



Council 23 September 2014

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr Sarah Stamp Leisure, Culture and Heritage Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

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

1. Parks and Open Spaces

1.1 The Abbey Gardens, East Town Park, Nowton Park and West Stow have again retained their Green Flag status following the judge's visits and mystery shopper evaluations. Despite the less than perfect weather over the schools summer holiday period, the borough's parks have remained popular destinations to visit.

1.2 Since my last report in June, there have been 25 organised events in our parks. These have included outdoor theatre at both East Town Park and Abbey Gardens, a Circus and 'It's a knock out' at Hardwick Heath and the Summer Bash and Football Jam at Haverhill Recreation Ground. All events are advertised on West Suffolk Diary. There is also a link from the Council website, www.westsuffolkdiary.co.uk

1.3 Projects

- Abbey Gardens Donations Box – A voluntary donations box has been installed into the Abbey Gardens to help raise funds for the site.
- No Mans Meadows – Re-introduction of grazing on site. In order to better maintain the riverside meadow the Council's Parks Service have entered into an agreement with a local farmer to graze sheep on site. Whilst stock fencing has been installed around the site there is still good access for dog walkers who frequent the area. This initiative will save money (as the Council will no longer have to cut the grass in the area) and increase the bio-diversity of the area.
- Play areas - Three borough owned play areas - Haverhill Recreation Ground (Haverhill), Aeroplane Park (Haverhill) and Horringer Court Play Area (Bury St Edmunds) are being refurbished this year. In addition to these

refurbishments Taylor Wimpey (housing developers) have recently installed a MUGA on the new public open space on the Moreton Hall estate and a new children's play area will, prior to March 2015, also be installed.

- Clare Castle Country Park - Clare Town Council has recently agreed the heads of terms for the transfer of the park from the County Council to a local Town Trust. Our Parks Service will continue to provide help and support to the new Trust and a service level agreement between the Trust and Borough Council is currently being prepared.

2. Heritage Services

- 2.1 Moyses Hall - On 4 July 2014 I attended the launch of the 1970's exhibition which had been funded via a successful HLF grant. The exhibition and associated outreach work had been successful and we have received a number of positive comments. The 70's exhibition will be replaced on the 25 October 2014 by a Time & Space: Sci-Fi exhibition to be launched by Dave Prowse, the original Darth Vader. Most of the props and exhibits for the Sci-Fi exhibition have been loaned or donated by local enthusiasts.
- 2.2 West Stow - On 19 September 2014 I attended the ground breaking event at the Anglo-Saxon Village to mark the start of the work to create the new sunken house on site. This new exhibit which is funded by the Trust will be built over the coming months to mark the 50th anniversary of original excavations on site by Dr Stanley West.
- 2.3 Museum Outreach Work - West Suffolk's Operations Manager (Heritage and Tourism), has recently met with representatives from the Guildhall Trust to discuss the possibility of the Trust borrowing items to exhibit in the Guildhall as part of their Heritage Lottery funded project.
- 2.4 Staff - Dr Keith Cunliffe left the Council's employment in August. Keith had been the Collections Manager for St Edmundsbury for just over 22 years. At the time of preparing this report the Council is seeking to recruit to the vacant position.

3. Tourism (Destinations & Events)

- 3.1 On 26 August 2014 the Apex hosted the first Tourist Information Point update session. There were 21 attendees representing the Town Council, Cathedral, Bury Town Guides and Newmarket National Horseracing Museum. The session, facilitated by West Suffolk's Operations Manager (Heritage and Tourism), included an introduction session, briefings on arrangements at the TIC in the Apex, West Suffolk Diary, Cathedral TIC, Bury Guides, Moyses's Hall and West Stow. There were open discussions on what was working well and areas that needed improving.
- 3.2 At the time of preparing this report a second session is being scheduled at West Stow and they will now continue on a quarterly basis for as long as participants find them useful.
- 3.3 As part of its drive to draw in additional income the Commercial Team have been working with various stakeholders on promoting new tourist tours around venues in West Suffolk. Officers are attending the **Group Leisure & Travel Trade Show** at the NEC later in September and will in partnership with certain other venue owners in the West Suffolk area be promoting the area to tour operators.

4. Public Halls

4.1 The Apex

- 4.1.1 Progress continues to be made commercially. Over the summer the use of The Apex, as a community facility has continued to flourish with the upstairs gallery area hosting various art exhibitions.
- 4.1.2 The Apex Gallery has diversified its programming in the last five months. After a fantastic Festival exhibition of two world renowned photographers, two community led exhibitions followed from the Bury Schools Partnership and Artheads, which offered a completely different dynamic to the space. As a result The Apex benefitted from good press coverage and support for both, encouraging a new audience to venture into the gallery space. The feedback has been extremely positive and the hope is to build on this success.
- 4.1.3 Upcoming exhibitions include works by Cambridge-based artist, Marcus Nisbet, Gainsborough's House Print Workshop, traditional local sign writer, Wayne Tanswell, as well as a retrospective exhibition of photos from 2014 Apex events and various others soon to be confirmed.
- 4.1.4 Interest in chess continues to grow in Bury St Edmunds and a recent outdoor chess event on Charter Square proved very popular.
- 4.1.5 The programme for The Apex for the coming months to Christmas is very full and there are only 7 days in October and November when there are no performances. For the first time since The Apex opened, events are taking place right up until 23 December 2014.
- 4.1.6 Hall hire by performance agents is also up compared with this time last year by £5000.

4.2 The Athenaeum

- 4.2.1 The venue has continued to perform well over the last four months, generating revenue of £56,487.
- 4.2.2 There is a great deal of loyalty attached to the Athenaeum and it is currently operating at 73% repeat business. The feedback from clients concerning the Athenaeum remains consistently positive.
- 4.2.3 A wedding promotion running from June onwards has generated a number of excellent leads. There has also been some good editorial to promote weddings which will continue to provide a large proportion of the revenue at the Athenaeum. It is clear that the market being targeted at the Athenaeum suits the venue

5. Sport

- 5.1 Cladding and new flumes project Haverhill Leisure Centre - Work on the replacement of the flumes and recladding of the Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre commenced at the beginning of September. The contractors are currently on schedule and the works are due to be completed in mid-January.
- 5.2 Summer 2014 holiday activities - The combined total attendance of the Bury and Haverhill School's Out holiday programme was 3,204. The attendance in

Haverhill has increased to 1,741 over the six weeks and Bury was 1,463. The programme in Bury was averaging 54 children a day and in Haverhill this figure was 66 a day and displayed very good levels of sustained participation in sport and physical activity across the six weeks.

- 5.3 Explore Outdoor – this provides outdoor education to youth projects, schools, adult groups and as part of the holiday activities. Activities include; Orienteering, Climbing Wall, Geocaching, Archery, Team Building Challenges, Bush Craft Skills, Fire Lighting, Camp Cooking, Shelter Building, Catapult Building and Leadership Activities. Since 1 May 2014, 165 sessions have been delivered including 30 climbing wall sessions, two team building days, 34 taster sessions, 9 weekend/birthday party sessions, 20 one-day activity sessions, and sessions of up to 270 school pupils at Howard Middle School plus 70 holiday camp sessions with 444 attendees. Included in this were two days at the Suffolk Show with 900 participants.

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