



Council 17 December 2013

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Terry Clements Planning and Regulation Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Planning (Development Control)
- Planning Policy
- Building Control
- Vision 2031
- Environmental Health (excluding Environmental Management)
- Licensing

1. *Planning Policy and Vision 2031*

- 1.1 In accordance with the Members resolution on 30 September 2013, the Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Rural Vision 2031 documents were submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2013 and a Planning Inspector has been appointed to carry out the examination of the documents. The Inspector, Mr Roger Clews, has commenced examining the documents and the Hearing is set to commence on 28 January 2013. The Hearings are to be held in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. The draft programme for the Hearing and matters to be discussed are available on the Council's website. Members should be aware that this is subject to change. Given that the Hearings are taking place sooner than had been anticipated, planning policy officers will be focusing on meeting the deadlines of the examination process over the next few weeks. I will ensure that information on the examination is kept up-to-date on the website and in the weekly Members Bulletin.
- 1.2 Consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement for West Suffolk concluded recently and officers are now analysing comments with a view to bringing the document to Council at the earliest opportunity for its adoption.

2. *Major Development*

- 2.1 As I've reported previously, a number of masterplans are currently being prepared by developers for major sites across the borough including the six strategic sites around Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill identified in the adopted Core Strategy and Vision 2031 documents. Elsewhere at this meeting of the Council, Members are being recommended to adopt a masterplan for the

development at North-West Bury St Edmunds and it is likely that masterplans for Moreton Hall and for North-East Bury St Edmunds, which have been the subject of recent consultation by the developers, will be considered for adoption early in the new year. The masterplans provide a positive but not unnecessarily detailed framework by which more detailed planning applications can be considered.

3. Development Management

- 3.1 Work continues in Development Management to bring the two teams together as a shared service. On 3 December 2013, a joint Member event was held to raise awareness of the new framework for the Planning Shared Service. This was agreed by both Development Control Committees and Councils in September 2013, following on from joint Member workshops held last year.
- 3.2 The main changes are as follows:
- introduction of a Delegation Panel where the Chairman and Vice Chairmen of Development Control Committee decide which applications require referral to committee
 - a new way of organising committee site visits in a more proactive way in advance of the relevant committee
 - new agenda format
 - amended procedures for public speaking and late papers.
- 3.3 All of these changes will be introduced for the January 2014 Development Control Committee. The changes will result in processes being aligned between the two authorities and a more efficient approach to committee procedures which should also have cost and time savings and be more customer focused.
- 3.4 There has been a noticeable increase in workload for Development Management, not surprisingly fee income has risen significantly but performance has suffered somewhat as a result of the increased demands on the service and the not insignificant changes in staffing over the last year. Work is also underway to address the workload increase with additional resources and progress continues towards aligning the processes across the two authorities and establishing the two area Development Management teams envisaged by the Shared Services Business case.

4. Regulatory Services

- 4.1 **Fuel poverty:** The link between fuel poverty, cold homes and winter deaths is well recognised in the UK. An estimated 31,100 winter deaths occurred in 2012/13 over and above what would normally be expected, a 29% increase on the previous winter. On average in Suffolk there are 400 "excess" winter deaths annually. The most vulnerable are those over the age of 75 years, living alone and those suffering from chronic illnesses.
- 4.2 In response to the national Cold Weather Plan which aims to alleviate the impact on health of cold weather, with our partners in Suffolk we have launched this year's county-wide programme, Warm Homes Healthy People. The programme has been running since Winter 2011 and offers a range of services to vulnerable households in Suffolk which include home-based energy advice, emergency heating repairs, temporary heater loans, basic energy measures

such as draught-proofing, and referral to other support such as debt advice and benefit checks. Through our partners, the programme is also able to offer emergency fuel payments to eligible vulnerable residents to keep their homes heated over the winter period.

- 4.3 Over the first two winters covered by the programme, 215 households in the Borough received in-home advice on how to keep their home warm and manage energy costs, while 128 homes received insulation to improve energy efficiency. Residents experiencing difficulties can call the Warm Homes local rate helpline, 08456 037 686 for advice and support where eligible.
- 4.4 In November 2013, the Suffolk Warm Homes Healthy People programme won a national Carbon Action Network award representing the East of England.

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