

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Annual Presentation by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth	
Report No:	OAS/FH/18/025	
Report to and date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	13 September 2018
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Lance Stanbury Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth Tel: 07970 947704 Email: lance.stanbury@forest-heath.gov.uk	
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Purpose of report:	<p>As part of the "Challenge" role, Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. It is part of the Scrutiny role to "challenge" in the form of questions.</p> <p>Therefore, to carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall attend to give an account of his or her portfolio and answer questions from the Committee.</p>	

Recommendation:		<p>Members of the Committee are asked to question the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth on his portfolio responsibilities, and having considered the information, the Committee may wish to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth for his consideration; 2) Request further information and / or receive a future update. 3) Take any other appropriate action as necessary. 	
Key Decision: <i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that do not apply.)</i>		<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i> Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
Consultation:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	
Alternative option(s):		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	
Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> •	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
None			
Wards affected:		All	
Background papers:		None	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As part of its "Challenge" role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members. To carry out this constitutional requirement, at every ordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting at least one Cabinet Member shall be invited to give an account of his or her portfolio and to answer questions from the Committee.

1.1.2 Last year, on 14 September 2017, Councillor Lance Stanbury, Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth attended this committee and presented a report which summarised the areas of responsibility covered under his portfolio.

1.2 Scrutiny Focus

1.2.1 The scope of this report differs from that of last year as the Cabinet Member has been asked to prepare a report which answers the following specific questions identified by the committee members as being relevant to the planning and growth portfolio:

- 1) **Building control:** How is Building Control working within other District Councils, and are the finances stacking up?
- 2) **Environmental health:** This is quite an emotive subject. How is this handled, if there is found to be issues that the Council needs to deal with? What is the procedure?
- 3) **Tourism (strategic):** Would like to see figures on this and what problems there are, if any. How can this be improved?
- 4) **Economic development:** Would like an update on where are we with economic development.
- 5) **Town centres:** Are there any town centres that have problems? If so, what are they and how are they being dealt with, and hopefully resolved.
- 6) **Town centres:** Town centres are going to have to be reinvented, where are we with this?
- 7) **Town centres:** What is happening to improve Mildenhall Town centre and Brandon Town centre, and their associated markets?
- 8) **Licensing:** What are the main issues being dealt with at the moment, and can they be resolved?
- 9) **Growth and regeneration:** Where is our dual electric train line to Cambridge so we can make Newmarket more like Ascot and increase employment in Forest Heath from commuting to Cambridge?

1.3 Response to Key Questions Set out in the Scrutiny Focus

1.3.1 Building control: How is Building Control working within other District Councils, and are the finances stacking up?

Building control continues to develop a collaborative working approach with neighbouring district councils. We have initiated and are leading on this joint working. It is clear there are significant benefits to be had from working as a Suffolk partnership. These include pooling resource for back office systems development and developing a joint marketing strategy. This work includes operating under the 'Cross Boundary Agreement' set up by Local Authority Building Control (LABC) which enables building control teams to provide the building control function in another district with their agreement. This has proved beneficial in retaining customers within the local authority sector who may want to work with a specific building control team on all jobs regardless of location. A TCA grant submission for pooled Suffolk money has been submitted with the aim to support us further develop the collaborative working approach between all Suffolk building control teams.

WS BC has achieved accreditation of the government expected ISO 9001 quality assurance system, providing assurance on the quality of our work. We are supporting the other LA's in Suffolk to achieve the same standards – for our collective benefit.

Comprehensive work has been carried out on achieving a sustainable building control budget and the team are currently set to meet their predicted income target.

In order to support the necessary resilience of the team, Cabinet agreed a new post (trainee BC surveyor) within the team.

1.3.2 Environmental health: This is quite an emotive subject. How is this handled if there is found to be issues that the Council needs to deal with? What is the procedure?

The Council Environmental Health Service is multi-disciplinary comprising environmental health, environment, licensing, customer service, licensing and regulatory support staff:

- Food hygiene and safety:
 - undertaking routine food hygiene inspections in over 1800 premises
 - food sampling
 - Infectious disease investigation and prevention.
- Occupational health, safety and wellbeing:
 - inspections of high risk workplaces
 - accident investigations including fatalities.
- Licensing:
 - alcohol and entertainment
 - hackney carriage and private hire
 - animal welfare
 - gambling

- sex establishments
- street trading and vending
- temporary events, charitable collections, lotteries.
- Climate change, energy efficiency and carbon reduction:
 - promoting domestic and business energy efficiency
 - renewable energy advice and support
 - managing the councils' environmental performance.
- Environmental protection:
 - regulating and advising on drinking water quality, contaminated land, industrial pollution prevention and control, and air quality.
- Fuel poverty
- Sustainability.

The service works within a suite of legal rules and policies. These are managed by staff who are trained and experienced to levels set by the relevant professional body, for example the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Chartered Institute of Housing, Institute of Licensing or the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

The service takes a preventative approach to addressing issues, in particular where regulatory compliance is concerned, in line with the UK Government Regulators' Code. In so doing, the service endeavours to apply the principles of good regulation:

- Proportionality
- Accountability
- Consistency
- Transparency
- Targeting

Issues are identified generally through one of two routes:

- Our regulatory inspection and intelligence gathering activities; or
- Through requests for service from a member of the public, an organisation or another regulatory agency.

These can be reported directly to the service or via Customer Services. The Environmental Health Service receives around 2,300 requests for service, undertakes approximately 1,500 inspections and handles many thousands of customer communications each year.

Each issue, depending on its nature and severity, will be logged on the services' work management software and allocated to an officer for response and investigation as appropriate. Each request for service or inspection is undertaken following both national rules and codes of practice, internal procedures or both as appropriate.

Interventions will range from providing advice and support through to legal action for non-compliance which ultimately may lead to serving of formal notices, issuing of cautions or prosecution in the most significant

situations where harm to public health or damage to the environment has is imminently likely to occur.

The Service acts as an enabler and will work with others to deliver a range of programmes, whether that is around healthy eating and lifestyle (e.g. Eat Out Eat Well award), tackling fuel poverty (e.g. Warm Homes Healthy People), supporting small business to save money by becoming more energy efficient (e.g. Business Energy Efficiency Anglia, West Suffolk Greener Business Grant) or investing in renewable energy (e.g. Community Energy Plan). Staff are allocated to according to the operational needs of the council, along with their knowledge and experience and work within the specific scope and guidelines of each initiative.

1.3.3 **Tourism (strategic):** Would like to see figures on this and what problems there are, if any. How can this be improved?

Tourism in West Suffolk currently contributes £510m (2016) to the local economy of which £306m is attributed to Forest Heath from a total of 6.7million trips including 726,000 staying nights.

	Forest Heath	% Change	St Edmundsbury	% Change	West Suffolk	% Change
Day Trips	6,516,000	1.5%	3,748,000	2.1%	10,263,000	1.7%
Staying Trips	198,000	-3.4%	180,000	2.9%	378,000	-0.5%
Number of Nights	726,000	2.0%	680,000	4.5%	1,406,000	3.2%
Total Trips	6,714,000	1.3%	3,928,000	2.2%	10,642,000	1.6%
Day Trip Spend	£209,970,000	1.5%	£117,389,000	2.1%	£327,359,000	1.7%
Staying Trip Spend	£45,440,000	2.3%	£37,506,000	2.9%	£82,946,000	2.6%
Total Trip Spend	£306,927,000	1.7%	£204,067,000	2.5%	£510,994,000	2.0%
Average Stay Length	3.67	5.6%	3.78	1.6%	3.73	3.6%
Actual Jobs	5873	1.7%	4239	2.5%	10112	2.0%

The table above shows that staying trips have slightly decreased but the spend associated has increased. The Forest Heath data though is skewed by the presence of CenterParcs but a separate report is also available for Newmarket town as the other main destination.

The main objective for strategic tourism in partnership with other organisations such as Discover Newmarket is to increase the value of tourism to the local economy by encouraging visitors to convert from

day trips to staying trips and therefore increasing the total spend. A day visitor average spend to Forest Heath is £32.22 while the average spend for an overnight trip is £229.49.

Figures for 2017 are expected imminently and these will give us an idea of the growth for these areas since the partnership approach to tourism was adopted and the development of the Destination Management Organisations.

1.3.4 **Economic development:** Would like an update on where are we with economic development.

The Economic Development team has just been through a restructure. The focus of the team comes from the Strategic Plan and the Growth Investment Strategy. Alongside leading on key corporate projects such as Haverhill Research Park and Suffolk Business Park the team has for key areas of focus as follows:

Jonathan Miles – leads on Economic activity; town centres; the visitor economy and external funding opportunities;
Sara Noonan – leads on Infrastructure – including that needed to unlock economic growth;
Kirsty Pitwood – leads on Skills and Social Enterprise; and
James Talbot – leads on Business and Inward Investment.

Economic Activity:

The focus of this programme area is to invest in and promote our local places by building on their unique qualities through specific local strategies, projects and environmental services. By ensuring that the places are attractive to visit and by promoting these places in a clear and appealing way we can attract visitors and businesses alike. The main areas of work currently are:

High Streets

Work is currently underway to understand the current issues facing the High St and the future issues likely to affect West Suffolk. We have seen a number of changes and high profile departures from banks, shops and restaurants. We are working with partners and stakeholders to understand the specific issues faced by our towns so that a tailored approach can be used to support our town centre businesses with this transition.

Tourism Promotion

Working in partnership with tourism organisations across West Suffolk we collectively aim to increase the value of tourism to the local economy by increasing overnight trips and spend. A sharing approach is being applied so that various tourism organisations and local authority districts each work together to promote and cross promote encouraging the visitor to stay in Suffolk.

Filming

In December 2016 Screen Suffolk launched and began to promote Suffolk to the TV and film industry. Screen Suffolk acts on behalf of all local authorities in Suffolk and provides a film office function. To date West Suffolk has provided locations for a number of productions, but new locations are constantly required to continue the promotion of the area.

Funding

Working in conjunction with Suffolk County Council funding team and other bodies we are looking out proactively for funding opportunities in addition to providing reactive support across the council to help with the variety of corporate projects. With funding an ever changing landscape we will keep an up to date matrix of available opportunities so that these are visible across services.

Infrastructure:

This programme area is focused on the identification of the key infrastructure requirements for West Suffolk in support of Growth. Infrastructure improvements will be brought forward through working collaboratively with other public and private bodies to lobby and develop business cases for projects which will benefit of both local communities and UK plc.

We will use our influence, investment, partnerships and regulatory powers to lobby for a better connected West Suffolk, in terms of transport and digital connectivity.

Key road infrastructure requirements for West Suffolk include:

1. A14/A142 Junction 37 Newmarket / Exning - where lack of capacity leads to extensive queueing on the A14 from Cambridgeshire.
2. A11 Fiveways including at grade crossing at A11 Tuddenham Road and A11 Herringswell Road - both short term improvements including signalisation at Fiveways (scheduled for September to December 2018) and long term improvements included in the SCC Road Investment Strategy 2 bid are needed.
3. A14 Junctions 43 (Tesco/British Sugar) and 44 (Sainsbury's) - poor layout, short slip roads and lack of capacity leads to significant congestion and queueing which extends back onto the A14 main carriage way.
4. Cross boundary improvements including the campaign to dual the A1307 and the aspirations for an A11/A14 link road at the A14 junction 38.

Key rail infrastructure improvements are required in order for West Suffolk to achieve increased services as follows:

- a. Ipswich to Peterborough hourly services via Ely
- b. Ipswich to Cambridge half hourly services via Newmarket
- c. Increase rail freight paths to 45 freight paths per day

Infrastructure improvements needed to increase services include:

1. Ely Area Enhancements
2. Haughley Junction doubling
3. Ely to Soham doubling
4. Felixstowe branch line improvements
5. Bury St Edmunds headways and signalling
6. Level crossing upgrade/closure programme

Skills:

Research and mapping work is underway to understand the current skills provision and identify the stakeholders. Alongside this, a piece of work is being undertaken to identify the skills gaps and consider opportunities for skills development, with a view to producing a set of tangible actions for West Suffolk Councils to deliver, working with partners as appropriate. Officers are also working closely with Suffolk County Council on county-side skills initiatives to deal with issues such as work and health and youth unemployment.

Whilst social enterprises face many of the same issues and challenges as other types of business, officers are looking to understand more about our local social enterprises and see where the council may be able to help them. For example, officers are currently working with a social enterprise from the STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) sector to see how they can develop their business within West Suffolk.

Business and Inward Investment

The team continues to actively support businesses across West Suffolk through a proactive programme of business engagement.

The engagement programme focusses on a broad spread of businesses across West Suffolk, from those starting, growing, to those in the sectors we are seeking to grow and those sectors where specific funding might be available. The team has signposted and helped West Suffolk businesses access more than £400k in grant funding in since March 2017.

Work continues on a new website to promote the West Suffolk offer. The website will have a strong economic development focus, acting as a 'shop window' for our places, sectors and development sites amongst other areas of focus.

In addition to this promotional work to attract inward investment Officers are again working with colleagues across the New Anglia area with regard to attendance at MIPIM (London) 2018, the UK's main property show.

The team are also supporting the re-launch of the New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Group (NAAME). The very first West Suffolk Manufacturing Group will be held during this year's Business Festival on 4 October 2018 at West Suffolk College. It is hoped that this group will be held at private sector business premises around West Suffolk as it moves forward.

Other events at this year's festival (which runs from 2-12 October) include The Menta Business Show, an event promoting the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, a Bank of England Breakfast, and the annual Business Awards, amongst other events.

1.3.5 **Town centres:** Are there any town centres that have problems? If so, what are they and how are they being dealt with, and hopefully resolved.

The current vacancy rates for our West Suffolk towns as of July 2018 are as follows:

- **Brandon:** 5 Vacancies out of **86** units, a vacancy rate of **5.8%**. **70** units in the town centre are occupied by independent businesses (Less than 5 branches) giving an independent rate of **81.4%**. The national average is **41.6%**.
- **Haverhill:** There are 11 vacancies out of **193** units, a vacancy rate of **5.7%**. **118** units in the town centre are occupied by independent businesses (Less than 5 branches) giving an independent rate of **61.1%**. The national average is **41.6%**.
- **Bury St Edmunds:** There are 27 vacancies out of **492** units, a vacancy rate of **5.5%**. **290** units in the town centre are occupied by independent businesses (Less than 5 branches) giving an independent rate of **58.9%**. The national average is **41.6%**.
- **Mildenhall:** There are **9** Vacancies out of **112** units, a vacancy rate of **8.0%**. **77** units in the town centre are occupied by independent businesses (Less than 5 branches) giving an independent rate of **68.8%**. The national average is **41.6%**.
- **Newmarket:** There are **11** Vacancies out of **280** units, a vacancy rate of **3.9%**. **163** units in the town centre are occupied by independent businesses (Less than 5 branches) giving an independent rate of **58.2%**. The national average is **41.6%**.

The Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) considers between five and ten per cent to be healthy as it means that there are opportunities for new businesses to open. Our towns all fall within this range but vacant shops are often a perception issue. An important aspect of our town centre work will be to engage with the landlords of these vacant units to help source a tenant or find an alternative temporary use (i.e. pop up).

The reasons that shops close or move is down to a variety of factors – some may be successful stores but are part of a chain while others may

close due to a business remodelling the way it operates. In terms of the rents and rates - rents are down to the landlord which most of the time is not the Council, while Business Rates are set by Central Government – we can however offer help to struggling businesses through rate relief.

1.3.6 **Town centres:** Town centres are going to have to be reinvented, where are we with this?

The issues facing the High Street are national issues and are a high priority in the work stream of the Economic Development team. An action plan is currently being developed which will aim to address the national issues that are affecting our market towns in addition to the local issues. The action plan is based on extensive research and local workshops aimed at uncovering the current issues.

The current high level issues facing the town centres of West Suffolk are:

- Landlords – higher rents are being demanded by commercial landlords which is starting to push out some retail from the town centre
- Business Rates – in addition to higher rents business rates are becoming a large burden to retailers
- Online retail – sales are being affected by the rise and convenience of online retail
- Parking – in certain areas retailers are reporting that sales are being lost due to the length and type of parking available

1.3.7 **Town centres:** What is happening to improve Mildenhall Town centre and Brandon Town centre, and their associated markets?

Mildenhall

We have had four family fun days during August which have included additional stalls and family friendly entertainment. These have been well attended and the stallholders have given discounts and free fruit to children. There has been an increase in stallholder enquiries during the year. We are now working with the Parish Council to upgrade the electrical feeder pillars on the market as at the moment we are not able to offer stallholders power. These should be complete by November in time for the Christmas events. Once we have this in place we will be able to attract more stallholders particularly in the winter months. These feeder pillars will also enable us to offer the market place as an event space to other local groups in the area.

The Mildenhall Messenger has been providing free advertising throughout the year for market traders. This has included discounts and special offers. We have an ongoing relationship with Zak FM to promote the market through their local radio station.

Brandon Market

We are starting the 'family fun day' format in Brandon on Saturday 1 September, this will continue until December on the first Saturday of the month with additional stalls and family entertainment. We have offered stalls free of charge to community groups and charities in the area. The Brandon Musical Arts Project will be providing entertainment and the fun days will finish in December with a special Christmas Event. As this market has been struggling for many years we are trying to make the fun days an event market rather than a regular provisions market. Take up and interest for stalls has been high and many community groups and clubs are attending during the period.

We are now offering a free 'start up package' to young entrepreneurs and start-up businesses. This package will include a free gazebo, cover on our insurance package and business advice. We are promoting this on several websites and on social media. This offer will include Brandon, Mildenhall and Newmarket subject to what the trader sells.

The new West Suffolk Markets website will be up and running by the end of September and will include details of all our markets and their events and special offers.

1.3.8 Licensing: What are the main issues being dealt with at the moment, and can they be resolved?

The Licensing Service manages a range of regulatory activities covering:

- alcohol and entertainment
- hackney carriage and private hire
- animal welfare
- gambling
- sex establishments
- street trading and vending
- temporary events, charitable collections, lotteries.

The current issues being dealt with by the service fall into two categories:

- strategic; and
- operational.

Strategic issues

The service's activities are undertaken under a set of regulations or policies which undergo a rolling programme of review and revision to ensure they reflect the current standards that prevail and the nature of the local area over which they apply. At this time, the service is overlaying the harmonisation programme onto this resulting from the establishment of a single council for West Suffolk in April 2019. The impact of this change is the unification of two separate licensing authorities, which will need to be fully operational from the first day of the new single council.

Issues being considered at this time include:

- renewal of the Gambling Act Statement of Policy
- Licence fee harmonisation
- Hackney fare setting
- Taxi and skin piercing byelaws
- Harmonisation of hackney carriage standards where difference still remain between the two licencing authorities' standards
- Harmonisation of street trading and vending policy
- Renewal and harmonisation of the Statement of Licensing Policy.

These are undergoing updating and appropriate stakeholder consultation prior to being considered for adoption by the relevant council decision taker with new standards. We are currently consulting on the West Suffolk Gambling Act Statement of Policy, Forest Heath Statement of Licensing policy and the Newmarket Cumulative Impact Assessment area. Unlike these current consultations, upcoming consultations on the taxi policy, street trading and vending policy and enforcement policy include proposals for substantive policy changes. However, these policy changes have been limited to those that we feel are absolutely necessary for aligning Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury licensing and regulatory policies.

Once a single Council is in effect we will be looking at some of our licensing regimes, such as taxi and street trading to see how we can better use regulation in our place shaping role.

Operational issues

There are several areas where the service is focussing its attention:

- Changes to the Animal Welfare Regulations affecting the boarding and breeding of pets and other facilities such as riding establishments. The changes will be coming into effect in October 2018 and will have a significant impact on the way that the licensing, inspection and regulation of such activities will be undertaken. This will include a move to risk-based inspection, a new application and licence renewal process and more activities being covered for the first time. The service is, therefore, gearing itself and the sector up for the changing legislation.
- The Licensing Services handled around 275 complaints about licensable activities in the last twelve months. These include issues such as operating hire vehicles without appropriate licences, poor driver behaviour towards customers and other traders, driving under the influence of drugs. During the year, some of these complaints resulted in 12 hearings in the most significant cases. These are onerous undertakings requiring high levels of technical skill, experience and time for officers to prepare case material prior to members of the Licensing & Regulatory Committee hearing the case.

Officers undertake regular inspection visits to assess compliance and advise licensees. This includes weekly inspections of the taxi ranks across West Suffolk, and the inspection of hackney and private hire vehicles on request.

- 1.3.9 **Growth and regeneration:** Where is our dual electric train line to Cambridge so we can make Newmarket more like Ascot and increase employment in Forest Heath from commuting to Cambridge?

Electrification of train lines

The government has cancelled the proposed electrification schemes in South Wales, the east Midlands and the Lake District because of cost. Rail companies are now starting to use bimode trains which can either run on electric power from overhead wires or from diesel. Greater Anglia are replacing their fleet with bimode trains, these new trains will be introduced from May 2019 with full roll out expected in 2020. The new trains between Ipswich and Cambridge will be four car trains and are expected to reduce crowding at peak times.

Dualling the single track line between Chippenham Junction and Coldham Lane Junction (via Newmarket)

In order to achieve half hourly services between Ipswich to Cambridge a study commissioned by the East West Rail Consortium, of which Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury are members, concluded that a double track line is likely to be needed to achieve half hourly services and a resilient rail line. Network Rail's Cambridge Connectivity Study is underway and should provide a further level of detail as regards what infrastructure improvements are needed and high level estimates of what they may cost. This study is expected at the end of 2018.

Timescales

No timescale has been established regarding when a half hourly service could be achieved. West Suffolk Council continues to work with Suffolk County Council, Network Rail and the East West Rail Consortium (which has recently launched an Eastern Working Group) to push for improvements to services in West Suffolk.

1.4 Proposals

- 1.4.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee ask questions of the Cabinet Member following her update.