

## Full Council 25 February 2014

### 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 Children's Play**

1.1.1 Sketch designs and plans for the proposed new play area on the new Public Open Space at Moreton Hall were exhibited at the Abbots Green Community Primary School on Wednesday 5 February 2014. The event was attended by around 30 people, the majority of whom were supportive of the proposed playground design. The designs have also been placed on the Borough's web page where further comments can be made. Subject to there not being any significant changes to the proposed scheme, detailed plans and tender specifications will be drawn together in the coming weeks. The scheme is being funded via a section 106 agreement.

##### **1.2 Abbey Gardens**

1.2.1 The Abbey model located in the Abbey Gardens has been refurbished and now looks brand new.

1.2.2 The water garden refurbishment is progressing well. The scheme, which is being funded by a generous donor, involves the installation of a new boundary fence, new tree and shrub planting and new access points through the middle of the old shelters.

1.2.3 To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War the Parks and Landscape Team are intending to sow a wildflower mix containing a high proportion of red poppies on the southern bank of the river Lark. This work will necessitate the clearance of some trees and scrub but will benefit the area in the long term.

### **1.3 Nowton Park**

- 1.3.1 The Nowton Park Volunteers have completed the planting of a new orchard near to the walled garden that includes apple species that were traditionally associated with Suffolk.

## **2. Heritage, Arts and Culture**

- 2.1 As indicated in Councillor Everitt's report, one of the enquiries taken by a locality officer was from a community group wanting to put on a local community arts festival to run alongside the wider Bury St Edmunds Festival. The group had already established support from the community for such a festival and were looking for some support in terms of sources of funding. This is a wonderful example of a community working to provide accessible local opportunities to experience the arts and bringing local people together in their village. They are looking to run a few test events this year and to stage the festival in May 2015.

## **3. Public Halls**

- 3.1 With the new team now in place, progress is being made in all areas. Priority has been placed on driving revenue through the Apex box office in order to meet our target for reducing the 2014/2015 budget. As of the first week in February, the programme of events for 2013/2014 broke even, meaning that any further ticket income will take us into surplus for the year – a milestone which I know we have all been keen to reach.
- 3.2 Sodexo, our catering partner, is now showing steady progress and has recently launched a pre-show dinner package, thus achieving our vision of creating an entire night's entertainment at the Apex (dinner and concert/show). Uptake has been encouraging so far.
- 3.3 As part of the drive to be more commercial with our leisure and arts venues across the whole of West Suffolk, the tools used in promoting The Apex are being rolled out to the greater benefit other venues in the Borough. This will allow us to sell events across the region, and to cross sell between our own venues (such as the museums and parks).