



Council 23 September 2014

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 and Growth

1.1 West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

- 1.1.1 The group has met twice since the last Council meeting. At its June meeting I was pleased to be re-elected as the Chair. The group received four updates on the production of the Inward Investment packs; the West Suffolk Housing Strategy; the Six Point Plan and the West Suffolk Innovation and Incubation Support Study. At the September meeting the group received a Markets update; an item on Planning Policy and growth in West Suffolk; a discussion regarding the Development Management Policy 28 (Housing in the Countryside); and a presentation on the forthcoming Business Festival.

1.2 Business Engagement

- 1.2.1 The programme of leafleting individual businesses around West Suffolk with information on the availability of grant funds and other business support initiatives is continuing as it provides an on-going opportunity for direct contact with local businesses.
- 1.2.2 The West Suffolk Business Forum continues to meet (last meeting 15 July 2014) and provides an opportunity for engagement with the main Business Representative Groups in West Suffolk, such as the Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Our Bury St Edmunds (previously Bid4Bury), the Newmarket Retailers Association. The New Anglia LEP and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP are also invited to attend this group.

- 1.2.3 Key business opportunities/requests for support requiring more urgent attention continue to be dealt with on a 1-2-1 basis, primarily by the Principal Growth Officers, as and when they arise. This continues to be a significant aspect of our engagement with local businesses.
- 1.2.4 The West Suffolk Small Business Grant scheme, recently approved by both Cabinets in West Suffolk, has now been made available to SEBC businesses. Even though it is early days MENTA are already supporting a number of potential applicants through the process which suggests that it will prove to be as popular as anticipated.
- 1.2.5 The New Anglia LEP is continuing to progress its plans for its Growth Hub. The Growth Hub Advisors have now been recruited, undertaken their induction training and have begun to meet with businesses throughout Suffolk. Officers from the ED&G team will continue to liaise with the LEP to ensure that this extra resource adds value to businesses in West Suffolk and integrates with the key objectives of the West Suffolk Six Point Plan for Jobs and Growth.
- 1.2.6 The council is supporting Our Bury St Edmunds, the Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District (BID), as they prepare for their re-ballot in November 2014. All eligible businesses will be given the opportunity to participate in the ballot to decide whether the BID is given a second term of five years.

1.3 Business Festival

- 1.3.1 This year's Business Festival takes place from 1-10 October 2014, with events being held throughout West Suffolk. The festival will once again open's with the Menta Trade Fair and will culminate with the Bury Free Press Business Awards, both of which are taking place at The Apex, Bury St Edmunds.
- 1.3.2 This year's comprehensive programme of events includes Business Funding Roadshows, sector events in Digital, Life Sciences and Energy, a business breakfast with the Bank of England and the Fresh Festival for young entrepreneurs.

1.4 Haverhill Masterplan

- 1.4.1 I continue to play a lead role in the development of the Haverhill Masterplan, in my role as Chair of the ONE Haverhill Masterplanning Core Group. This group, which includes representatives from Haverhill Town Council, Haverhill Chamber, Havebury Housing Partnership, St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Suffolk County Council, meets on a fortnightly basis, supported by officers.
- 1.4.2 A project plan has been put in place and has been reported to HAWP. Individual briefing and consultation with stakeholders has begun and will be followed by a large-scale community engagement process. A number of town centre environmental improvement projects related to the recording of local issues and suggestions aspect of the Masterplan will run alongside the legally-controlled development of the Masterplan document itself.

1.5 Strategic Tourism

- 1.5.1 Visit Suffolk's Autumn campaign, Take me to The Other Side, focuses on folklore, ghost stories, mysteries and Suffolk's quirkiest side. Visit Suffolk

continues to produce highly creative content and a partnership has been struck with Film Suffolk to deliver 20 short films on Suffolk's folklore, mysteries and ghost stories. A PR strategy is in place to support the new social campaign including a 'meet the media' day in London to meet with key national print and online titles when the campaign launches, linking in nicely with Halloween.

- 1.5.2 New photography has been commissioned and completed to produce a series of portraits around Suffolk's top experiences. The images tell the story behind the best experiences in Suffolk through the eyes of a local representative.
- 1.5.3 The website "VisitSuffolk.com" is developing and has generated £17k in its first year. James Beresford, CEO of VisitEngland, said 'it breaks the mould of tourism websites'. The site engages with half a million unique visitors per year, attracts 75% returning visitors and is ranked 3 on Google. To encourage further growth and to improve the Google ranking, a search engine optimisation strategy is being implemented and will be an on-going effort to ensure VisitSuffolk.com appears in key search terms.
- 1.5.4 Businesses are being offered the opportunity to have an automatic pin on the 'Take Me to Suffolk' planning tool and map. Prices have remained static for 2014 to offer added value and to encourage repeat and new sign-ups.

1.6 Market Development

- 1.6.1 The summer weather has helped to encourage stall numbers on both Bury and Haverhill markets. Several new stalls have started including a pop up barbers, Thai food, children's clothing and handmade popcorn. We have had two stalls from Bury market which are trialling Newmarket and the 'trade for a tenner' deal has proved very popular.
- 1.6.2 The annual NMTF conference was held in Stratford upon Avon where thanks to the hard work of the Bury St Edmunds NMTF members the town came second in the 'most pro-active' market award.
- 1.6.3 Events have been very important during the summer and have included a successful Motor Show in Haverhill, a children's fun day and food and drink festival in Newmarket and a cherry day in Bury St Edmunds.
- 1.6.4 Working with Ourburystedmunds Bury St Edmunds held its first Night Fayre on Friday 4 July 2014. Local businesses and regular Bury market traders were offered a free pitch for the event with over 45 stalls taking part.
- 1.6.5 Publicity for the Christmas Fayre is now available and an advertising campaign has started. We have over 90 coaches booked at present. We will be having the opening night parade and other entertainment on Thursday 27 November 2014 with the Fayre opening at 4pm that day and finishing at 5pm on Sunday 30 November 2014.
- 1.6.6 Communications continue with regular newsletters and liaison meetings with market representatives and operational staff.

2. *Parking Services*

- 2.1 Some changes have recently taken place at smaller non-charged car parks outside the town centre in Bury St Edmunds. New signs at the car park off Vinery Road have been put up restricting parking to 3 hours. This is to aid the freeing-up of car parking spaces for visitors to the local businesses at Stamford Court. At the Heldaw Road car park at Moreton Hall we have installed lighting in readiness for winter to improve the user experience and safety.
- 2.2 The growing popularity of our weekly tickets for long stay car parks in Bury St Edmunds has prompted us to upgrade more payment machines to enable them to dispense weekly tickets to our customers. Two machines at levels 6 and 7 of the multi-storey car park and a further two machines at Ram Meadow have been upgraded in response to customer feedback about queuing at peak periods.
- 2.3 Demand at the Borough's car parks has increased significantly over the summer. The month of July saw an increase in car parking events of 6.3% in Bury St Edmunds compared to the same month in 2013. Haverhill also saw a spike in car parking demand for the month of July increasing 6.1% over the same period last year.

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