
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title of Report:	Report by Cllr Alaric Pugh Economic Growth Portfolio	
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Portfolio includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic Development• Town Centre Management• Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourism• Car Parking• Transport

1. Economic Development and Growth

1.1 West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group

The group met for a special meeting in October and received a presentation from Suffolk County Council (SCC) on their Skills Strategy. As part of the 'Raising The Bar' and other related agenda, SCC has joined up sets of skills interventions that start with young people still at school right up to skills for people in the workplace. This was adjudged a very joined up piece of work and the Group is looking for opportunities to help disseminate this effective work.

1.2 Apple Day and Christmas Fayre

We held an Apple Day on 18 October 2014 – lots of stalls took part with Apple promotions and tastings. There was also entertainment for children, apple pie making, apple bobbing and apple puppet making workshops and the event seemed to be very well received.

The Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre consolidated its position as one of the regions foremost seasonal events with another record year. Attendance has substantially exceeded previous years and the Thursday evening community night also saw an increase in attendance, which was particularly pleasing because it shows that there is still growing local support for the event.

The visitors it brings to our traders' doorsteps contribute upwards of £750,000 to the local economy. The warmer weather this year encouraged people to spread out and experience more of the town. We had visitors from as far as

Southampton and the Midlands and while the parking and park and ride operations were busy, they did their job admirably and kept traffic flowing.

1.3 Our Bury St Edmunds

I am extremely pleased that the Business Improvement District (BID) in Bury St Edmunds has been voted in for a second 5 year term. Approximately £300,000 is available each year for OurBuryStEdmunds (the BID) from local businesses and the income is spent on marketing; events; business support; and the environment. Over the first five years the BID has worked hard to support local businesses by endeavouring to make Bury St Edmunds a great place to visit and to do business. I am looking forward to continuing to be involved with the Board and lending appropriate support where we can.

1.4 Haverhill Masterplan

In my role as Chair of the ONE Haverhill Town Centre Masterplanning Core Group, I am pleased to report that progress continues towards developing the Haverhill Masterplan. It is anticipated that consultants will be appointed before the end of the year; the consultants will work closely with borough council officers and ONE Haverhill. The intention is for an inception and governance meeting with the consultants to take place early in 2015.

1.5 Strategic Tourism

I am pleased to be able to say that a plan is underway which will see businesses and organisations work together to determine the long term strategy for tourism in Bury St Edmunds. OurBuryStEdmunds and Bury St Edmunds Town Council have both agreed to fund £3,000 each towards the creation of a Destination Management Plan for Bury St Edmunds, with St Edmundsbury Borough Council meeting the remaining £9,000 of the costs. The money is being used to pay for an independent assessment of the value of tourism to Bury as it stands now, followed by a Destination Management Plan which will include recommendations for how to deliver growth in tourism; this work is due to be completed in Spring 2015. This work will in turn trigger the creation of a Destination Management Organisation (DMO), a new partnership made up of local businesses and organisations which will set out a plan for how it wants to grow the area's tourism for the future.

The DMO will not only coordinate tourism activities, bring together resources and expertise, but will also provide the long term strategic direction for tourism in Bury including the creation of a strong and vibrant brand identity. A major emphasis will be not just on attracting tourists to Bury, but attracting them for longer, increasing their stay, their experience, their spending, and brand loyalty. The commercial strategy will also see the partners on the DMO work to redress an imbalance in tourism seasonality, so that the town attracts a strong number of visitors throughout the whole year, rather than a concentrated number in the summer months and around the Christmas Fayre. A DMO scheme in County Durham has seen a 13 per cent increase in the tourism economy.

1.6 Visit Suffolk

Visit Suffolk's 'TheOtherSide' campaign has been the latest tourism success. The Visit Suffolk website won 'Best tourism board website' at the national TravelMole Awards, being victorious over Yorkshire and Bath. Takemetosuffolk.com underwent a facelift to incorporate more visual assets to engage and inspire even more visitors to come to Suffolk. This included twenty short films on Suffolk folklore, mysteries and legends, one of which was focussed on witchcraft in Bury St Edmunds. Planning is well underway for Visit Suffolk's 2015 promotional activity which will incorporate a strong commercial role.

This is testament to the excellent work that Visit Suffolk has done for tourism in the county.

1.7 Showcasing the Economy

Showcasing the Local Economy project is one of the component parts of the Raising the Bar Agenda for Suffolk.

The objective of this project is to provide an online "portal" to allow Young People to engage with Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance relating to jobs and careers. In addition it is also intended that it will provide content (supplied by local Suffolk Businesses) about which employers offer opportunities in the selected areas of interest and further information about the training needs and remuneration etc. associated with such jobs. The information would also include where and when the opportunities might be and any recruitment events or work experience opportunities that Employers (across the whole of the County) might be offering.

The County Council Skills team, with the support of the District and Borough officers have now reached agreement, in principle, with a charitable Trust based on the Suffolk-Norfolk border who have been working in this area for some time, to work on the development of an online platform to deliver the Showcasing the Local Economy project which it is hoped will be available in September 2015 in time for the next academic year.

1.8 Haverhill Chamber of Commerce

We have just entered into a "Contract for Services" agreement with Haverhill Chamber of Commerce which will enable us to work closely with the Chamber to increase its membership and to improve communications between its members and ourselves. This is part of our aim to improve engagement with businesses and enables us to understand more closely the issues faced and support needed by our local businesses.

1.9 Small Business Saturday

Small Business Saturday was held on 6 December this year. The aim of this national campaign is simply to support small independent businesses and traders primarily by online and social media campaigning. I helped publicise this initiative with our local businesses and reminded local people that it is down to each of us individually to support our retailers and other local businesses.

2. Parking Services

Demand at the Borough's car parks has increased significantly over the summer and into the autumn. The number of parking events has risen by approximately 3% in the first 9 months of the calendar year in comparison to 2013. A total of 1,777,861 parking events have been recorded with an average increase of 1,300 per week.

Christmas is an extremely important period for the vitality of our town centres, and the Borough Council is again supporting our local traders by encouraging more footfall at certain periods during the week. The 'Free from 3' offer has been extended to every Thursday evening in Bury St Edmunds until Christmas. We are offering free parking after 3pm in Haverhill every day from the 13th to 24th December 2014, as a pilot this year.

Car park management is important this time of year and in addition to the extended 'Free from 3' promotions, that encourage people into our towns at less busy periods, we are actively promoting Olding Road in Bury as a free Park and Walk car park at weekends. Social Media is being used to encourage users to park early or late in the day, and provide up to the minute car parking capacity information.

The Council's pay and display car parks in Haverhill have been independently inspected by the police and parking specialist. The inspection considers the level of safety, cleanliness, quality of signage, frequency of patrols and uniformed attendants, and maintenance within our car parks. These five car parks were again recognised for their high quality of management and were each awarded the ParkMark award.