

Borough Councillor's November Report for Hawstead

Brown Bins. The proposal to charge for emptying brown bins was passed at the Full Council meeting on the 22nd of September. The charge to collect garden waste will be between £35 and £50 a year. People will opt into the scheme meaning that those using the facility will pay for it which is the fairest option. It will come into force next April.

West Suffolk Operational Hub. Councillors have now approved a second round of consultation to give residents across West Suffolk further opportunity to give their views about proposals for a shared waste transfer station, vehicle depot and household waste recycling site. This follows concerns raised by those who live nearest to the originally preferred site for the facility at Hollow Road Farm, Bury St Edmunds. This second consultation, probably starting in the New Year, will enable communities to put forward other credible, alternative sites for consideration before a final decision is made. Any potential site will need to have easy access to the A14.

Car Parking Review. I have been a member of the task and finish group which reviewed all aspects of car parking in both Bury and Haverhill. We have looked at the need for spaces, noting in particular that the Cattle Market and Parkway are full on a Saturday. Ram Meadow has sufficient spaces at the moment and we need to encourage more cars there. We also have to plan ahead for up to 500 more spaces in the next 25 years. In addition we reviewed tariffs, only suggesting minor changes to encourage parking on Ram Meadow. Our report will go to Cabinet and then to Full Council later this year.

Masterplans for future development. The masterplan for the South East of Bury was adopted at the last Full Council meeting, together with the plan for Station Hill and north east Bury to the east of Moreton Hall. The masterplan for the redevelopment of Tayfen Road, including the removal of the gasometer, is coming forward in the very near future.

Emergency Housing. In the summer last year SEBC bought a five bedroom House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) in Lake Avenue. This purchase was triggered after the council had to spend more than £200,000 on putting homeless households into bed and breakfast accommodation.

The first tenants have now moved in to the HMO at Lake Avenue and this investment has made significant savings for the Council which has a statutory duty to provide accommodation for homeless households in priority need. It is forecast that the property will effectively pay for itself in five years while the savings will continue for decades to come.

The Council is also looking to purchase a second property, this time on Newmarket Road. Planning permission was granted this month for a change of use of this property from a B&B to short stay accommodation, which was needed before any purchase could go ahead. This property will cater for 7 families or individuals, thus further reducing the need for spending on B&B.

Gypsy and Travellers Sites. SCC is once again appealing to landowners near to major routes to find sites for short stay pitches. The county is required to provide such sites. The call for sites will close on November 17th.

Possible closure of Bury Magistrates Court. SEBC is strongly opposing the closure of our Court. If it goes ahead Suffolk will only have one Court and that will be in Ipswich. This will cause problems for all residents, especially those using public transport to get there. Time and expense will be involved, not just for people appearing in the Court, but also for magistrates and solicitors. We have offered to provide a suitable location for the Court in the second phase of our Public Service Village which will be next to West Suffolk House on Western Way.

Bury Bus Station. Last year as part of a spending review the council considered options for the bus station building which costs £250,000 a year to run. It marketed the building to community groups and commercial providers to see if there was interest in renting the building.

Nothing came of this, so SEBC Cabinet members have decided to recommend investing £39,500 in the bus station building to achieve savings and create the potential for further income.

The investment will be used to configure the building into three parts – a waiting area with café kiosk available to let, access to public toilets and a large lettable area for rent

At the same time Suffolk County Council has said it will install real time electronic bus information boards by December. The changes to the layout of the bus station building will then take place between January and April 2016. The new electronic boards mean that the bus station will no longer be staffed by SEBC. The council will look to redeploy the staff that work in the bus station into alternative suitable roles and will seek to avoid redundancies as far as possible.

Park Farm Ingham. The first stage towards the development of a significant new leisure facility at Park farm, Ingham is now underway. SEBC has just launched a consultation, running till November 16th asking for people's views on plans to develop a former sand and gravel quarry at Ingham for leisure, recreation and tourism purposes. This could include the provision of holiday lodges, fishing lakes, and public access. The site was identified and allocated for such development in the adopted Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan. A masterplan will come forward before a planning application is submitted.

Street lighting. SEBC cabinet has voted to upgrade the street lights they own and then to transfer about half to SCC, thus reducing maintenance costs by £157,000 a year. This will be debated at Full Council on Tuesday, 17th November.

Housing Company. Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and Suffolk County Council are looking at taking the first steps to set up an independent housing development company which will generate income by developing a range of homes both for sale and for rent in West Suffolk. The councils will use the income to help deliver services.

The purpose of the company would be to act commercially, build homes for sale and private rent, provide up to 30 per cent of the homes as affordable housing (rented, shared ownership and/or low cost starter homes) in line with planning policy.

The company would be wholly owned by Forest Heath District Council (25% share), St Edmundsbury Borough Council (25% share), Suffolk County Council (50% share).

National research has shown that every new home built creates 2.4 long term, sustainable jobs and every £1 spent on housing adds £2.41 to the local economy.

If approved at Joint Full Council Meeting on November 17th, building could start in 2016.

Angela Rushen

November 2015