, which will be entitled 'West Suffolk six point plan for jobs and growth'. This will set out, in six points, what the West Suffolk councils will do to meet our priority of economic growth. This plan will also enable us to be prepared to capitalise on any opportunities that arise. The plan is closely aligned to, and derived from, the strategic growth plans of our principal partners, including Suffolk County Council's 'Suffolk Growth Strategy' and the growth plans produced by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership.

1.1.2 To meet the needs of our different customers, the plan will eventually be communicated in two different ways. The first will be a pocket sized hand out for businesses and investors; and the second will be a more detailed document explaining how and why we will focus on each of the six points.

1.2 Business support and innovation/incubation offer

1.2.1 We have recently sought quotations from interested parties to complete a research study into the business support offer in West Suffolk. The research will also seek to determine if there is a need for additional physical innovation/incubation space in West Suffolk and how St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath could look to develop our current 'offer'.

1.2.2 This piece of work will look to comprehensively understand both external and internal influences upon the economic development landscape in West Suffolk. In concluding how we tailor our 'offer', the research will examine our proximity to Cambridge; the existing sectors in which we have a competitive advantage; the sectors we should target (if any); the role that the councils should play in being either a direct provider or a facilitator of provision and the nature that this facilitation should take; and the future direction of travel of Further and Higher Education institutions, amongst other important considerations.

1.2.3 I expect this piece of work to be completed by the end of April 2014 and I will keep you informed as to how this shapes the economic development landscape in West Suffolk.

1.3 Eastern Enterprise Hub

1.3.1 I recently met with Simon Mead, Chief Executive of the Eastern Enterprise Hub, based in Ipswich. The hub works with people across the East of England, from all walks of life, who have a good idea for a business. The aim of the hub is to help people develop key business skills and the confidence to turn their idea into a successful business. Under Mr Mead's guidance, the hub is running a number of programmes and we are considering how we may engage with Mr Mead and his team.

1.4 Enterprise Week

1.4.1 I attended the launch event for Enterprise Week at West Suffolk College from week commencing 18 November. There was an exhibition in the Gateway building all week, including stands from MENTA, Barclays Bank and Foundation East, as well as a showcase of student successes, exhibitions and enterprise activities – including two Enterprise competitions, Asian food selling enterprises linked with the festival of Diwali, an afternoon Mad Hatter's Tea Party, a pop-up restaurant, 'street food' stalls and a pop-up beauty salon.

1.4.2 The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Business to Business Mentoring scheme for the west of the county was also launched during the Enterprise week.

1.5 Haverhill Masterplan

1.5.1 Together with officers from the Economic Development and Growth team I attended a workshop to discuss the forthcoming Haverhill Masterplan, in my new capacity as Board Member of ONE Haverhill. The workshop was very productive, with attendees focussing on what we considered the good, the bad and the ugly during a tour of the town centre. Particular emphasis was given to how we seek to deliver economic growth in Haverhill.

1.6 Promotion of West Suffolk as a tourist destination

1.6.1 Officers have been working with Visit Suffolk and Visit Cambridge to ensure that West Suffolk is promoted as a prime tourism destination for visitors. Information will shortly be available in 2014 guides and accompanying websites.

1.7 Transport and Infrastructure

1.7.1 I regularly attend a meeting with the Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Roads and Transport and SCC officers to discuss possible improvements to

road and rail infrastructure and bus information in the west of Suffolk. At the last meeting we agreed a way forward to help promote the key road schemes in West Suffolk including the A14 corridor; the A1307 and work with Cambridgeshire County Council; and the A11 corridor. SCC explained the key role it has in the preparation of the New Anglia LEPs Strategic Economic Plan and how this would then hopefully lead to additional funding for our key schemes (including rail).

2. Parking Services

- 2.1 I am pleased to report that the uptake of our pay-by-phone provider, RingGo, has continued to grow, with October reaching the highest levels to date which included 266 new users. This upward growth trend may well have been boosted by the promotional banners installed at The Cattle market/arc car park and certainly demonstrates how this convenient way of paying has been met with great enthusiasm by our visitors.
- 2.2 Overall demand during this quarter has been very consistent with the same period last year, with September in particular showing growth against last year.
- 2.3 This period has also seen continuing popularity of our long stay weekly ticket offer, which gives substantial discounts against the daily charge. We are now selling around 1700 tickets each week.
- 2.4 A tender for the winter gritting service for all borough car parks was recently undertaken and a new supplier identified – based on previous costs this new contract indicates a saving of over £8000 over the life of the contract.
- 2.5 In the run up to Christmas, we are providing parking information and live updates about car park space availability through social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook; a first for our service
- 2.6 A great deal of planning has been going on during this period for the seasonal Christmas Park and Ride operation to support visitors coming to the Christmas Fayre. This will be our first year at the Claas site which will have capacity for nearly 1000 vehicles.
- 2.7 This Christmas also sees the first year we have offered Free from 3 on Thursday afternoons, starting from the Christmas Lights Turn On to match the year round Tuesday offer. In Haverhill we are offering two free Saturdays before Christmas. The Free from 3 offer applies in Haverhill on Fridays and will be complemented by free parking on Saturdays 14 and 21 December 2013. In addition there is no charge for parking in Haverhill on Sundays, making both weekends free as follows:
 - from 3pm on Friday 13 December 2013 to 8am on Monday 16 December 2013;
 - from 3pm Friday 20 December 2013 to 8am on Monday 23 December 2013.

